

CHAPTER XXX

Jesus, Mary and Joseph Return from Egypt to Nazareth by the Will of the Most High.

702. The child Jesus reached the end of his seventh year while in Egypt, which was also the term set by eternal Wisdom for his mysterious sojourn in that land. So the prophecies would be fulfilled it was necessary for Him to return to Nazareth. This determination the eternal Father intimated to the humanity of his most holy Son on a certain day in the presence of his holy Mother and while She was with Him in prayer. She saw it mirrored in his deified soul and how He submitted to it in obedience to the Father. Thereupon the great Lady did the same, although they had already become better acquainted and habituated to their present abode than to their own native city of Nazareth. Neither the Mother nor the Son made known to St. Joseph this new decree of heaven, but that very night the Angel of the Lord spoke to him in his sleep, as St. Matthew relates (Mt. 2:19-20), and bade him take the Child and his Mother and return to the land of Israel, for Herod and those who with him had sought the life of the Child were dead. The Most High so greatly desires the good order of all created things that although the child Jesus was true God, and his Mother so superior in sanctity to St. Joseph, nevertheless He did not desire the arrangement of this journey to Galilee to proceed from the Son nor from the most holy Mother, but rather referred all to St. Joseph, who in that most divine Family held the office of head. God intended to teach all mortals that He desires all things to be governed by the natural order set up by his providence, and that the inferiors and subjects of the Mystical Body of the Church, even though they may excel in virtue and in certain other respects, must obey and submit to their superiors and prelates in the visible order.

703. St. Joseph immediately notified the child Jesus and his Mother of the command of the Lord, and both of them answered that the will of the heavenly Father must be done. Thereupon they resolved upon their journey without delay, immediately distributing among the poor the little furniture contained in their dwelling. This was done by the hands of the divine Child, for the heavenly Mother often consigned into his hands what She had destined as alms for the poor, knowing the Child, as the God of mercy, loved to exercise it with his own hands (Mt. 25:40). When She gave Him these alms the most holy Mother, falling on her knees, said: "Take, my Son and Lord, whatever Thou dost desire, in order to share it with the poor, our friends and brothers." The blessed dwelling, which had been sanctified and consecrated for seven years by the presence of Jesus the High Priest, was left in the possession of certain of the most devout and pious persons in Heliopolis. Their sanctity and virtues had gained them a favor which they could not now fully estimate, though because of what they had seen and experienced they counted themselves indeed fortunate to occupy the same house in which these Strangers had lived for seven years. This affectionate devotion was rewarded by abundant light and grace for their eternal salvation.

704. They departed for Palestine in the company of the Angels as on their way to Egypt. The great Queen sat on the little donkey with the divine Child on her lap, and St. Joseph walked on foot very close to the Son and Mother. Because of the loss of such great Benefactors their acquaintances and friends were very sorrowful at the news of their departure; with incredible weeping and sighing they saw them leave, knowing and confessing they were losing all their consolation, help and remedy in their necessities. If the divine power had not interfered the Holy Family would have found great difficulty in leaving Heliopolis, for its inhabitants began to feel the night of their miseries secretly setting upon their hearts at the parting of the Sun which had

dispersed and brightened its darkness (Jn. 1:9). In traversing the inhabited country they passed through some towns of Egypt where they scattered their graces and blessings. The news of their passage spread about, and all the sick, afflicted and disconsolate gathered to seek them out, and they found themselves relieved in body and soul. Many of the sick were cured (Jn. 6:44), and many demons were expelled without knowing who it was who thus hurled them back into hell, though they felt the divine power which compelled them and wrought such blessings among men.

705. I will not tarry to relate the particular events of this journey of the child Jesus and his Blessed Mother out of Egypt, for it is not necessary, nor could it be done without extending this History too much. It will suffice to say that all who came to them with greater or less devotion left their presence enlightened with truth, assisted by grace, and wounded with the love of God. They felt a secret force which urged and compelled them to the pursuit of virtue, and while withdrawing them from the paths of death showed them the way of eternal life. They came to the Son drawn by the Father (Jn. 6:44), and returned to the Father sent by the Son (Jn. 14:6) by the divine light with which He enlightened their understanding to know the divinity of the Father (Jn. 1:9). Nevertheless He concealed Himself, since it was not yet time to reveal Himself openly. But the fire which He had come to enkindle and spread in this world (Lk. 12:49) secretly and incessantly produced its divine effects among men.

706. Having thus fulfilled the mysteries decreed by the divine will, and issuing from the inhabited regions of this country, which they had signalized by their miracles, our heavenly Pilgrims entered the desert through which they had come. In it they again suffered labors and difficulties similar to those of their flight from Palestine, for the Lord always gave time and place for necessity and tribulation so He could provide the opportune remedy (Ps. 144:15). He ministered to these necessities by the hands of the holy Angels, sometimes in the manner as in the first journey (634), and other times the child Jesus himself commanded them to bring food to his most holy Mother and her spouse; and for the greater joy of St. Joseph at this favor he heard the order given to these ministering spirits, and saw how obedient and prompt they were in bringing what was needed, by which the holy Patriarch was encouraged and consoled in his sorrow at not having the necessary sustenance for the King and Queen of heaven. At other times the divine Child made use of his omnipotence and created all that was necessary to supply their wants out of a piece of bread. The rest of the journey was similar to the journey described before in chapter XXII; hence I do not think it necessary to repeat the description. However, when they arrived at the confines of Palestine the most careful spouse St. Joseph was informed that Archelaus had succeeded Herod his father in the government of Judea (Mt. 2:22). Fearing that with the sovereignty he had inherited also his cruelty, St. Joseph turned from his route without going to Jerusalem or entering Judea, and passed through the land of the tribe of Dan and Issachar below Galilee, following the coast of the Mediterranean sea and passing Jerusalem to his right.

707. They reached Nazareth, their home, for the Child was to be called a Nazarene (Ib. 23). They found their former humble house in charge of the devout cousin of St. Joseph, who as I mentioned in chapter XVII of Book Three (227) had offered to serve him while our Queen was absent in the house of Elizabeth. Before they left Judea for Egypt St. Joseph had written to this woman, asking her to take care of the house and what it contained. They found it all in good condition, and his cousin received them with great consolation because of her love for the great Queen, though at the same time she did not know of her dignity. The heavenly Lady entered with her Son and St. Joseph, and immediately She prostrated Herself in adoration of the Lord and in

thanksgiving for having led them safe from the cruelty of Herod to this retreat, and preserved them in the dangers of their banishment and their long and arduous journeys. Above all She rendered gratitude for having returned with her Son as grown and full of grace and virtue (Lk. 2:40).

708. Taking counsel with her divine Child She proceeded to set up a rule of life and regulate her pious practices. Not that She had failed to observe a rule of life on her journey, for the most prudent Lady, in imitation of her Son, had always observed the most perfect order according to circumstances; but being now peacefully settled in her home She desired to include many exercises which on the journey were impossible. Her greatest solicitude was always to cooperate with her most holy Son for the salvation of souls, which was the work most urgently enjoined upon Her by the eternal Father. Toward this most exalted end our Queen directed all her practices in union with the Redeemer, and this was their constant occupation as we have seen in the course of this second Part. The holy spouse Joseph also ordered his occupations and his work in order most worthily to earn sustenance for the divine Child and his Mother, as well as for himself. That which in other sons of Adam is considered a punishment and a hardship was to this holy Patriarch a great happiness, for while others were condemned to sustain their natural life by the labor of their hands in the sweat of their brow (Gen. 3:19), St. Joseph was blessed and consoled beyond measure to know he had been chosen to support by his labor and sweat God himself and his Mother, to whom belonged heaven and earth and all they contained (Esther 13:10).

709. The Queen of the Angels herself undertook to pay the debt of gratitude due to St. Joseph for his labors and solicitude; hence She provided his meals and attended to his comforts with incredible care and most loving gratitude. She was obedient to him in all things and humbled Herself before him as if She was his handmaid and not his spouse, or what is more the Mother of the Creator and Lord of all. She considered Herself unworthy of existence and of having the earth itself support Her, since She thought it just to be in need of all things. In the consciousness of having been created out of nothing, and therefore unable to make any return either for this benefit or according to her estimation for any of the others, She established in Herself such a rare humility that She thought Herself less than the dust and unworthy to mingle with it. For the least favor She gave admirable thanks to the Lord as to the first cause and origin of them all, and to creatures as to the instruments of his bounty. To some She gave thanks because they conferred favors upon Her, to others because they denied them, and to others again because they bore with Her in patience. She acknowledged Herself as indebted to all of them, though She filled them with the blessings of sweetness and placed Herself at the feet of all, seeking ingenious means and artifices to let no instant and no occasion pass for practicing the most perfect and exalted virtues to the admiration of the Angels and the pleasure and delight of the Most High.

*INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF
HEAVEN HERSELF GAVE ME.*

710. My daughter, in the works which the Most High wrought with me, commanding me to journey from one place and kingdom to another, my heart was never disturbed, nor my spirit saddened; for my heart was always prepared to execute in all things the divine will. Although His Majesty gave me to know the most exalted ends of his works, yet this was not always done at the beginning, so there would be more to suffer; for in the submission of the creature no further reason must be sought than the Creator commands it, and that He arranges it entirely. Only by

this means do souls subdue themselves, and learn only to please the Lord, without distinguishing between prosperous and adverse events, and without looking to the feelings of their own inclinations. In this wisdom I desire thee to advance. In imitation of me, and to fulfill thy obligations to my most holy Son, receive the prosperous and the adverse in this mortal life with the same countenance, equal encouragement, and serenity, without the one making thee sad, nor the other exalt thee in vain joy; attend only to all the Most High ordains according to his good pleasure.

711. Human life is interwoven with this variety of events, some of which mortals like, and others which are sorrowful; some which they abhor, others which they desire. And since the creature is of a limited and narrow heart, from this arises the tendency toward one of these extremes or the other,* admitting with excessive pleasure what it loves and desires, or on the contrary becoming disconsolate and sad when what it abhors and does not want happens to it. These fluctuations and swings create danger for all or many virtues, since the disorderly love for something which it cannot obtain then moves the soul to crave another, searching with new desires for alleviation of the suffering of not obtaining what it wants; and if the soul obtains its desire, it becomes inebriated and intractable in the pleasure of possessing what it craved, casting itself by these whims into greater disorders of different cravings and passions. Therefore, dearest, beware this danger, and attack it at the root, preserving thy heart independent and attentive only to divine Providence, without allowing it to incline toward what it craves or gives it pleasure, or abhor what is painful to it. Thy joy and delight must be only in the will of the Lord. In whatever happens let neither thy desires impel thee, nor thy fears discourage thee. Do not be impeded in thy exterior occupations, nor diverted from thy holy exercises, and much less by thy respect or attention paid to creatures; in all things attend to what I have done. Affectionately and diligently follow my footsteps.

END OF BOOK FOUR

* As the Latin saying goes, *virtus in medio stat*. [Ed.]