

CHAPTER III

Most Holy Mary and St. Joseph Go to Jerusalem Every Year according to the Requirement of the Law, and They Take with Them the Child Jesus.

26. Some days after our Queen and Lady with her most holy Son and St. Joseph had settled in Nazareth, the time of the year in which the Jews were obliged to present themselves before the Lord in the temple of Jerusalem was at hand. This commandment obliged the Jews to this duty three times each year, as can be seen in Exodus (34:18ff.) and Deuteronomy (16:1ff.); however, it obliged only the men, not the women (Ex. 23:17), and therefore the women could go or not, according to their devotion, for it was neither commanded nor prohibited to them. The heavenly Lady and her spouse conferred with each other regarding what they should do in this regard. The Saint was inclined to take with him the great Queen his spouse and her most holy Son in order to offer Him anew to the eternal Father in the temple as they had always done. The most pure Mother was also drawn by her piety to worship the Lord in the temple, but since in matters of that kind She did not permit Herself to decide without the counsel and direction of the incarnate Word her Teacher, She asked his advice about this matter. They finally arranged that two times a year St. Joseph was to go to Jerusalem by himself, while on the third occasion they would go together. The Israelites visited the temple on the feast of Tabernacles (Dt. 16:13), the feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Ib. 9), and the feast of Unleavened Bread or the Pasch of Parasceve (Ib. 8). To this latter the sweetest Jesus, most pure Mary, and St. Joseph went up together. It lasted seven days and during that time happened what I shall relate in the next chapter. For the other solemnities St. Joseph went alone, leaving the Child and the Mother at home.

27. The holy spouse Joseph made these pilgrimages for himself and his Spouse in the name of the incarnate Word. Instructed by Him and furnished with his graces the Saint journeyed to the temple, offering there to the eternal Father the gifts always reserved for this occasion. Being the substitute of the Son and Mother, who remained at home praying for him, he offered up the mysterious sacrifices of his prayers, and since he therein represented Jesus and Mary his offering was more acceptable to the eternal Father than the offerings of the whole Jewish people. But whenever he was accompanied by the incarnate Word and the Virgin Mother at the feast of the Pasch, the journey was a most wonderful one for him and for the heavenly courtiers, who as I have already recorded on similar occasions formed for them a most solemn procession. The ten thousand Angels accompanied the three pilgrims Jesus, Mary and Joseph in human forms, refulgent in their beauty and full of most profound reverence, serving their Creator and their Queen. The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem was in the neighborhood of thirty leagues, and the holy Angels, according to the command and disposition of the incarnate Word, observed the same mode of accompaniment both in going and returning.

28. They consumed more time in these journeys than in previous ones, for after they had come back from Egypt the child Jesus desired them to journey on foot, and hence all three, the Son and the most holy Parents, made the pilgrimage on foot. And it was necessary to proceed slowly, for already the child Jesus began to assume hardships in the service of his eternal Father and for our advantage. He refused to make use of his immense power for lessening the difficulties of the journey, but undertook it as a man subject to suffering, allowing all the natural causes to produce their effects, one of which was the fatigue and exhaustion caused by travel. Although in his first journey the heavenly Mother and St. Joseph eased his fatigue by sometimes carrying Him in their arms, yet this was but a slight alleviation, and later on He always made the entire journey on

foot. The sweetest Mother did not interfere since She knew his desire for suffering, but ordinarily She led Him by the hand, and sometimes this was also done by St. Joseph. Many times when the Child was fatigued and overheated the loving and prudent Mother was moved to most tender and tearful compassion. She inquired about his sufferings and fatigue and wiped his divine countenance, which was more beautiful than the heavens and all its stars. She was accustomed to do this on her knees and with ineffable reverence. The divine Child would respond with much pleasure and speak of the delight with which He accepted these hardships for the glory of the eternal Father and for the good of men. With these conversations and conferences of canticles and divine praises they occupied themselves for a great part of the way, as I have already mentioned in other places (*Inc.* 627, 637).

29. At other times when the great Queen and Lady beheld on the one hand the interior activity of the soul of Christ, and on the other hand the perfection of his deified humanity, the beauty and activity of which manifested itself in the operations of divine grace and in his growth as true man, and when She pondered upon all this in her Heart (Lk. 2:19), She exercised Herself in heroic acts of all the virtues and was inflamed with divine love. She also beheld the Child as the Son of the eternal Father and as true God; without ever failing in the love of a true and natural Mother, She showed Him all the reverence due to Him as her God and Creator. All this flowed naturally from her spotless and pure Heart. Very often the wind would flutter through the hair of the child Jesus as He walked along. His hair grew to no greater length than was necessary and He lost none of it, except what the executioners tore out later on. Such little incidents were noticed by the sweetest Mother and they provided Her subjects for affectionate and sweet meditation. In all her interior and exterior conduct She was wonderful to the Angels and pleasing to her most holy Son and Creator.

30. In all these journeys which the Son and Mother made to the temple they performed heroic works of charity for the benefit of souls. They converted many to the knowledge of the Lord, freed them from their sins, and justified them, leading them on the way of eternal life. But since it was not yet time for the Teacher of virtue to manifest Himself, all these works were done in secret (Jn. 12:49). Since the heavenly Lady knew such activity was enjoined upon her Son by the eternal Father, and for the present it was to remain hidden, She concurred therein as the instrument of the will of the Redeemer, though in a covered and hidden manner. In order to govern Herself according to the dictates of the highest wisdom the most prudent Lady always consulted the divine Child concerning all her doings on the way and their stopping places and lodging houses on their journey. The heavenly Princess well knew her Son prearranged the occasions for his admirable works, which He foresaw and predetermined in his wisdom.

31. Hence they passed their nights sometimes in lodging places and sometimes in the open fields, but the divine Child and his purest Mother never separated. At all times the great Lady attended upon her Son and Master, watching his actions in order to imitate and follow them closely. The same She did in the temple, where She joined in the prayers and petitions of the incarnate Word to his eternal Father and was witness to the humble and profound reverence by which his humanity acknowledged the gifts flowing from the Divinity. A few times the Blessed Mother heard the voice of the Father saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt. 17:5). At other times She perceived and witnessed how her most holy Son prayed for Her to the eternal Father and how He offered Her to Him as his true Mother, and this knowledge was inexpressibly joyful to Her. She perceived also how He prayed for the whole human race, offering up all his works and labors for all these ends. In these petitions and offerings She accompanied, imitated and followed Him at all times.

32. It also happened at other times the holy Angels intoned hymns of sweetest harmony in honor of the incarnate Word, as well when they entered the temple as on their journey. The most fortunate Mother saw them and listened to them, understanding all the mysteries and being filled thereby with new light and wisdom. Her purest Heart was inflamed and blazed up in divine love. The Most High showered upon Her new gifts and blessings such as my inadequate tongue cannot clothe in words; by them He prepared Her for the adversities which She was to suffer, for many times after these consolations She beheld as in a panorama all the affronts, ignominies and sufferings awaiting her most holy Son in that same city of Jerusalem. So She could already at that time see all this with so much the more vivid sorrow, He was accustomed to enter upon his prayers in the presence of his sweetest Mother, and since She was filled with the light of divine wisdom and with a divine love for God and her Son, She was pierced with the sword of sorrow mentioned by Simeon (Lk. 2:35). She shed many tears in anticipation of the injuries to be borne by her sweetest Son (Is. 53:3ff), and at the thought of the sufferings and the ignominious death to which He was destined (Wis. 2:20). Her soul was filled with anguish when She remembered that the beauty of the Son of God, greater than that of all men (Ps. 44:3), was to be disfigured worse than with leprosy (Is. 53:4), and that She herself was to see all this with her own eyes. In order to somewhat mitigate the sorrow the Child God was accustomed to turn toward Her, instructing Her to dilate her Heart with his charity for the human race, and together with Him offer to the eternal Father all these sufferings for the remedy of men. Thus both Son and Mother made delightful offerings to the Holy Trinity, applying them for the benefit of the faithful and especially for the predestined who would profit by their merits and by the Redemption wrought by the incarnate Word. Principally in these occupations did the sweetest Jesus and his Mother spend the days of their visits to the temple of Jerusalem.

DOCTRINE GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

33. My daughter, if thou shalt deeply and attentively weigh thy obligations, thou shalt find very easy and sweet all the labors enjoined upon thee by the commands and precepts of the holy law of the Lord (Mt. 11:30). As the beginning and foundation of all Christian perfection this must be the first step of thy pilgrimage. But I have already many times reminded thee that the fulfillment of the precepts of the Lord must not be done with tepidity and coldness but with all fervor and devotion, because this shall prevent thee from being satisfied with common virtue and excite thee to undertake works of purest love beyond that which God imposes upon thee by command; for this is one of the artifices of His wisdom, that He seeks to be obliged by his true servants and friends so He may reward them, and this is what I desire of thee. Remember, dearest, the journey from mortal life to eternal life is long (III Kg. 19:7), painful and dangerous (Mt. 7:14): Long, because it takes up one's whole life; painful, because of the hardships; and dangerous, because of human frailty and the astuteness of the enemies. In addition to this the time is short (I Cor. 7:29) and the end uncertain (Eccles. 9:2), being either very happy or most unfortunate (Mt. 25:31), while the one as well as the other end is irrevocable (Eccles. 11:3). Since the sin of Adam the animal and earthly life of man is burdensome for all who subject themselves to it (Job 7:20); the chains of the passions are strong, and the war against lower nature continual (Ib. 1); sensible pleasures are always present and easily captivate the faculties of man (Wis. 4:12), while that which is noble, as well as its immediate consequences, is often hidden from sight. All this fills the pilgrimage of life with hazardous dangers and difficulties.

34. Among all these dangers and difficulties, not the least are those of the flesh, for its human weakness, always present and always active, withdraws many from grace. The shortest and most secure course to follow, both for thee and for all men, is to welcome bitterness and sorrow, put aside ease and pleasure of the senses, and resolve inviolably not to allow them to become dissipated or enjoy greater freedom than the strict rule of reason permits (Job 31:1). In addition to this thou must continually seek after the greater pleasure of the Lord and aspire to the great last end of all thy longings. For this purpose thou must always be solicitous to imitate me, for to this I call and invite thee, desiring thee to arrive at the summit of virtue and sanctity. Consider the punctuality and fervor with which I achieved so many and such great results, not because the Lord urged me on by his commands but because I desired to please Him more. Do thou also multiply thy deeds of fervor, thy devotions, and thy spiritual exercises, and in all things increase thy prayers and sacrifices to the eternal Father for the benefit of mortals. Help them also by thy example and thy exhortations wherever thou canst. Console the sorrowful, encourage the weak, help the fallen to arise,* and for all of them offer if necessary thy own blood and life. Above all strive to please my most holy Son, who suffers so kindly the ingratitude of men, preserving them in existence and continuing to shower his favors upon them. Consider his invincible love toward them and how I imitated Him, and even now show toward them the same love. I desire thee to follow thy sweet Spouse in his exalted charity, and also me, who am thy Teacher.

* cf. Is. 35:3-4 [Ed.]