

The Mystical City of God

by Ven. Mary of Jesus of Ágreda (1602-1665)

Volume 3

The Transfixion

Third of Four Volumes

Part II of III Parts

Books 5 and 6 of 8 Books

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The Transfixion

Books 5 and 6

*The Sacramental Mysteries of the Life of the Mother of God from the
Return out of Egypt up to the Ascension of Her Divine Son into
Heaven.*

BOOK FIVE

THIRD OF PART II

The Perfection with which Most Holy Mary Copied and Imitated the Activity of the Soul of Christ; How the Incarnate Word Instructed Her in the Law of Grace, the Articles of Faith, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Alacrity and Noble Promptitude with which She Corresponded; the Death of St. Joseph, the Preaching of St. John the Baptist, the Fasting and Baptism of our Redeemer, the Call of the First Disciples, and the Baptism of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady.

CHAPTER I

At Nazareth the Lord Resolves to Try Most Holy Mary by a Certain Severity and Lack of Familiarity, and the Ends which He had in Mind for This Exercise.

1. Already Jesus, Mary and Joseph had settled in Nazareth and thus changed their poor and humble dwelling into a heaven. In order to describe the mysteries and sacraments which passed between the divine Child and his purest Mother before his twelfth year, and later on until his public preaching, many chapters and many books would be required, and in all of them I would be able to relate but the smallest part in view of the vastness of the subject and the insignificance of such an ignorant woman as I am. Even with the light given to me by this great Lady I can speak of only a few incidents and must leave the greater part unsaid. It is not possible or appropriate for us mortals to comprehend all these mysteries in this life, since they are reserved for the future life.

2. Shortly after their return from Egypt to Nazareth the Lord resolved to try his most holy Mother in the same manner as He had tried Her in her childhood (as I related in Part I, Book Two, chapter XVII). Although She was now vastly grown in the exercise of her love and wisdom, yet as the power of God and the object of divine charity is infinite, and the capacity of the Queen was superior to that of all creatures, the Lord desired to raise Her to a higher level of sanctity and merits; moreover, being a true Educator of the spirit, He desired to form of Her a Disciple of such exalted knowledge that She would truly be for us a consummate Teacher and a living example of his own doctrines, for such was to be her office after the Ascension of her Son and Redeemer, as I shall relate in the third Part (*Cor.* 106, 183, 209). It was also befitting and necessary for the honor of Christ our Redeemer that the evangelical doctrine, by which and upon which He was to found the new law of grace, so holy, *not having spot or wrinkle* (Eph. 5:27), would be accredited in its efficacy and power, educating some mere creature in whom it would bring forth its sufficient and plenary effects, and who would be the most perfect of her kind, in whom all the rest of the inferiors could regulate and measure themselves. It is clear this creature could be none other than most blessed Mary, who as his Mother stood so close to the Master and Teacher of all sanctity.

3. The Most High therefore resolved that the heavenly Lady would be the first Disciple of his school and the firstborn Daughter of the new law of grace, the most perfect copy of his ideals, and the most pliant material upon which, as on liquid wax, would be set the seal of his doctrine and sanctity, so the Son and the Mother would be the two true tablets of the new law to be taught

to the world (Ex. 31:18). And to achieve this most high end foreseen in the divine wisdom, He manifested to Her all the mysteries of the evangelical law and of his doctrine, and this was the subject of his instructions from the time of their return from Egypt until his public preaching, as we shall see in the course of this History. In these hidden sacraments the incarnate Word and his holy Mother occupied themselves during the twenty-three years of their stay in Nazareth. Since all of this concerned the heavenly Mother alone (whose life the holy Evangelists did not profess to narrate), the writers of the Gospel made no mention of it except that which was related of the child Jesus when, in his twelfth year, He absented Himself in Jerusalem (Lk. 2:43ff.). During all those years most holy Mary alone was the Disciple of her onlybegotten Son; hence, in addition to the ineffable gifts of grace and sanctity which He had conferred upon Her until their arrival in Nazareth, He infused into Her new light and made Her a participant in his divine knowledge, depositing and engraving into her Heart the whole law and doctrine of grace which to the end of the world was to be dispensed by his holy Church. This was effected in such an exalted manner that no human thought or words can express it, and the great Lady was thereby filled with such wisdom and knowledge that it would suffice to enlighten many worlds, if such existed, with his teaching.

4. In order to raise this edifice in the most pure Heart of his most holy Mother above all that is not God, the Lord laid its foundations accordingly, trying the strength of her love and all her other virtues. For this purpose the Lord withdrew Himself, causing Her to lose Him from her sight, which until then had caused Her to revel in continual joy and delight. I do not say the Lord left Her bodily, yet still remaining with Her and in Her by an ineffable presence and grace He hid Himself from her interior sight and suspended the tokens of his most sweet affection. The heavenly Lady in the meanwhile knew not the inward cause of this behavior, since the Lord gave Her no explanation; moreover, her divine Son, without any forewarning, showed Himself very reserved and withdrew from her society. Many times He retired and spoke but few words to Her, and even these with great earnestness and majesty. But what was apt to afflict Her most was the eclipse of the light by which She was accustomed to see reflected as in a crystal the human operations of his most pure soul. This light was suddenly dimmed so much that She could not thenceforth distinguish it as a living copy for her own actions.

5. This unannounced and unexpected change was the crucible in which the purest gold of the love of our Queen was cleansed and assayed. Surprised at what was happening, She immediately took refuge in the humble opinion She had of Herself, deeming Herself unworthy of the vision of the Lord, who had now hidden Himself. She attributed all of this to her lack of correspondence and to her ingratitude for the blessings She had obtained from the most generous and exalted Father of mercies. The most prudent Queen did not feel so much the privation of his delightful caresses as the dread of having displeased Him and fallen short in his service; this was the arrow which pierced her Heart with grief. One filled with such true and noble love could not feel less, for all the delight of love is founded in the pleasure and satisfaction given by the one who loves to the one beloved, and therefore he cannot rest when he suspects the beloved is not contented or pleased. The loving sighs of his Mother were highly pleasing to her most holy Son. He was enamored with Her anew, and the tender affection of his only and chosen One wounded his Heart (Cant. 4:9). But whenever the sweet Mother sought Him out in order to hold converse with Him, He continued to show exterior reserve (Ib. 3:1). Just as the flame of a forge or a conflagration is intensified by the application of insufficient water, so the flame of love in the Heart of the sweetest Mother was fanned to an intense blaze by this adversity.

6. The single-hearted Dove exercised Herself in heroic acts of all the virtues. She humbled Herself below the dust; She revered her Son in deepest adoration; She blessed the Father, thanking Him for his admirable works and blessings, and conforming Herself to his desires and pleasure; She sought to know his will in order to fulfill it in all things; She was inflamed in love, in faith, and in hope; and in all her actions and in all circumstances this most fragrant spikenard gave forth the odor of sweetness for Him, the King of kings, who rested in her Heart as in his flowery and perfumed couch (Ib. 1:11). She persevered in her tearful prayers with continual sighing and longing from her inmost Heart; She poured forth her prayers in the presence of the Lord, and recounted her tribulation before the throne of God (Ps. 141:3). And many times She broke out in words of ineffable sweetness and loving sorrow, such as these:

7. "Creator of all the universe (She said), eternal and almighty God, Thou art infinite in thy wisdom and goodness, and incomprehensible in essence and perfection. Well do I know my sighs are not hidden to Thee, and Thou knowest the wound which pierces my heart. If as a useless handmaid I have fallen short in thy service and in pleasing Thee, why, O life of my soul, dost Thou not afflict me and chastise me with all the pains and sufferings of this my mortal life so I may not see the severity of thy countenance, though it is merited by she who hath offended Thee? All punishments would be less than this, for my heart cannot bear thy displeasure. Thou alone, O Lord, art my life, my happiness, my glory and my treasure. My heart neither esteems nor considers anything of all Thou hast created, and their images have not entered into my soul except to magnify thy greatness and to acknowledge Thee as Creator and Lord of all (Ps. 72:25). Yet what shall I do, my Good and my Lord, if I lack the Light of my eyes (Ps. 37:11), the goal of my desires, the north star of my pilgrimage, the Life which gives me being, and the Being which nourishes me and gives me life? *Who will give a fountain of tears to my eyes* (Jer. 9:1) so I may weep for not having duly profited by the many blessings I have received, having been so ungrateful in the return due to Thee? My Master, my Light, my Guide and Teacher on the way, who by thy most exalted and perfect operations dost direct my fragile and lukewarm undertakings, how can I regulate my life if Thou fail me as my model? Who shall guide me securely through this desert? What shall I do and whither shall I turn if Thou dost deprive me of thy assistance?"

8. Nor did this wounded Deer rest satisfied therewith, but thirsting after the purest fountains of grace (Ps. 41:2) She addressed Herself also to the holy Angels and held long conferences and colloquies with them, saying: "Sovereign princes and intimate friends of the highest King, my guardians, by thy secure happiness in seeing always his divine countenance (Mt. 18:10) in the inaccessible light (I Tim. 6:16) I ask thee to tell me the cause of his displeasure if such He has conceived against me. Also clamor for me in his royal presence, so through thy prayers He may pardon me if I have offended Him. Remind Him, my friends, that I am but dust (Job 10:9), though I am formed by his hands and have upon me the seal of his image; beseech Him not to forget his needy one to the end so she may confess and magnify his Name (Ps. 73:19). Ask Him to give back to me the breath of life which fails me at the dread of having lost his love. Tell me, how and by what means can I please Him and regain the joy of his countenance?" The holy Angels answered: "Our Queen and Sovereign, dilated is thy Heart (Ps. 4:2), so Thou canst not be vanquished by tribulation, and none is so able as Thee to understand how near the Lord is to the afflicted who call upon Him (Ps. 90:15). Without doubt He recognizes thy affection and does not despise thy loving sighs (Ps. 37:10). Thou shalt always find Him a kind Father, and his Onlybegotten a most affectionate Son looking upon thy affliction." "Will it perhaps be presumption (replied the most loving Mother) to appear before Him and prostrate myself before

Him, asking his pardon for any fault He might find in me? What shall I do? What relief can I find in my uncertainties?” And the holy Princes answered: “A humble heart does not displease our King (Ps. 50:19); upon it He fixes his loving regard, and He is never displeased by the clamors of those who act in love” (Ps. 101:18).

9. These colloquies and answers of the holy Angels somewhat gladdened and consoled their Queen and Lady, since they confirmed Her in her own interior conviction that these sweetest sighs would excite the special love and delight of the Most High. They would not speak more openly because the Lord on his own account desired to prolong these delights (Prov. 8:31). Though her most holy Son, because of his natural love toward his Mother (and only a Mother, not having a human father), was often deeply touched with compassion at seeing Her so afflicted, yet He would not show any signs thereof, hiding his compassion under a severe countenance. Sometimes when the most loving Mother called Him to his meals He would delay; at other times He would partake of them without looking at Her or speaking to Her. Yet although the great Lady at such times shed many tears and lovingly sighed in her Heart, She always put upon Herself such restraint and weighed all her actions so wisely that if it were possible for God to give way to wonder (which certainly He cannot) He would have yielded to such a feeling in the presence of such great plenitude of sanctity and perfections in this mere creature. Insofar as He was man the child Jesus delighted especially in seeing his divine love and grace bring forth such abundant fruits in his Virgin Mother. The holy Angels sang to Him new hymns of praise for this admirable and unheard-of prodigy of virtues.

10. St. Joseph, at the request of the loving Mother, had made a couch which She covered with a single blanket and upon which the child Jesus rested and took his sleep, for from the time in which He had left the cradle when they were yet in Egypt He would not accept any other bed or more covering. Although He did not stretch Himself out on this couch, nor even always made use of it, He sometimes reclined in a sitting posture upon it, resting upon a poor pillow made of wool by the same Lady. When She spoke of preparing for Him a better resting place her most holy Son answered that the only couch upon which He was to be stretched out was the bed of the cross, in order to teach men by his example (I Peter 2:21) that no one can enter eternal rest by things beloved of Babylon, and to suffer is our true relief in mortal life. From then on the heavenly Lady imitated Him in this manner of taking rest with new earnestness and attention. When at night the time for repose came the Mistress of humility was accustomed to prostrate Herself before her Son as He reclined on his couch, asking his pardon for not having fulfilled all her duties in serving Him, and for not having been sufficiently grateful for the blessings of the day. She poured out her gratitude anew and with many tears acknowledged Him as true God and Redeemer of the world, and She would not rise from the ground until her Son commanded Her and gave Her his blessing. This same behavior She observed also in the morning, requesting her divine Teacher and Master to impose upon Her all that She was to do during the day in his service, which His Majesty did with tokens of great love.

11. But now He changed his bearing and manner toward Her. When the most candid Mother approached to reverence and adore Him as She was accustomed, though her tears and sighs issued ever more abundantly from her inmost Heart, He would not answer Her a word but listened to Her with severity, commanding Her to go. To see her Son, true God and true man, so different in his behavior and so distant in his actions, so sparing in his words and so changed in all his exterior bearing, ineffably affected the purest and dovelike Heart of the loving Mother. The heavenly Lady examined her interior, searched all the conditions, circumstances and sequence of her actions, and racked her memory in her inquiry into the celestial workings of her

soul and faculties, and though She could find no shadow of darkness where all was light, holiness, purity and grace, yet since She knew, as Job says, that neither the heavens nor the stars are pure in the eyes of God (Job 15:15; 25:5), and since He finds fault even in the angelic spirits (Ib. 4:18), the great Queen feared lest She had overlooked some defect which was known to the Lord. By this misgiving She suffered agonies of love; for since love is strong as death (Cant. 8:6), though She was filled with the plenitude of wisdom this most noble emulation caused in Her sorrows of inextinguishable pain. This trial of our Queen lasted many days, during which her most holy Son looked upon Her with incomparable pleasure, and by which He raised Her to the position of a Teacher of all the creatures. He rewarded her loyalty and exquisite love with abundant graces in addition to those which She already possessed. Then happened what I shall relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

12. My daughter, I see thee desirous of being a disciple of my most holy Son, since now thou hast understood and described my own behavior in this regard. For thy consolation take notice that He has exercised this office of Teacher not only once and not only at the time when He taught his holy doctrine while yet in mortal flesh, as is related in the Gospels, but continues to be the Teacher of souls to the end of the world (Mt. 28:20). He admonishes, instructs and inspires them, urging them to put into practice whatever is most perfect and most holy. Thus He acts toward all without exception, though according to his divine ordainment and the disposition and attentiveness of each soul everyone receives more or less of the benefits (Mt. 11:5). If thou hadst always applied this truth thou wouldst have known by abundant experience that the Lord does not refuse to act as the Teacher of the poor, the despised, and the sinners, if they desire to listen to his secret doctrines. Since thou dost now desire to know what disposition He requires of thee in order to have Him teach Thee to the extent to which thy heart aspires, I shall in his name inform thee of it. I assure thee if He finds thee well disposed He shall, as a true and wise Teacher, communicate to thee the plenitude of his wisdom and enlightenment.

13. First of all thou must keep thy conscience pure, undefiled, serene and quiet, keeping a constant watch against falling into any sin or imperfection throughout all the events of this life. At the same time thou must withdraw thyself and disentangle thyself from all that is earthly in such a manner that, as I have at other times admonished thee, there remain in thee neither image nor memory of any human or visible thing, but only sincerity, serenity, and purity of heart. When thou hast thus cleared thy interior of the images and shadows of earthly things, then pay attention to the Lord, inclining thy ears as a loving daughter who forgets her people of this vain Babylon, the house of her father Adam (Ps. 44:11), and all the bad habits of sin; I assure thee He shall then speak to thee words of eternal life (Jn. 6:69). It shall be thy duty to listen to Him with reverence and humble gratitude, to appreciate his teachings, and to follow them in practice with all diligence and punctuality. Nothing can be hidden from this great Master and Teacher (Heb. 4:13), and He withdraws in disgust from those who are ungrateful and disobedient. No one must think these withdrawals of the Most High always happen in the same way as they happened to me, for the Lord did not withdraw from me because of any fault of mine but out of exceeding love. He is accustomed to withdraw from other creatures in order to visit them with merited punishment for their many sins, outrages, ingratitude and negligences.

14. Therefore, my daughter, in gauging thy reverence and esteem for the teaching and enlightenment of thy divine Master and for my own exhortations, thou must take into account thy

omissions and faults. Moderate thy inordinate fears, and do not any more doubt it is the Lord who speaks to thee and teaches thee, since his doctrine of itself gives testimony of its own truth and assures thee that God is its Author, for thou dost see it is holy, pure, perfect, and without error. It inculcates whatever is best and reprehends thy least fault, and it is moreover approved by thy instructors and spiritual directors. Since I am thy Teacher I desire thee also, in imitation of me, to come every morning and night humbly and sorrowfully to confess thy faults so I may intercede for thee and as thy Mother obtain for thee the pardon of the Lord. As soon as thou dost commit any imperfection acknowledge it without delay and ask pardon of the Lord, promising amendment. If thou dost attend to these things which I here tell thee, thou shalt be a disciple of the Most High and of me as thou dost desire to be. Purity of soul and divine grace is the most exquisite and adequate preparation for partaking of the influences of divine light and science, and the Redeemer of the world communicates it to his true disciples.