

CHAPTER V

After Three Days Most Holy Mary and St. Joseph Find the Child Jesus in the Temple Contending with the Doctors of the Law.

47. In the previous chapter (36) a partial answer might be found to the question raised by some regarding how the heavenly Queen, who was so diligent and solicitous in attending upon and serving her most holy Son, could ever so far lose Him out of sight as to leave Him in Jerusalem. Although it would be a sufficient answer to say the Lord himself brought it about, yet I will now explain more fully how it could have happened without any voluntary negligence or oversight of the loving Mother. It is certain that besides availing Himself of the great concourse of people our Lord was obliged to use also supernatural means to elude the attention of his solicitous Mother, for without it She could no more have lost sight of Him than of the sun that lit her way. Therefore at the parting of the men and the women which I mentioned the mighty Lord visited his heavenly Mother with an intellectual vision of the Divinity, which with divine power centered and withdrew all her faculties toward her interior. She thus remained so abstracted, inflamed, and deprived of her senses that She could make use of them only insofar as necessary to pursue her way; regarding all the rest She was entirely lost in the sweetness and consolation of the divine vision (Cant. 5:1). St. Joseph was guided in his behavior by the circumstances already mentioned, although he too was elevated in a most exalted contemplation, which made more easy and mysterious his error in regard to the whereabouts of the Child. In this manner He absented Himself from both of them, remaining in Jerusalem. When after a considerable time the Queen came to Herself and found Herself without the company of her most holy Son, She supposed Him to be with his reputed father (Lk. 2:44).

48. It was very near to the gate of the city that the divine Child turned and hastened back through the streets. Foreseeing in his divine foreknowledge all that was to happen, He offered it up to his eternal Father for the benefit of souls. He asked for alms during these three days in order to ennoble from that time on humble begging as the firstborn of holy poverty. He visited the hospitals of the poor, consoling them and giving them the alms which He had received. Secretly He restored bodily health to some and spiritual health to many by enlightening them interiorly and leading them back to the way of salvation. For some of the benefactors who gave Him alms He performed these wonders with a greater abundance of grace and light, thus fulfilling from that time on the promise which He was afterwards to make to his Church, namely *he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet; and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man* (Mt. 10:41).

49. Having thus busied Himself with these and other works of his Father, He went to the temple. On the day which the Evangelist St. Luke mentions (2:46) the rabbis, who were the doctors and teachers of the law, gathered together in a certain part of the temple in order to confer among themselves concerning some doubts and points of Scriptures. On this occasion the coming of the Messiah was discussed, for due to the report of the wonderful events which had spread about since the birth of the Baptist and the visit of the Kings of the east, the rumor of the coming of the Redeemer and of his being already in the world, though yet unknown, had gained ground among the Jews. They were all seated in their places filled with the sense of authority customary to those who are teachers and considered as learned. The child Jesus came to the meeting of these distinguished men, and He who was the King of kings and Lord of lords (Apoc.

19:16), the infinite Wisdom himself (I Cor. 1:24) who corrects the wise (Wis. 7:15), presented Himself before the teachers of this world as a humble disciple, giving them to understand that He had come to hear the discussion and inform Himself regarding the question they were treating, namely whether the Messiah had already come, or if not, the time in which He would come into the world.

50. The opinions of the scribes were much at variance on this question, some of them answering in the affirmative, others in the negative. Those in the negative quoted some testimonies of Holy Scriptures and prophecies with the coarse interpretation reprehended by the Apostle, namely killing the spirit by the letter (II Cor. 3:6). They maintained the Messiah was to come with kingly magnificence and display in order to secure the liberty of his people by the exercise of great power, rescuing them in a temporal manner from the slavery of the gentiles, and yet there were no indications of this power and freedom in the present state of the Hebrews, and no possibility of throwing off the yoke of the Romans. This outward circumstance was an argument of great force among this carnal and blinded people, for they presumed the coming greatness and majesty of the promised Messiah and the Redemption was intended for themselves only, and they believed this Redemption to be temporal and earthly, just as even now the Jews, in the obscurity which envelops their hearts (Is. 6:10), continue to believe; for to the present day they have not yet come to realize that the glory, the majesty, and the power of the Redeemer, and the liberty which He is to bring to the world, is not of an earthly, temporal and perishable kind, but heavenly, spiritual and eternal, and that it is not intended alone for the Jews, although offered to them before all other nations, but indiscriminately for the whole human race descended from Adam (II Cor. 3:15).

51. The Teacher of truth, Jesus, foresaw the discussion would end with the confirmation of this error, for though some of the learned men inclined to the contrary opinion they were but few, and they had now been silenced by the authority and arguments of the others. Since the Lord had come into the world in order to give testimony to the truth (Jn. 18:37), which was He himself, He would not on this occasion, when it was so important to manifest the truth, allow the deceit and error opposed to it to be confirmed and established by the authority of the learned. His measureless charity could not pass by unnoticed this ignorance of his works and high purposes in these men who were set as teachers of the people in matters concerning eternal life and its Author, our Redeemer. Therefore the Child God presented Himself to the disputants, manifesting the grace poured out over his lips (Ps. 44:3). He stepped into their midst with exceeding majesty and grace as one who would propose some doubt or solution. By his pleasing appearance He awakened in the hearts of these learned men a desire to hear Him attentively.

52. The Child God spoke to them as follows: "The doubt which has been addressed concerning the coming of the Messiah, as well as thy solution, I have heard and understood completely. In order to propose my difficulty regarding this determination, I presuppose what the Prophets say, that his coming shall be in great power and majesty, which has also been confirmed by the testimonies brought forward. For Isaias says He shall be our Lawgiver and King who shall save his people (Is. 33:22); David, that He shall crush all his enemies (Ps. 96:3); Daniel, that all tribes and nations shall serve Him (Dan. 7:14); Ecclesiasticus, that He shall come with a great multitude of the saints (Ecclus. 24:3ff.). All the Prophets and Scriptures are full of similar promises, manifesting his characteristics clearly and decisively enough for all those who study them with enlightened attention. But the doubt arises from the comparison of these with other passages in the Prophets, since all of them must be equally true, though due to their brevity they may appear to contradict each other. Hence they must agree with each other in another sense

which can and must be found equally applicable in all the passages. How then shall we understand what this same Isaias says of Him, that He shall come from the land of the living, and *who shall declare his generation* (Is. 53:8)? That He shall be satiated with reproach, that He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and that He shall not open his mouth (Ib. 7)? Jeremias states the enemies of the Messiah shall join hands to persecute Him and mix poison with his bread, and shall wipe out his name from the earth, although they shall not prevail in their attempt (Jer. 11:19); David, that He shall be the reproach of the people and of men, and shall be trodden under foot and despised as a worm (Ps. 21:7-8); Zachary, that He shall come meek and humble seated upon an insignificant beast (Zach. 9:9). All the Prophets say the same concerning the signs of the promised Messiah.

53. "Hence (added the divine Child) how shall it be possible to reconcile these prophecies if we suppose the Messiah is to come with the power and majesty of arms in order to conquer all the kings and monarchs by violence and foreign bloodshed? We cannot fail to see that He is to come twice, once to redeem the world and a second time to judge it. The prophecies must be applied to both these comings, giving to each one its right explanation. Since the purposes of these comings are different, so must also the conditions be different, for He is not to exercise the same office in both, but widely divergent and opposite offices. In the first advent He is to overthrow the demon, hurling him from his sovereignty over souls obtained through the first sin, and therefore He must first render satisfaction to God for the whole human race; He shall also teach men by his word and example the way of eternal life, how they are to overcome their enemies, serve and adore their God and Redeemer, and how they must correspond to the gifts and use well the blessings of his right hand. All these requirements the Messiah must fulfill in his first coming. The second coming is for the purpose of exacting an account from all men in the General Judgment, giving to each one the return for his works, good or bad, and chastising his enemies in his wrath and indignation. This is what the Prophets say of his second coming.

54. "Accordingly, when we wish to understand how his first coming shall be in power and majesty, or as David says, that He shall reign from sea to sea (Ps. 71:8), that in his advent He shall be glorious, as said by the other Prophets (Is. 52:6ff.; Jer. 30:9; Ez. 37:22ff.; Zach. 9:10), all this cannot be interpreted as referring to visible and terrestrial sovereignty, with all its outward show of pomp and majesty, but of a spiritual reign in a new Church, which would be extended over all the earth with sovereign power and riches of grace and virtue in opposition to the demon. By this interpretation the whole of Scriptures becomes clear, while in another sense its different parts cannot be made to harmonize. That the people of the Jews are under the dominion of the Romans and are in no condition to restore their sovereignty not only cannot be held as a proof of his not having come, but on the contrary it is an infallible sign that He is already come into the world, for our patriarch Jacob has pointed out this very sign for the guidance of his posterity, commanding them to expect the Messiah as soon as they would see the tribe of Juda deprived of the sceptre and sovereignty of Israel (Gen. 49:10), and you must confess that neither Juda nor any other tribe of Israel can hope to recover or hold it. The same is also proved by the weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9:25), which must certainly now be complete. And he who has memory can recall what was heard spoken of a few years ago, that a great brightness was seen in Bethlehem at midnight, and some poor shepherds heard the message of the newborn Redeemer, and soon after some Kings of the east came guided by a star, seeking the King of the Jews in order to adore Him. All this had been prophesied. Herod, the father of Archelaus, believing it an established fact, took away the life of so many children, hoping thereby to destroy the newborn King whom he feared as his rival in the government of Israel."

55. Other reasons did the child Jesus give, and asking them questions He taught with efficacy and divine power. The scribes and learned men who heard Him were all dumbfounded. Convinced by his arguments they looked at each other and in great astonishment asked: “What miracle is this? And what a prodigy of a Boy! From whence has He come, and who is this Child?” But though thus astonished, they did not recognize or suspect who it was who thus taught and enlightened them concerning such an important truth. During this time, and before the Child God had finished his reasoning, his most holy Mother and St. Joseph her most chaste spouse arrived, just in time to hear Him advance his last reasons. When He had finished all the teachers of the law arose with stupendous amazement (Lk. 2:47). The heavenly Lady, absorbed in joy, approached her most loving Son, and in the presence of the whole assembly spoke to Him the words recorded by St. Luke: *Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing* (Ib. 48). This loving complaint the heavenly Mother uttered with equal reverence and affection, adoring Him as God and manifesting her maternal affliction. The Lord answered (Ib. 49): *How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?*

56. The Evangelist says they did not understand the mystery of these words (Ib. 50), for it was hidden at the time to most holy Mary and St. Joseph, and this for two reasons. On the one hand, the interior joy of now reaping what they had sown in so much sorrow, and the visible presence of their precious Treasure, entirely filled the faculties of their souls; and on the other hand, the time for the full comprehension of what He had addressed in this dispute had not yet arrived for them. Moreover, for the most solicitous Queen there was another hindrance just at that time, for the veil concealing the interior of her most holy Son had again intervened, and was not manifested to Her until later. The learned men departed, commenting in their amazement upon the wonderful event by which they had been privileged to hear the teaching of eternal Wisdom, although they did not recognize it. Being thus left almost alone with her most holy Son, the Blessed Mother said with maternal affection: “Give permission, my Son (She said this embracing Him in her arms), for my stricken heart to manifest its sorrow and pain, so it may not die of grief as long as it can be of profit in thy service. Do not cast me off from thy sight, but accept me as thy slave. If it was my negligence which deprived me of thy presence, pardon me and make me worthy of thy company, and do not punish me with thy absence.” The divine Child received Her with signs of pleasure and offered Himself as her Teacher and Companion until the proper time would arrive. Thus was the dovelike and affectionate Heart of the great Lady appeased, and they departed for Nazareth.

57. But at some distance from Jerusalem, when they were alone upon the road, the most prudent Lady fell on her knees before her Son and adored Him, asking his benediction, for She had not thus revered Him openly in the presence of the people in the temple, so aware and attentive was She to lose no occasion in which She could act according to the plenitude of her sanctity. With loving tenderness the child Jesus raised Her from the ground and spoke to Her words of sweetest comfort. Immediately the veil fell, revealing anew his most holy soul with greater depth and clearness than ever before. Then the heavenly Mother read and perceived in the interior of her most holy Son all the mysteries of his doings during those three days in Jerusalem. She also understood all that had passed in the dispute with the doctors, what the child Jesus had said, and why He did not manifest Himself more clearly as the true Messiah. He revealed many other sacramental secrets to his Virgin Mother, depositing them within Her as in an archive of all the treasures of the incarnate Word, so He could thus receive for all of them the return of honor and praise due to Him as the Author of such great wonders; and the Virgin Mother fulfilled all of

this with gratitude and the approbation of the Lord himself. Then She asked Him to rest a while in the field and partake of some nourishment, and He accepted it from the hands of the great Lady, who with all care administered it as the Mother of Wisdom himself (Ecclus. 24:24).

58. During the rest of the journey the heavenly Mother discoursed with her sweetest Son on the mysteries interiorly manifested to Her concerning the discussion with the teachers, and He repeated by word of mouth what He had shown Her interiorly. In particular He told Her these doctors had not recognized Him as the Messiah because they were inflated and arrogant in their own knowledge. Their understanding was obscured by the darkness of their pride, and thus they could not perceive the divine light, though the Child God put it forth to them in such great profusion; and his reasons would have sufficiently convinced them if the affection of the will was disposed to receive them with humility and desire for the truth. Because of these obstacles they saw it not, though it was open before their eyes. Our Redeemer converted many souls to the way of salvation on this journey, and since his most holy Mother was with Him He used Her as an instrument of his wonderful works. By means of her most prudent words and holy admonitions He enlightened the hearts of all to whom She spoke. They restored health to many of the sick, consoled the afflicted and sorrowful, and everywhere they scattered grace and mercies without ever losing an occasion for doing good. Since I have described more particularly some of the wonders performed during other journeys (*Inc.* 624, 645, 667, 704) I shall not stop to describe any more here, for many chapters and much time would be necessary to relate them all, and there are other things more to the point to be related in this History.

59. They arrived at Nazareth where they occupied themselves in what I shall record later on. The evangelist St. Luke compendiously mentions all these mysteries in few words, saying the child Jesus was subject to his parents, namely most holy Mary and St. Joseph, that his heavenly Mother noted and preserved within her Heart all these events (Lk. 2:51), and that *Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men* (Ib. 52), concerning which, as far as my understanding goes, I shall speak later on. Just now I desire only to mention that the humility and obedience of our God and Master toward his parents was the admiration of the Angels; and so was the dignity and excellence of his most blessed Mother, who thus merited that the incarnate God subject and resign Himself to her care to the extent that She, with the assistance of St. Joseph, governed and ruled Him as her own. Although his subjection and obedience was to a certain extent a natural result of her Motherhood, yet in order to make proper use of this maternal right and superiority a different grace was necessary than the one by which She conceived and gave birth to Him. The graces necessary for such ministry and office were given to most holy Mary in such abundance that they overflowed into the soul of St. Joseph, making him worthy of being the reputed father of Jesus and the head of the Holy Family.

60. To the obedience and subjection of her most holy Son the great Lady on her part responded by heroic works. Among her other excellences She conceived as it were an incomprehensible humility and a most heartfelt gratitude for having regained the companionship of her Son. This blessing, of which the heavenly Queen deemed Herself unworthy, vastly increased in her most pure Heart her love and solicitude in serving her divine Son. And She was so constant in showing her gratitude, so punctual and solicitous in serving Him, kneeling before Him and lowering Herself to the dust, that it excited the admiration of the highest Seraphim; moreover, She sought with the closest attention to imitate Him in all his actions as they became known to Her, and exerted Herself most carefully to copy and reproduce them in her own life. The plenitude of her perfection wounded the Heart of Christ our Lord (Cant. 4:9), and according to our way of speaking held Him bound to Her with chains of invincible love (Osee 11:4). His

being thus bound as God and as Son to this heavenly Princess gave rise to such an interchange and divine reciprocity of intense love as surpasses all created understanding, for into the ocean of the soul of Mary entered all the vast floods of the graces and blessings of the incarnate Word, and this ocean did not overflow (Eccles. 1:7) because her soul contained the depth and expanse necessary to receive them. But these currents turned back to their source like ebbs and tides of the Divinity held between two shores, the Son of God and his Mother. This explains the many repetitions of the humble acknowledgment of the Spouse: *My Beloved to me, and I to Him who feedeth among the lilies, till the day break, and the shadows retire* (Cant. 2:16-17). And elsewhere: *I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me* (Ib. 6:2); *I to my Beloved, and his turning is towards me* (Ib. 7:10).

61. The fire of divine love which burned in the Heart of our Redeemer, and which He came to spread upon the earth, finding material so prepared and ready at hand as was that of the pure Heart of Mary, produced such effects as only the Lord Himself, who was the Author of them, could properly estimate. There is but one thing which I desire to record, having received an understanding thereof, that in the outward demonstration of his love for his most holy Mother He guided Himself not by the natural affections and inclinations of a Son, but by her capability of meriting as a pilgrim in mortal life; for if in these demonstrations He would allow his filial love for such a Mother to have full sway He well knew He would impede her merits by forcing upon Her the continual enjoyment of the delights of her Beloved. Hence the Lord restrained to a certain extent the human activity of his love and permitted his Mother, though She had reached the pinnacle of sanctity, to engage in meritorious labor and suffering by stopping now and then the flow of visible favors from his divine humanity. In his daily conversation the divine Child therefore maintained a certain reserve and moderation. Hence, though the most assiduous Lady was so solicitous in serving and ministering to Him in all his necessities, her most holy Son indulged in no such outward tokens of his filial love as would have been an adequate return for her loving service.

TEACHING OF MARY MOST HOLY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

62. My daughter, all the works of my most holy Son and my own actions are full of mysterious instruction and doctrine for the mortals who contemplate them diligently and reverently. The Lord absented Himself from me so by seeking Him in sorrow and tears I could find Him again in joy (Ps. 125:5) and fruit for my spirit. I desire thee to imitate me in this mystery and seek Him with such earnestness as to be consumed with a continual longing, without ever in thy whole life coming to any rest until thou dost hold Him and canst lose Him no more (Cant. 3:4). So thou mayest understand better this sacrament of the Lord, remember the infinite Wisdom made men capable of his eternal felicity and placed them on the way to this happiness, but left them in doubt of its attainment as long as they have not yet acquired it, and thus filled them with joyful hope and sorrowful fear of its final acquisition. This solicitude engenders in men a lifelong fear and abhorrence of sin by which alone they can be deprived of beatitude; it thus prevents them from being ensnared and misled by the corporeal and visible things of this earth. This solicitude the Creator assists by adding to the natural reasoning powers faith and hope, which are the spurs of their love toward seeking and finding their last end. Besides these virtues and others infused at Baptism, He sends his inspirations and helps to keep the soul awake in the absence of its Lord, and prevent forgetfulness of Him and of itself while deprived of his amiable presence. Thus the

soul pursues the right course until it finds the great goal, where all its inclination and desires shall be satiated (Ps. 16:15).

63. Hence thou canst estimate the listless ignorance of mortals, and how few stop to consider the mysterious order of their creation and justification, and all the works of the Almighty tending toward this exalted end. From this forgetfulness flow so many evils endured by men, while they appropriate so many earthly goods and deceitful delights as if they could ever find in them their ultimate end. The height of perversity opposed to the order of the Creator is that mortals in this transitory and short life rejoice in visible things as if they were their last end, while they ought on the contrary to make use of creatures to gain and not lose the highest Good. Do thou therefore, my dearest, be mindful of this dangerous human folly. Consider all delights and joys of the world as insanity, its laughing as sorrow (Eccles. 2:2), and sensible enjoyment as self-deceit and the source of foolishness which intoxicates the heart and hinders and destroys all true wisdom. Live in constant and holy fear of losing eternal life, and rejoice in nothing except in the Lord, until thou dost obtain full possession of Him. Flee from conversation with men and dread its dangers. If sometimes God places thee in the way of human conversation for his glory and by obedience, though thou must trust in his protection yet never be remiss or careless in guarding thyself from contamination. Do not trust thy natural disposition when there is question of friendship and close interaction with others; in this consists for thee a greater danger, for the Lord has given thee a pleasing and mild disposition so thou mayest naturally incline toward Him, resist none of his intentions, and make a proper return for the blessings bestowed upon thee. But as soon as thou givest entrance to creatures into thy heart thou shalt certainly be carried away and alienated by them from the highest Good, and thou shalt pervert the intentions and operations of his infinite wisdom in thy behalf. It would certainly be most unworthy of thee to divert that which is most noble in thy nature toward an unseemly end. Raise thyself above all created things and above thyself (Lam. 3:28). Lift up the operations of thy faculties, and represent to them the most noble object of the being of God, of my beloved Son and thy Spouse, who is *beautiful above the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3), and love Him with all thy heart, soul and mind.