

CHAPTER XXIII

The Occupations of the Virgin Mother During the Absence of Her Most Holy Son, and Her Colloquies with Her Holy Angels.

254. When the Redeemer of the world had left the bodily presence of his most loving Mother, She felt Herself as it were in an eclipse or under a shadow, caused by the transposition of the clear Sun of justice which had illumined and rejoiced Her; however, the interior gaze of her most holy soul lost not a single degree of the divine light in which it was entirely bathed and in which it was raised above the burning love of the Seraphim. Since all the operations of her faculties during the absence of the most holy humanity of her Son concerned themselves with the incomparable Divinity, She ordered all her doings so retired within her dwelling and separated from all human interaction She could apply Herself to the contemplation and praise of the Lord. She wanted to give Herself up entirely to the exercise of prayer and petition so the seed of the divine word and doctrine which the Lord was to plant into the hearts of men might not be lost because of their hardness and ingratitude, and so it might not fail to give abundant fruit of eternal life and the salvation of souls. By means of her infused knowledge She knew the intentions of the incarnate Word, and therefore the most prudent Lady resolved to not converse with any human creature in order to imitate Him in his fasting and retirement in the desert, as I shall relate farther on (279), for in all things She was a living image of his works whether He was absent or present.

255. Shut up in her house during all the days in which her divine Son was absent, the heavenly Lady spent her time in exercises of devotion. Her prayers were so ardent that She shed tears of blood in weeping over the sins of men. She genuflected and prostrated Herself upon the ground more than two hundred times each day, and this was an exercise which She practiced with special earnestness during all her life as an exterior manifestation of her humility, charity, reverence, and worship of God; of this practice I shall speak many times in the course of this History (*Inc.* 180; *Cor.* 614; etc.). Thus cooperating with her absent Son and Redeemer She interceded so powerfully and efficaciously with the eternal Father that because of her merits and her presence here upon this earth (according to our way of speaking) He forgot the sins of all mortals who were then making themselves unworthy of the preaching and doctrine of his most holy Son. Hence it was most holy Mary who cleared away this hindrance by the clamors of her burning charity; She was the Mediatrix who merited and gained for us the blessing of being taught by our Lord himself and receiving the law of the Gospel from the mouth of the Redeemer himself.

256. The time which remained to the great Queen after She descended from her most high and eminent contemplation and petitions She spent in conferences and colloquies with her holy Angels, to whom the Lord had given anew the command to attend upon Her in bodily forms during all the time in which He was to be absent, so in that form they could serve his Tabernacle and guard the holy City of his habitation. The ministers of God obeyed most diligently and served their Queen with admirable and befitting reverence. Since love is so active and so impatient of the absence and privation of the object beloved, it finds its greatest comfort in speaking of its sorrow and rehearsing the cause of it, in renewing again and again the memory and discussing the excellences and conditions of the beloved, and by these conferences it distracts its sorrow and curbs or diverts its grief, substituting for the original the images of the well-beloved retained in the memory. Such was also the course pursued by the most loving

Mother of our truest and highest Good, for while her faculties were overwhelmed by the immense ocean of the Divinity She felt not the bodily absence of her Son and Lord; yet as soon as She again recovered the use of her senses, which had been accustomed to his amiable presence and now found Herself deprived of it, She immediately felt the irresistible force of her most intense, chaste and sincere love, unfathomed by any creature. It would have been impossible for nature to suffer such pain and still retain life had it not in Her been divinely comforted.

257. In order to give some relief for the natural sorrow of her Heart, She turned to the holy Angels and said: “Ye diligent ministers of the Most High, fashioned by the hands of my Beloved, my friends and companions, give me information about my cherished Son and Master; tell me where He tarries, and inform Him that I am dying due to the lack of his life-giving presence. O sweet Good and Love of my soul! Where art Thou, more beautiful than all the sons of men? Where dost Thou lay thy head? Where rests thy most delicate and holy humanity from its fatigues? Who is there to attend upon Thee, light of my eyes? And how can my eyes cease their tears without the clear Sun which illumined them? Where, O my Son, canst Thou find repose? And where shall this lonely and poor little bee find Thee? What course shall this little bark pursue in the vast billows of this ocean of love? Where shall I find peace? O Beloved of my desires, to forget thy presence is not possible to me! How then can it be possible to live with the mere memory of Thee without possessing thy true presence? What shall I do? O who shall console me and lend me his company in this bitter solitude? Whom shall I seek among creatures, as long as Thou art absent, who art the only One and all that my heart yearns after in its love? Sovereign spirits, tell me: What is my Lord and my Beloved doing? Inform me of his exterior movements, and omit nothing of his interior doings to the extent manifested to thee in the mirror of his divinity and his face. Point out to me all his footsteps so I may follow and imitate Him.”

258. The holy Angels obeyed their Queen, consoling Her in the sorrows of her mournful love, speaking of the Most High and repeating to Her most exalted praises of the most sacred humanity of her Son and of all his perfections. They informed Her of all his occupations and undertakings, and the places in which He wandered. This they did by enlightening her understanding in the same way a higher angel is accustomed to enlighten those of an inferior order, for this was her manner of communication with the angels, unhindered by the body and without use of the senses. The heavenly spirits communicated to Her the prayers of the incarnate Word, his teachings, his visits to the poor and the sick, and other actions, so the heavenly Lady was enabled to imitate Him in all these proceedings according to her condition. She thus engaged in most excellent and magnanimous undertakings as I shall presently describe, and by this means She rested in part from her pain and sorrow.

259. She also several times sent the holy Angels to visit her sweetest Son in her name. On such occasions She gave them most prudent instructions, full of deep and reverential love, also supplying them with linen cloths and towels prepared by her own hands so they could wipe the venerable countenance of the Savior when they saw Him exhausted and covered with a bloody sweat, for the Blessed Mother knew that He was thus overcome more and more often as He approached the fulfillment of all the works of the Redemption. The holy Angels obeyed their Queen therein with incredible reverence and holy fear because they knew the Lord himself permitted it in order to yield to the ardent desires of his most holy Mother. At other times, informed by the Angels or by a special vision or revelation of the Lord, She knew of his prayers and petitions for mankind in the mountains; She would then perform the same prayers in her house in the same posture and with the same words. Sometimes when She saw the Lord of all

creation was lacking food She also sent Him by the hands of the Angels some nourishment, though this happened but rarely, for the Lord, as I have indicated in the preceding chapter (247), did not always permit his Mother to act according to the promptings of her love. Therefore during the forty days of his fast She did not send any food because She understood such to be his will.

260. At other times the heavenly Lady occupied Herself in composing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to the Most High; this She did by Herself or in the company of the Angels, alternating with them. All these canticles were most exalted in style and most profound in meaning. At other times She hastened to the assistance of her neighbors in imitation of her most holy Son. She visited the sick, consoled the sorrowful and afflicted, enlightened the ignorant, brought relief to them, and enriched them with divine grace and bounty. Only during the time of the great fast of our Lord did She retire and remain in her house, as I have already mentioned (279). During this retirement our Queen and Lady separated Herself from all human company, and She was favored by almost continual ecstasies in which She received peerless gifts and treasures of the Divinity, for the hand of God imprinted and painted, as upon an admirably prepared canvas, the outlines and images of his infinite perfections. All these new graces and gifts She employed in working for the salvation of men, and all her occupations and thoughts followed closely the doings of the Savior, as was appropriate for the Coadjutrix of the Lord in his labors for the Redemption of mortals. Although these benefits and this close communication with the Lord could not but bring Her a great and ever new joy and exultation of soul in the Holy Ghost, yet in the inferior and sensible parts of her being She experienced the pains which She had sought and asked of the Savior in union with Him and in imitation of his sufferings as related above (249). In this desire of following Him in his sufferings She was insatiable, and She besought the eternal Father for this privilege with incessant and burning love. She renewed that most pleasing sacrifice of the life of her Son and her own which She had made in accordance with the will of God, and She was consumed with the desire of suffering with her Beloved, enduring the greatest pains precisely because of the lack of such suffering.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

261. My dearest daughter, the wisdom of the flesh has made men ignorant, foolish, and hostile to God, because it is diabolical, fraudulent and earthly (James 3:15), and *is not subject to the law of God* (Rom. 8:7). The more the children of Adam study and exert themselves to reach the evil objects of their carnal and animal passions, and attain the means of indulging them, so much the more do they ignore the divine things of the Lord by which they can arrive at their true last end. This ignorance and worldly prudence is even more abominable and hateful in the eyes of God when it occurs in the children of the Church. By what right can the children of this world call themselves sons of God, brethren of Christ, and inheritors of his possessions? The adopted son must be in all things possible like unto the natural son. A brother is not of different blood or position from that of his brother. One is not called an heir merely because he is in some way concerned with the possessions of his father, but because he has the full enjoyment and comes into the possession of the principal property of the testator. How then are they heirs of Christ who love, desire and seek only earthly goods, and are perfectly satisfied with them? How can they be his brothers who so widely depart from his position, his teachings, and his holy rule of life? How can they be similar to Him and claim to be his image and likeness when they so often

destroy in themselves all likeness of Him, and allow themselves to be so often sealed with the image of the infernal beast (Apoc. 16:2)?

262. By divine light thou knowest these truths, my daughter, and how much I exerted myself to make myself the image of the Most High, namely my Son and Lord. Do not think that in vain I have given thee such exalted knowledge of my works, for my desire is for this memorial to remain written in thy heart and this pendant to be always before thy eyes, serving thee as a rule for all thy conduct during the remainder of thy life, which cannot be of very long duration now. Do not allow thyself to be impeded and snared away from my following by communication with creatures; leave them alone, avoid them, and despise them insofar as they can hinder thee on thy way. In order for thee to advance in my school I desire to see thee poor, humble, despised, abased, and yet always with a cheerful heart and countenance. Do not try to repay thyself with the applause or the love of any creature, nor allow human sentiment to rule thee, for the Most High has not destined thee for such useless entanglements, or for occupations so lowly and adverse to the religious state to which He has called thee. Think attentively and humbly of the tokens of his love received at his hands and the treasures of his grace which He has showered upon thee. Neither Lucifer nor any of his ministers and followers is ignorant of them; they are filled with wrath against thee, and in their cunning they will leave no stone unturned for thy destruction. His greatest efforts will be directed against thy interior, where he establishes his battery of cunning and deceit. Do thou live well prepared and watchful against all his attacks; close the portals of thy senses and preserve the authority of thy will, without allowing it to be spent on human undertakings, no matter how good and upright they may appear to thee, for if in the least point thou curtail the love which God requires of thee, this very point will be seized upon by thy enemies as a portal of entrance. *The kingdom of God is within thee* (Lk. 17:21); keep it there, and there thou shalt find it, and in it all the good thou dost desire. Do not forget my discipline and teaching; lock them up in thy bosom, and remember how great is the danger and damage from which I thereby wish to preserve thee. Being called to imitate and follow me is the greatest blessing which thou couldst ever desire. I am ready in my extreme clemency to grant thee this blessing if thou dispose thyself to high resolves, holy words, and perfect works, which alone can raise thee to the state which the Almighty and I desire thee to attain.