

## CHAPTER XXIV

*Our Savior Jesus goes to the Banks of the Jordan where He is Baptized by St. John, who Himself then Asks to be Baptized by the Savior.*

263. Leaving his beloved Mother in the poor dwelling at Nazareth, our Redeemer, without accompaniment of any human creature, but altogether taken up with the exercise of his most ardent charity, pursued his journey to the Jordan, where in the neighborhood of a town called Bethany, otherwise called Betharaba, on the farther side of the river, his Precursor was preaching and baptizing (Mt. 3:1ff.). At the first steps our divine Redeemer took from his house He raised his eyes to the eternal Father, and by his most ardent charity offered to Him anew all the work He was about to begin for men, namely his labors, sorrows, Passion and Death of the cross which He desired to suffer for them, obeying the eternal will of the Father himself, as well as the natural sorrow of a true and loving Son at parting from his Mother, leaving her sweet company which He had for twenty-nine years. The Lord of all creation walked alone, without show and ostentation of human retinue. The supreme King of kings and Lord of lords (Apoc. 19:16) was unknown and despised by his own vassals, vassals so much his own that they owed their life and preservation entirely to Him (Ib. 4:11). His royal outfit was nothing but the utmost poverty and destitution.

264. Since the sacred Evangelists passed over in silence such works of the Savior as these, and their circumstances so worthy of our attention, and since our gross forgetfulness customarily passes over unnoticed what has not been written, therefore we examine and consider so little the immensity of his blessings and measureless love by which He has enriched us so much and has sought us to bind us to Him with so many bonds of charity (Osee 11:4). O eternal love of the Onlybegotten of the Father! O delight and life of my soul! How little known, and much less acknowledged, is thy most burning love! Why, O Lord and sweet love of my soul, why dost Thou exhibit so many artifices of love, so many watchings and sufferings, for those whom Thou dost not need and who will neither correspond nor attend to thy favors, not any more than if they had been offered but deceit or a joke? O hearts of men, more rude and fierce than those of wild beasts! What has hardened you so? What detains you? What oppresses you and makes you so sluggish that you will not gratefully follow in the ways of your Benefactor? O lamentable illusion and aberration of human understanding! What mortal lethargy has come over it? Who has blotted out from thy memory such infallible truths and such memorable benefits, and even thy own true happiness? Are we of flesh, and have we our senses? Who has made us more hard and insensible than the rocks and stony mountain heights? Why do we not wake up and recover some of our sensibility at the sight of the benefits of our Redemption? At the words of a Prophet the dead bones came to life and moved about (Ez. 37:10), but we resist the words and exertions of Him who gives life and being to all. So defective is our earthly love, so great our forgetfulness!

265. Accept me then, O my Lord and light of my soul, accept this vile wormlet of the earth, which creeps along in order to meet thy beautiful footsteps now begun in search of me! By them thou dost raise me to the certain hope of finding in Thee the truth, the way, and the delights of eternal life. I possess nothing wherewith to repay Thee, my Beloved, except thy own goodness and love, and the being which through them Thou hast given me. Less than thy own Self cannot be paid for the infinite bounty Thou hast shown to me. Thirsting after thy love I go to meet Thee on the way. Do not, O my Lord and Master, take away or deprive her of the vision of thy

clemency, she whom in her poverty Thou hast sought so diligently and lovingly. Life of my soul and soul of my life, since I have not been so fortunate as to merit to see Thee bodily in this life and in that blessed age of thy earthly life, let me at least be a daughter of thy holy Church, let me be a part of this thy Mystical Body and the congregation of thy faithful. In this life, so full of dangers, in this frail flesh, in these times of calamity and tribulations, do I live; but I cry out from its profound depths, I sigh from the bottom of my heart for thy infinite merits. That I shall share them I have the assurance of faith, the encouragement of hope, and the claims of holy charity. Look down then upon thy humble slave in order to make me grateful for such great blessings, meek of heart, constant in love, and entirely conformable and pleasing to thy holy will.

266. While proceeding on his way to the Jordan our Savior dispensed his ancient mercies by relieving the necessities of body and soul for many of those whom He encountered at different places; yet this was always done in secret, for before his Baptism He gave no public token of his divine power and exalted office. Before appearing at the Jordan He filled the heart of St. John with new light and joy which changed and elevated his soul. Perceiving these new workings of grace within himself, he reflected upon them full of wonder, saying: "What mystery is this? What presentiments of happiness? From the moment when I recognized the presence of my Lord in the womb of my mother I have not felt such stirring of my soul as now! Is it possible He is now happily come, or the Savior of the world is now near me?" Upon this enlightenment of the Baptist followed an intellectual vision wherein he perceived with greater clearness the mystery of the hypostatic union of the Person of the Word with the humanity, and other mysteries of the Redemption. In the fullness of this intellectual light he gave the testimonies which are recorded by St. John in his Gospel and which occurred while the Lord was in the desert and afterwards when He returned to the banks of the Jordan. The Evangelist mentions one of these public testimonies as happening at the question of the Jews,\* and the other when the Precursor exclaimed *behold the Lamb of God* (Jn. 1:36), as I shall narrate further on (299, 306). Although the Baptist had been instructed in great mysteries when he was commanded to go forth to preach and baptize, yet all of them were manifested to him anew and with greater clearness and abundance on this occasion, and he was then notified that the Savior of the world was coming to be baptized.

267. The Lord then joined the multitude and asked Baptism of St. John as one of the rest. The Baptist knew Him, and falling at his feet he hesitated, saying as is recorded by the Evangelist St. Matthew (3:14): "I have need of being baptized, and Thou, Lord, dost ask Baptism from me?" But the Savior answered: *Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice* (Ib. 15). By thus hesitating to baptize Christ his Lord, and asking Him for Baptism instead, he gave evidence that he recognized Him as the true Redeemer. And there is no contradiction between this and what St. John records of the Baptist as saying to the Jews: *And I knew Him not; but He who sent me to baptize with water, said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God* (Jn. 1:33-4). The reason there is no contradiction between these words of St. John and those of St. Matthew is because the testimony of heaven and the voice of the eternal Father over Christ on the banks of the Jordan<sup>†</sup> happened after the Precursor had the vision of which I have spoken (266). Hence he had not seen Christ bodily until then and could therefore deny having known Christ, at least in the same way as he then knew

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\* cf. Jn. 1:19ff. [Ed.]

† cf. next paragraph [Ed.]

Him, for precisely because he knew Christ then both by sight and by intellectual vision he prostrated himself at the feet of the Savior.

268. When St. John had finished baptizing our Lord the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly in the form of a dove upon his head, and the voice of his Father was heard: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt. 3:17). Many of the bystanders heard this voice, namely those who were not unworthy of such a wonderful favor; they also saw the Holy Ghost descending upon the Savior. This was the most convincing proof which could ever be given of the Divinity of our Redeemer, as well on the part of the Father, who acknowledged Him his Son, as also in regard to the nature of the testimony given, for without any reserve was Christ manifested as the true God, equal to his eternal Father in substance and perfection. The Father himself desired to be the first to testify to the divinity of Christ so in virtue of his testimony all the other witnesses would be ratified. There was also another mystery in this voice of the eternal Father: It was as it were a restoration of the honor of his Son before the world, recompensing Him for humiliating Himself by receiving Baptism, which served as a remedy for sins, from which the incarnate Word was entirely free (Heb. 7:26) since He was impeccable.

269. This act of humiliating Himself to the form of a sinner, receiving Baptism with the rest of those present, Christ our Redeemer offered to the eternal Father along with his obedience, in order to recognize by this act the inferiority of his human nature He had just like all the rest of the children of Adam, and in order to institute in this manner the sacrament of Baptism, which in virtue of his merits was to wash away the sins of the world. By humiliating Himself in first receiving Baptism for sins the Lord sought and obtained from the eternal Father a general pardon for all those who were to receive it (I Peter 3:21); He freed them from the jurisdiction of the demon and of sin, and regenerated them to a new existence, spiritual and supernatural, as adopted sons of the Most High, brethren of their Redeemer and Lord. And because the past, present and future sins of men, which the eternal Father always saw in the presence of his wisdom, had prevented this so sweet and easy remedy, Christ our Lord merited it in justice so the eternal Father would accept it in justice as a complete satisfaction according to all the requirements of his equity. Christ was also not deterred from thus securing this remedy by his foreknowledge of the abuse of holy Baptism by so many mortals in all ages, and of its neglect by innumerable others. All these impediments and hindrances Christ our Lord removed by satisfying for their offenses, humiliating Himself and assuming the form of a sinner in his Baptism (Rom. 8:3). This is the meaning of the words *suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice*. Then in order to honor the incarnate Word and in recompense for his humiliation, and in order to approve of Baptism and establish its wonderful efficacy, the eternal Father gave forth his voice and the Holy Ghost descended. Thus was Christ proclaimed as the true Son of God, and all three Persons of the Holy Trinity ratified the sacramental rite of Baptism.

270. The great Baptist John was the one who reaped the greatest fruit from these wonders of holy Baptism, for he not only baptized his Redeemer and Master, saw the Holy Ghost and the celestial light descending upon the Lord together with innumerable Angels, heard the voice of the Father, and saw many other mysteries by divine revelation, but in addition to all this he himself was baptized by the Redeemer. The Gospel indeed says no more than he asked for it, but at the same time it also does not say it was denied him, for without a doubt Christ after his own Baptism conferred it also on his Precursor and Baptist. It was He who instituted this Sacrament, afterwards making it a general law and commanding the public administration of it upon the Apostles after the Resurrection (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16). As I shall relate later on (319) it was

also the Lord who baptized his most holy Mother before its general promulgation, and He on that occasion established the form in which Baptism was to be administered. These facts were made known to me, and also that St. John was the first fruit of the Baptism of Christ our Lord and of the new Church which He founded in this Sacrament. Through it the Baptist received the character of a Christian together with a great plenitude of graces since he had not upon him original sin, for he had been justified by the Redeemer before he was born as was said in its place (*Inc.* 218). By the answer of the Savior, *suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice*, He did not refuse but deferred the baptism of St. John until He himself had been baptized and fulfilled the requirements of the justice of God; He then baptized St. John, gave him his blessing, and His divine Majesty went away to the desert.

271. Let us now return to the main subject of this History, namely the occupations of our great Queen and Lady. Although She had divine light regarding the actions of His Majesty, as soon as her most holy Son was baptized the holy Angels who had attended upon their Lord brought Her intelligence of all that had happened at the Jordan; they were those who carried the ensigns or shields of the Passion of the Savior, as described in the first Part (*Con.* 372). To celebrate all these mysteries of the Baptism of Christ and the public proclamation of his divinity, the most prudent Mother composed new hymns and canticles of praise and incomparable thanksgiving to the Most High and to the incarnate Word. She imitated all the acts of humility and the petitions of the divine Master, adding many others, accompanying Him and following Him in all things. With ardent charity She interceded for men so they might profit by the sacrament of Baptism, and so it might be administered all over the world. In addition to these prayers and hymns of thanksgiving She asked the heavenly courtiers to help Her in magnifying her most holy Son for having thus humiliated Himself in receiving Baptism at the hands of one of his creatures.

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

272. My daughter, since in relating to thee the works of my most holy Son I so often remind thee how gratefully I appreciated them, thou must understand how pleasing to the Most High is the most faithful care and correspondence on thy part, and the hidden and great blessings enclosed within it. Thou art poor in the house of the Lord, a sinner, insignificant and useless as dust; yet I ask thee to assume the duty of rendering ceaseless gratitude for all the incarnate Word has done for the sons of Adam, and for establishing the holy and immaculate, the powerful and perfect law for their salvation. Especially must thou be grateful for the institution of Baptism by which He frees men from the tyranny of the devil, regenerates them as his children (Jn. 3:5), fills them with grace, clothes them with justice, and assists them to sin no more. This is indeed a duty incumbent upon all men in common, but since creatures neglect it almost entirely I enjoin thee to give thanks for all of them as if thou alone wert responsible for them. Thou art bound to special gratitude to the Lord for other things as well because He has shown Himself so generous to no one among other nations as He has with thee. In the foundation of his holy law and of his Sacraments thou wert present in his memory; He called and chose thee as a daughter of his Church, proposing to nourish thee by his own blood with infinite love.

273. And if the Author of grace, my most holy Son, as a prudent and wise Artificer, in order to found his evangelical Church and lay its first foundations in the sacrament of Baptism, humiliated Himself, prayed, and fulfilled all justice, acknowledging the inferiority of his human nature, and if, though at the same time God and man, He hesitated not to lower Himself to the nothingness of which his purest soul was created and his human being formed, how much must

thou humiliate thyself, who hast committed sins and art less than the dust and despicable ashes? Confess that in justice thou dost merit only punishment, the persecution and wrath of all the creatures, and that none of the mortals who has offended his Creator and Redeemer can say in truth that any injustice or offense is done to them if all the tribulations and afflictions of the world from its beginning to its end were to fall upon them. Since all sinned in Adam (I Cor. 15:22), how deeply should they humiliate themselves when the hand of the Lord visits them (Job 19:21)? If thou dost suffer all the afflictions of men with the utmost resignation, and at the same time fulfill all that I enjoin upon thee by my teachings and exhortations with the greatest fidelity, thou nevertheless must esteem thyself as a useless and unprofitable servant (Lk. 17:10). How much then must thou humiliate thyself when thou dost fail in thy duty and in the return due to all the blessings received from God? Since I desire thee to make a proper return both for thyself and for others, think well how much thou art obliged to annihilate thyself to the very dust, not offering any resistance, nor ever being satisfied until the Most High receives thee as his daughter and accepts thee as such in his own presence and in the celestial vision of the triumphant Jerusalem.