

CHAPTER XXVII

Christ our Redeemer Leaves the Desert and Returns to where St. John was; He Occupies Himself in Judea in Various Works until the Calling of the First Disciples; Most Holy Mary Knows All His Doings and Imitates Them.

298. Christ our Redeemer, having gloriously achieved the hidden and exalted ends of his fasting and solitude in the desert by the victories He gained over the demon, triumphing over him and all his vices, His Divine Majesty now resolved to leave his solitude in order to pursue the further works enjoined upon Him by the eternal Father for the Redemption of man. In taking leave of the desert He prostrated Himself upon the ground, praising the eternal Father and giving Him thanks for all He had accomplished through his sacred humanity for the glory of the Divinity and the benefit of the human race. He added also a fervent prayer for all those who would in imitation of Him retire either for their whole life or for some time into solitude, and far from the world and its allurements follow Him in contemplation and holy exercises for their spiritual advancement. The Father in heaven promised his favors and his words of eternal life (Osee 2:14), as well as his special helps and blessings of sweetness (Ps. 20:4), to all those who on their part dispose themselves properly to receive and correspond with them. Having said this prayer the Savior, as true man, asked permission to leave the desert, and attended by the holy Angels He departed.

299. The Master directed his most faithful steps toward the Jordan, where his great Precursor St. John was continuing his preaching and baptizing, that by his appearance and presence the Baptist could give new testimony of his divinity and ministry as the Redeemer. In addition His Majesty condescended to make this visit because of the affection of St. John himself, who desired anew to see Him and speak with Him, because by the first visit and presence of the Savior, when He baptized St. John, the heart of the holy Precursor was inflamed and wounded by that hidden and divine force which attracted to Himself all things.* In hearts which were well disposed (as was that of St. John) this fire of the love of Christ was enkindled with greater force and violence. When the Baptist saw the Savior coming to him the second time, his first words were those recorded by the Evangelist: *Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29). St. John gave this testimony while pointing out the Lord with his finger to those who were listening to his instructions and receiving Baptism at his hands. He added (Ib. 30-31): *This is He of whom I said: After me there cometh a Man who is preferred before me, because He was before me. And I knew Him not, but that He may be made manifest in Israel, therefore I am come baptizing with water.*

300. These words the Baptist spoke because before Christ our Lord had come to be baptized he had not seen Him, nor received the revelation of his coming, as I have said in chapter XXIV of this Book (267). Then the Baptist added how he had the vision of the Holy Ghost descending upon Christ in Baptism, and how he had given testimony to the truth that Christ is the Son of God (Jn. 1:32), for while His Majesty was in the desert the Jews had sent to the Baptist the embassy from Jerusalem which is spoken of in chapter one of the Gospel of St. John, asking him who he was and the other questions there recorded. The Baptist answered that he was baptizing with water (Ib. 26ff.), but in their midst had been One whom they knew not, for Christ had been

* cf. Jn. 12:32 [Ed.]

among them at the Jordan, and that He would come after him, the latchet of whose shoe he was not worthy to loosen. Hence when St. John again saw the Savior returning from the desert he called Him the Lamb of God, and referred to the testimony which shortly before he had given to the Pharisees, at the same time adding that he had seen the Holy Ghost descending upon his head as had been promised him by revelation beforehand. Both St. Matthew (3:17) and St. Luke (3:22) also mention the voice of the Father which was heard at the Baptism of Christ, whereas St. John the Apostle (1:32) mentions only the appearance of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, for he only desired to record the words of St. John to the Jews in regard to Christ.

301. The Queen of heaven in her retirement knew of this faithful testimony of the Precursor in denying that he himself was the Christ, and in asserting the divinity of her Son. In return She begged the Lord to reward his faithful servant John. The Almighty granted her prayer, for the holy Baptist was raised above all those born of woman in the esteem of the Most High. Because St. John refused the honor of Messiah offered to him, the Lord determined to give him an honor which no other man was capable of receiving. On this occasion, when the Baptist saw the Savior the second time, he was filled with new and vast graces of the Holy Ghost. Some of the bystanders, when they heard him say *behold the Lamb of God*, were strongly moved and asked him many questions; but the Savior, permitting him to inform his hearers of the truth as explained above, turned away and left this place to go to Jerusalem. His Majesty was but a very short time near the Precursor. He did not go directly to the holy city, but for many days He tarried in smaller towns, teaching the people and in a veiled manner telling them the Messiah was already in the world. He directed them on the way of salvation, and induced many to seek the baptism of John in order to prepare themselves by penance for the coming Redemption.

302. The Evangelists say nothing of the time and the doings of Christ immediately after his fast; however, I have been informed that the Savior remained about ten months in Judea without returning to Nazareth to see his Blessed Mother, nor did He enter Galilee until He had again allowed Himself to be seen by the Baptist, who for the second time said *behold the Lamb of God* (Jn. 1:36). St. Andrew and the first disciples who heard these words of the Baptist followed Christ. He then called St. Philip, as related by St. John the Evangelist (Jn. 1:43). These ten months the Savior spent enlightening souls and preparing them by his helps, his doctrine, and his admirable blessings, stirring them up from their stupor so afterwards when He would begin to work miracles He would find them more ready to believe and follow Him as their Redeemer. Many of those whom He had during this time catechized and instructed really did become his followers. He did not speak with the Pharisees and those learned in the law during this time, for they were not so well disposed to believe the Messiah had come. They did not admit such belief even afterwards when this truth had been confirmed by his preaching, and when his miracles and other testimonies had so clearly given witness to Christ our Lord (Mt. 11:5). To the humble and the poor, who due to their station in life merited to be the first to be evangelized and instructed (Lk. 4:18), the Savior preached during these ten months in the kingdom of Judea; to them He showed his merciful liberality, not only by individual instruction but by his hidden favors and private miracles. Hence they received Him as a great prophet and a holy man. He stirred the hearts of innumerable people to forsake sin and seek the kingdom of God which was now approaching.

303. Our great Queen and Lady remained during all this time in Nazareth, knowing all the doings of her Son. She was kept informed of them not only by the divine light of which I have spoken, but also by the messages brought to Her by her thousand Angels, who during the absence of the Redeemer always appeared to Her in bodily forms (256). In order to imitate Him

fully in all things, She left her retirement at the same time as Christ our Savior left the desert; and since His Majesty, although He could not grow in love, yet manifested it with greater fervor after He conquered the demon by fasting and all the virtues, likewise the heavenly Mother, by new increases of grace which She had acquired, went forth more ardently and diligently to imitate all the works of her most holy Son for the benefit of the human race, and to carry out anew the office of Harbinger for the manifestation of the Savior. Accompanied by her Angels, filled with the plenitude of wisdom, and furnished with the power of Mistress of the universe, She went forth from her house in Nazareth to the neighboring places and performed great miracles, although in a hidden manner just as the incarnate Word was doing in Judea. She spoke of the advent of the Messiah without revealing who He was; She instructed many in the way of life, drew them from their sins, put to flight the demons, enlightened the erring and the ignorant, and prepared them for the Redemption by inducing them to believe in its Author. To these spiritual works of mercy She added many bodily blessings such as healing the sick, consoling the afflicted, and visiting the poor. Though She labored mostly among the women, yet She benefited also many of the men, who if they were despised and poor were not deprived of her helps and the happiness of being visited by the Sovereign of the Angels and of all the universe.

304. In imitation of all the Lord was doing in Judea She also went about on foot, spending nearly all this time on her excursions; however, She returned a few times to her dwelling in Nazareth. During these ten months She ate very little, for as I have indicated in the preceding chapter She had been so satiated and strengthened by the celestial food sent to Her by her Son from the desert that She was enabled not only to travel afoot to many places and over great distances, but also to abstain from other nourishment. The blessed Lady likewise knew of the doings of St. John while preaching and baptizing on the banks of the Jordan. Several times She sent him a multitude of her Angels in order to encourage him and thank him for the loyalty he had shown to her Lord and Son. In the midst of all these occupations the loving Mother suffered great agonies of desire to enjoy the sight and the presence of her most holy Son, while the Heart of Jesus in return was wounded by the clamors of her chaste and heavenly love. I shall relate in the following chapter what happened before He returned to visit Her and before beginning his public preaching and miracles.

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

305. My daughter, I shall instruct thee in two important lessons from this chapter. First, love solitude and seek it with particular affection in order to partake of the blessings promised and merited by my divine Son for those who imitate Him therein. As far as possible, when thou art not obliged to converse with thy neighbor in virtue of obedience, always try to be alone, and when thou art obliged to come out of thy retirement and solitude carry it with thee in the secret of thy heart in such a manner that thy senses and thy occupations shall not deprive thee of it. Attend to thy outward employments as if they were to be done only in passing, and consider thy retirement as something which is to be permanent. For this purpose thou must not allow the images of creatures to enter thy mind, for very often they occupy the mind more completely than the objects themselves, and they always embarrass the soul and take away from it the liberty of the heart. It is unworthy of thee to let thy heart be interested in anything or be taken up by any creature. My divine Son desires to be in it all alone, and this is also what I desire. The second lesson is to learn to set a proper value on thy soul in order to preserve it in its purity and innocence. And beyond this, although it is my will for thee to labor for the justification of all

men, I desire thee to imitate my most holy Son and me in what we did in our labors with the most poor and despised of this world. These little ones often beg for the bread of counsel and instruction (Lam. 4:4) and they find none to give it to them, as do the rich and powerful of the earth who have many to advise them. Many of these poor and despised ones come to thee; admit them with true compassion and console them kindly, so in their simplicity they may follow enlightened counsel, for counsel is to be administered to the better instructed in a different way. Seek to gain those souls who because of their temporal necessities are so much the more precious in the eyes of God. I desire thee to labor incessantly so they and all others may not waste the fruit of Redemption, nor do thou ever rest from this labor. Be ready even to die, if necessary, to advance this enterprise.