

CHAPTER XIV

The Escape and Scattering of the Apostles at the Capture of their Master; His Most Holy Mother Takes Notice of This, and what She Did on This Occasion; the Perdition of Judas, and the Disturbance of the Demons over what They Came to Know.

529. After the capture of our Savior Jesus, his prophecy at the Last Supper that all of the Apostles would be greatly scandalized in his Person (Mt. 26:31), and that Satan would attack them in order to sift them like wheat (Lk. 22:31), was fulfilled; for when they saw their divine Master taken prisoner, and perceived that neither his meekness, nor his words so full of sweetness and power, nor his miracles, nor his doctrine exemplified by such an unblamable life, could appease the envy of the priests and Pharisees, they fell into great trouble and affliction. They were frightened and filled with natural dread, losing their courage and trust in the counsels of their Master, and beginning to waver in their faith each one was imagining how he could secure his own safety from the danger which threatened him, seeing what had happened with his Master and Captain. The Apostles, availing themselves of the preoccupation of the soldiers and servants in binding and fettering the meek Lamb of God, fled unnoticed. Certainly their enemies, if they had been permitted by the Author of life, would have captured all the Apostles, especially if they had seen them flee like cowards or criminals (Mt. 26:56), but it was not proper for them to be taken and made to suffer at that time. This was clearly indicated as the will of the Lord when He said if they sought Him they should let his companions go free; these words had the force of a divine decree and were verified in the event. The hatred of the priests and Pharisees extended to the Apostles, and was deep enough to make them desire the death of all of them. That is the reason why the high priest Annas asked the divine Master about his disciples and his doctrine (Jn. 18:19).

530. At the flight of the Apostles Lucifer, already troubled and vaguely perplexed, began hesitating between different projects of his redoubled malice. He certainly wished to see the doctrine of the Savior and all his disciples blotted out from the world so not even the memory of them would be left; hence he would have been well satisfied if the Jews had imprisoned and killed them all. But he had no hope of easily attaining this wish, and therefore he busied himself in disquieting the Apostles by various suggestions and inciting them to flee so they would not witness the patience and virtues of their Master in his sufferings. The astute dragon feared that by this new proof of his doctrine in his living example the Apostles would be confirmed and fortified in their faith, and thus resist the temptations which he planned for them. Therefore it seemed to him that if he could weaken them now he could more easily cause them to fall away entirely by subsequent persecutions easily to be raised against them among the only too ready enemies of their Master; thus the demon deceived himself by his own malicious calculations. When therefore he saw the Apostles filled with cowardly fear and much disturbed by the sorrow of their hearts, he rejoiced in their evil plight and considered it the best time to begin his temptations. He assailed them with rabid fury, filling them with strong doubts and suspicions against the Master of life and urging them to give Him up and flee. They easily yielded to his suggestions of escape, but they resisted many of the doubts against faith, although some failed more, some less, not all of the Apostles being equally disturbed or scandalized.

531. They separated from each other, scattering in different directions, for it would have been difficult for all of them to hide as they wished if they remained together. Only St. Peter and St. John kept each other company to follow their God and Master and see the end of his Passion

(Mt. 26:58). But in the soul of each one of the eleven Apostles raged a battle of sorrow and grief which wrung their hearts and left them without consolation or the least rest. On one side battled reason, grace, faith, love and truth; on the other temptation, suspicion, fear, cowardice and sorrow. Reason and truth reproached them with their inconstancy and disloyalty in having forsaken their Master by cowardly fleeing from danger after having been warned of it, and having offered themselves so shortly before to die for Him if necessary. They remembered their disobedience in neglecting to pray and strengthen themselves against temptations as the Lord had commanded them. Their love for his sweet conversation and company, for his teaching and miraculous power, and their conviction that He was true God, urged them to return and seek Him, and offer themselves to danger and death like faithful servants and disciples. To all this was joined the memory of his most sweet Mother, the consideration of her intense sorrow, and the desire to seek Her and attend upon Her in her trouble. Opposing this was their struggle with their cowardice and the fear of being handed over to the cruelty of the Jews, to confusion, persecution and death. In regard to seeking the company of the sorrowful Mother they feared lest She would oblige them to return to their Master, and that they would be more easily found if they stayed with Her in the same house. Dreadful above all were the impious and horrible suggestions of the demons, for the dragon filled them with harassing doubts whether it would be suicide to thus deliver themselves to certain death; that if their Master could not free Himself, much less could He free them from the hands of the priests; that He would now certainly be put to death, and hence all ties between Him and them were dissolved, since they would not see Him anymore; that although his life seemed to be blameless, yet He had taught some very hard doctrines, some of them unheard of until that time, whereby He had incurred the hatred of those learned in the law and of the priests, as well as the indignation of all the people; and moreover, it was a serious matter to follow a man who was to be condemned to an infamous and frightful death.

532. Such was the interior contention and strife in the hearts of the Apostles. Satan, under cover of this excitement, continually sought to instill into their minds doubts concerning the teachings of Christ and the prophecies related to the mysteries of his Passion. Since in their sad interior conflict they failed to see the least assurance of seeing their Master escape the hands of the priests alive, their fears settled into a profound sorrow and melancholy in which they decided to flee from danger and save their own lives, and they were seized with such timidity and cowardice that during this night they felt nowhere safe, and every shadow or noise made them tremble with fear.* The consideration of the treachery of Judas added still more to their fear, for since he had not been seen in the company of any of the eleven after his treacherous delivery of the Lord they dreaded he might excite against them the hatred of the priests. St. Peter and St. John, being more fervent in the love of Christ, resisted their fear and the demon more than the others, and the two resolved to follow together their Master at a distance. In taking this resolve they relied much upon the acquaintance of St. John with the high priest Annas (Jn. 18:15), who with Caiphas alternated in the office of high priest. In that year it was held by Caiphas, who in the meeting had given the prophetic counsel, asking whether it was not better that one man die so the whole world might not perish (Jn. 11:49-50). This acquaintance had arisen from the fact that St. John was esteemed as a man, distinguished and of noble lineage, of affable and courteous manners and amiable in person. Trusting these favorable circumstances the two Apostles followed the Lord with less fear. The thought of their heavenly Queen was deep in their hearts,

* cf. I Jn. 4:18 [Ed.]

and they reflected on her bitter sorrow and desired to bring relief and console Her if possible. In this pious and loving desire especially St. John excelled all the others.

533. The heavenly Princess from the Cenacle clearly understood and saw all, not only her most holy Son in captivity and suffering, but all that happened inwardly and outwardly to the Apostles. She observed their tribulation and temptations, their thoughts and resolves, where each one was and what he did. But though all was known to the most gentle Dove, She allowed Herself no feeling of indignation against the Apostles, nor did She ever in the least reproach them for their disloyalty; on the contrary, She was the one who was principally instrumental in restoring them to a better mind, as I shall show later on (746-7), and from that hour She began to pray for them. In sweetest charity and with the compassion of a Mother She interiorly addressed them: "O ye simple sheep, chosen by the Lord, do ye forsake thy most loving Pastor who cares for thee and feeds thee on the pastures of eternal life? Why, being disciples of such a truthful doctrine, do ye leave thy Benefactor and Master? How can ye forget the sweet and loving treatment which so attracted thy hearts? Why do ye listen to the master of lies and follow the ravenous wolf who seeks thy ruin? O most patient and sweet Lord, how meek, how kind and merciful does the love of men make Thee! Extend thy gentle love to this little flock which is now troubled and dispersed by the fury of the serpent. Do not deliver over to the beasts those souls who have confessed thy Name (Ps. 73:19). Great hopes hast Thou set in those whom Thou hast chosen as thy servants, and through whom Thou hast already accomplished great things. Let not such graces be in vain, nor reject those whom Thou hast freely chosen for the foundations of thy Church. Let not Lucifer glory in having, beneath thy very eyes, vanquished the best of thy family and household. My Son and Lord, look upon thy beloved disciple John, and upon Peter and James, so much favored by thy love and good will. Turn an eye of clemency also upon the rest and crush the pride of the dragon, which now pursues them with implacable fury."

534. The grandeur of most holy Mary on this occasion, the works She accomplished, and the plenitude of sanctity She manifested in the eyes and to the pleasure of the Most High exceeded all the capacity of men and angels. Over and above the sensible and spiritual sorrows caused by the torments of her divine Son and the affronts perpetrated against his divine Person (for whom the Blessed Mother entertained the highest veneration attainable by a creature), She was overwhelmed with the sorrow caused by the fall of the Apostles, the greatness of which Her Majesty alone could properly estimate. She saw the fragility and forgetfulness they had shown despite the favors, doctrine, warnings and admonitions of their Master, and this in such a short a time after the Last Supper when He had warned them so lovingly, given them Holy Communion, and elevated them to such a high dignity as the priesthood. She saw also the danger of their falling into even greater sins due to the cunning with which Lucifer and his ministers of darkness worked to overthrow them, and the carelessness which had taken possession of the hearts of all the Apostles in their greater or lesser fear. Yet notwithstanding this great sea of sorrow She multiplied and intensified her petitions in order to merit for them sufficient assistance and speedy pardon from her Son so they could again return to their faith and to his friendship in grace. She alone was the powerful and efficacious instrument of these results. During these hours this great Lady united within Herself all the faith, all the sanctity, all the worship and divine cult of the Church, for in Her was preserved and enclosed as in the living and incorruptible Ark, and the temple and sanctuary, the evangelical law and sacrifice. She by Herself alone then constituted the entire Church, because She alone believed, hoped, loved, venerated and adored the object of the Catholic faith, Jesus Christ her divine Son, not only for Herself but for the Apostles and the entire human race. She it was who compensated, as far as was possible to a mere creature, for the

deficiencies and faults in the rest of the mystical members of the Church. She performed heroic acts of faith, hope and love toward her Son and true God; She venerated and adored Him by her prostrations and genuflections; and with admirable canticles She blessed Him, not allowing the deep and bitter sorrow of her soul to detune the instrument of her faculties, composed and arranged by the powerful hand of the Most High. What Ecclesiasticus says of music, that it is inopportune in time of sorrow (Ecclus. 22:6), does not apply to Her, for only most holy Mary was able and knew how to augment the sweet harmony of virtues in the midst of sorrow.

535. Leaving the eleven Apostles in the sad state mentioned above, I now proceed to relate the most unhappy end of the traitor Judas, somewhat anticipating the course of events in order to have done with his lamentable and unfortunate lot and continue the narrative of the Passion. With the band which had taken our Savior Jesus prisoner the sacrilegious disciple arrived at the house of the high priest, first Annas and then Caiphas, who with the scribes and Pharisees were awaiting results. When the perfidious disciple saw his divine Master overwhelmed with blasphemies and injuries, and how He suffered all with such admirable silence, meekness and patience, he began to reflect upon his own treachery and that it alone caused such cruel injustice to be heaped upon an innocent man and his Benefactor. He recalled the miracles he had witnessed, the doctrines he had heard, and the benefits enjoyed at his hands, and he remembered the kindness and meekness of most holy Mary, the charity with which She had solicited his conversion, and the malice with which he had offended the Son and the Mother for such insignificant gain. All the sins he had committed piled themselves up before his interior gaze like a dark, chaotic and impenetrable mountain.

536. As I have stated above (515), Judas was forsaken by divine grace after he delivered Christ our Savior over to his enemies by the kiss and contact with Him. According to the hidden judgments of the Most High, though he was now left to his own counsels, the divine justice and equity ingrained in the natural reason permitted these reflections to arise and to be supplemented by many suggestions of Lucifer who possessed him. Though Judas thus reasoned correctly in these matters, yet these truths were administered by the father of lies, who added many other false and deceitful suggestions in order to deduce from them not the salutary hope of remedy, but rather to convince him of the impossibility of repairing the damage and to lead him into the despair to which he at last yielded. Lucifer roused in him a keen sorrow for his sins, not however for a good purpose, nor founded upon having offended the divine Truth, but upon his disgrace among men and the fear of retribution from his Master whom he knew to be miraculously powerful and whom he would be unable to escape anywhere in the whole world. Everywhere the blood of the Just would forever cry for vengeance against him. Filled with these thoughts and others aroused by the demon, he was involved in confusion, darkness, and rabid rage against himself. Fleeing from all men he planned to throw himself from the highest roof of the priests' house without being able to execute his design. Gnawing like a wild beast at the flesh of his arms and hands, striking fearful blows at his head, tearing out his hair, and raving in his talk, he rushed away and showered maledictions and execrations upon himself as the most unfortunate and miserable of men.

537. Seeing him thus beside himself Lucifer inspired him with the thought of hunting up the priests, returning the money to them, and confessing his sin. This Judas hastened to do, and he loudly shouted at them those words: "I have sinned in betraying the blood of the Just" (Mt. 27:4). But they, not less hardened, answered that he should have seen to that before. The intention of the demon was to hinder the death of Christ if possible, for reasons already given (419ff.) and yet to be given. This repulse of the priests, so full of impious cruelty, took away all hope from Judas,

and he persuaded himself it was impossible to hinder the death of his Master; so thought also the demon, though later on he made more diligent efforts to prevent it through Pilate. But since Judas could be of no more use to him for his purpose, he augmented his distress and despair, persuading him that in order to avoid severer punishments he must end his life. Judas yielded to this terrible deceit, and rushing forth from the city hung himself on a dried out fig tree (Mt. 27:5). Thus he who was the murderer of his Creator became also his own murderer. This happened on Friday at twelve o'clock, three hours before our Savior died, since it was not appropriate for the death of Christ and the consummation of our Redemption to coincide too closely with the execrable end of the traitorous disciple, who hated Him with fiercest malice.

538. The demons at once took possession of the soul of Judas and took it down to hell. His entrails burst from the body hanging upon the tree (Acts 1:18). All who saw this stupendous punishment of the perfidious and malicious disciple for his treason were filled with astonishment and dread. The body remained hanging by the neck for three days, exposed to the view of the public. During that time the Jews attempted to take it down from the tree and bury it in secret, for it was a sight apt to cause great confusion to the Pharisees and priests, who could not refute such a testimony of his wickedness. But no efforts of theirs sufficed to drag or separate the body from its position on the tree until three days had passed, when according to the dispensation of divine justice the demons themselves snatched the body from the tree and brought it to his soul so both would suffer eternal punishment in the profoundest abyss of hell. Since what I have been made to know of the pains and chastisements of Judas is worthy of fear-inspiring attention, I shall according to command reveal what has been shown to me concerning it. Among the obscure caverns of the infernal prisons was a very large one, arranged for more horrible chastisements than the others, and which was still unoccupied, for the demons had been unable to cast any soul into it, though their cruelty had induced them to attempt it many times from the time of Cain unto that day. All hell had remained astonished at the failure of these attempts, being entirely ignorant of the mystery until the arrival of the soul of Judas, which they readily succeeded in hurling and burying in this prison never before occupied by any of the damned. The secret of it was that this cavern of greater torments and fiercer fires of hell had been destined from the creation of the world for those who after having received Baptism would damn themselves by the neglect of the Sacraments, doctrine, Passion and Death of the Savior, and the intercession of his most holy Mother. Since Judas had been the first one who had so signally participated in these blessings, and as he had so fearfully misused them, he was also the first to suffer the torments of this place, prepared for him and his imitators and followers.

539. This mystery I was commanded to reveal more particularly for a dreadful warning to all Christians, and especially to the priests, prelates and religious, who are accustomed to treat with more familiarity the body and blood of Christ our Lord, and who by their office and state are his closer friends. In order to avoid blame I would like to find words and expressions sufficiently strong to make an impression on our unfeeling obduracy, so all of us may take a salutary warning and be filled with the fear of the punishments awaiting all bad Christians according to the station each one of us occupies. The demons torment Judas with inexpressible cruelty because he persisted in the betrayal of his Master, by whose Passion and Death they were vanquished and despoiled of the possession of the world. The wrath which they had conceived against the Savior and his Blessed Mother they wreak, as far as allowed them, on all those who imitate the traitorous disciple and follow him in his contempt of the evangelical law, the Sacraments, and the fruits of the Redemption. And in this the demons are but executing just punishment on those members of the Mystical Body of Christ who have severed their connection with its head Christ,

and who have voluntarily drifted away and delivered themselves over to the accursed hate and implacable fury of his enemies. As the instruments of divine justice they chastise the redeemed for their ingratitude toward their Redeemer. Let the children of the Church consider well this truth, for it cannot fail to move their hearts and induce them to evade such a lamentable fate.

540. During the whole course of the Passion Lucifer with his demons moved about, eagerly spying out all the circumstances of each event in order to ascertain whether Christ the Lord was really the Messiah and Redeemer of the world. On the one hand his miracles seemed to argue the truth of their suspicions; on the other, very often his doings and sufferings, so much like those of weak human nature, argued the contrary. But the strongest suspicions of the dragon occurred in the garden when he felt the force of the Lord when He said *I am He* (Jn. 18:5), which crushed the demon himself, who fell prostrate with all his associates in the presence of Christ our Lord, and this had happened only a short time after he and his legions had issued from hell where they had been hurled from the Cenacle. And since most holy Mary had routed them from the hall of the Last Supper (as stated above [478-9]), Lucifer conferred with himself and his ministers and concluded that such virtue and power possessed by the Son and Mother was altogether new and had never been exercised against them. When he had received permission to rise from his fall in the garden, he conferred with the rest of the demons and said to them: "It is not possible that this power is that of a mere man; without doubt He is God and at the same time man. If He shall die as we have planned He will accomplish the Redemption of man and satisfy the justice of God; then our sway will cease and all our intentions will be frustrated. We have erred in seeking his death. If we cannot now prevent his death, let us see how far his endurance will go and excite his enemies to torture Him with most impious cruelty. Let us stir up their fury against Him; let us suggest to their minds new insults, affronts, ignominies and torments to be inflicted upon his Person; let us drive them to vent upon Him all their wrath in order to exhaust his patience, and let us carefully study the results." These proposals the demons sought to realize, though due to the hidden mysteries alluded to above and to be mentioned later (579, 627, 631) they found that not all of their plans succeeded, for whenever they incited the executioners to inflict tortures unbecoming his royal and divine Person, the Lord would not permit such indignities more than was becoming, while He gave free scope to their inhuman barbarities and savage fury in all the rest.

541. The great Lady of heaven, Mary most holy, likewise interfered in order to curb the insolent malice of Lucifer, for She was well aware of all the designs of the infernal dragon. Sometimes She would make use of her sovereign power as Queen to prevent some of the hellish suggestions from reaching the ministers of the Passion; other times She prevented their execution by her prayers, or enlisted the service of her holy Angels to drive away and confuse the persecutors of her Son. Those sufferings which by her great wisdom She knew her Son desired to undergo She permitted, fulfilling in all things the divine will. She likewise knew all that had happened in the unhappy death and torments of Judas, the place which he occupied in hell, and the seat of fire which was his for all eternity as the master of hypocrisy and the leader of all those who were to deny Christ our Redeemer as well in thought as in their works, who (as Jeremias said [17:13]) leave the veins of living waters, that is Christ, and whose names are written and sealed upon the earth, far from heaven where are written the names of the predestined. All this the Mother of Mercy knew, bitterly weeping over his fate, praying to the Lord for the salvation of men, and beseeching Him to withdraw them from such great blindness and from such a dangerous precipice and ruin; yet in all this She conformed Herself to the hidden and just judgments of divine Providence.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY MOST HOLY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, GAVE ME.

542. My daughter, thou art astonished, and not without cause, at what thou hast learned and recorded regarding the unhappy fate of Judas and the fall of the Apostles, who were all disciples in the school of Christ, raised at the bosom of his doctrine, life, examples and miracles, and favored by his sweetest meekness and treatment, and by my counsels, intercession, and other benefits received through me. Yet in truth I say to thee, if all the children of the Church would attentively consider this singular example they would find a salutary exhortation and warning in order to fear this dangerous state of mortal life, even in the midst of the favors and blessings they continually receive at the hands of the Lord, since none of them can be equal to the Apostles in seeing Him, hearing Him, conversing with Him, and having Him as the living Model of all sanctity. The Apostles received from me personal exhortations, and they were eyewitnesses of my blameless and holy conduct; they received great tokens of my kindness, and I communicated to them the very charity of God which flowed from His Majesty through me. If they, in the very act of receiving such favors, and in the very presence of their God and Savior, forgot all of them and all their obligation of corresponding to them, who then shall be so presumptuous in this mortal life as not to fear the danger of eternal ruin, no matter how many favors he has received from the Almighty? They were Apostles chosen by their divine Master, their true God, yet one of them fell lower than any other individual of the human race, and the others failed in faith, the foundation of all virtue; yet all this was conformable to the just judgments of the Most High. Why then would those who are not Apostles be without fear, who have not so labored in the school of Christ and who have not so merited my intercession?

543. Concerning the ruin and perdition of Judas, and his most just punishment, thou hast written enough in order to understand to what state a man can arrive when carried away by vices and an evil will when he delivers himself over to them and to the demon, and by refusing to hear and follow the pleading of grace. I moreover inform thee that not only the torments of the traitorous disciple Judas, but also those of many other Christians who condemn themselves and shall be sent to the same place of punishment which was assigned to Judas and to them from the beginning of the world, are greater than the torments of many demons; for my most holy Son did not die for the angels but for men, nor were the fruits and results of the Redemption for the demons but entirely at the disposal of the children of the Church in the holy Sacraments. The contempt for these incomparable benefits is not properly the sin of demons but of Christians, and therefore they must expect a special and appropriate punishment for this contempt. The mistake of not having recognized Christ as the true God causes the deepest and most tormenting regret to Lucifer and his evil spirits for all eternity, and this pain results in new indignation against the redeemed, particularly against Christians, who derived the greatest benefits from the Redemption and the blood of the Lamb. That is why the demons are so eager to cause forgetfulness and misuse of these graces in them, and why afterwards in hell they are permitted to vent so much the greater fury and wrath upon the wicked Christians. If it were not for the equitable dispositions of divine justice by which the pains are proportioned to the guilt, they would wreak still fiercer vengeance upon them; but the goodness of the Lord extends even to this place, and restrains the malice of the demons by his infinite power and wisdom.

544. In the fall of the other eleven Apostles I desire thee, my dearest, to learn the frailty of human nature, since even in the midst of such great blessings and favors received from the Lord men easily fall into the habit of gross negligence and ingratitude such as the Apostles manifested when in disbelief they fled from their heavenly Master and abandoned Him. Men incur this

danger due to their earthly and sensual inclinations, the result of past sins, and the habits formed by a terrestrial, carnal and sensual life, devoid of spirituality; because of this they desire and love the divine favors and benefits only in a carnal manner. As soon as they fail to find that kind of enjoyment in them they turn to other sensible enjoyments, are moved by them, and lose the true conception of a spiritual life, for they treat it and estimate it according to the low standard of mere sensuality. Hence the Apostles, though they were so greatly favored by my most holy Son, fell into such gross heedlessness and sins, for his miracles, teachings and examples affected them only in a sensible manner; and since they, in spite of their being raised to justice and perfection, permitted themselves to be affected by them only outwardly, they were consequently disturbed by temptation and yielded to it. They acted like men who had done little to penetrate into the mysteries and the spirit of what they had seen and heard in the school of their Master. By this example, my daughter, and by my teachings thou ought to be well instructed, a spiritual disciple of mine and not a terrestrial one, not accustoming thyself to the sensible, even in favors bestowed upon thee by the Lord or by myself. When thou dost receive them do not attach thyself merely to the material or sensible in them, but raise thy mind to the exalted and the spiritual contained therein, to that which is perceived by the interior and spiritual senses and not by the sensual (I Cor. 2:14). If even the merely sensible can hinder the spiritual life, how much is this true of that which pertains altogether to earthly, animal and carnal life? Clearly I desire thee to forget and blot out of thy faculties all images and remembrances of mere creatures in order to make thyself fit to receive my salutary teaching and be capable of imitating me.