

CHAPTER XXI

Pilate Pronounces the Sentence of Death against the Author of Life; His Majesty Takes Up the Cross upon which He is to Die; His Most Holy Mother Follows Him; what the Great Lady Did against the Demon on the Way, and Other Happenings.

643. Pilate decreed the sentence of death on the cross against Life himself, Jesus our Savior, to the great satisfaction and pleasure of the priests and Pharisees. Having announced it and notified the most innocent Prisoner, they brought His Majesty to another part of the house of Pilate, where they stripped Him of the purple mantle in which they had derided Him as a mock king. All happened according to the mysterious dispensation of God, though on their part it was due to the concerted malice of the Jews, for they wished to see Him undergo the punishment of the cross in his own clothes so in them He could be recognized by all. Only by his garments could He now be recognized by the people, since his face had been disfigured beyond recognition by the scourging, the impure spittle, and the crown of thorns. They again clothed Him with the seamless tunic, which at the command of the Queen was brought to Him by the Angels, for the executioners had thrown it into a corner of another room in the house where they left it to place upon Him the mocking and scandalous purple cloak. But the Jews neither understood nor noticed any of these circumstances, since they were too preoccupied with the desire of hastening his death.

644. Through the diligence of the Jews in spreading the news of the sentence decreed against Jesus of Nazareth the people hastened in multitudes to the house of Pilate in order to see Him brought forth to execution. Since the ordinary number of inhabitants was increased by the gathering of numerous strangers from different parts to celebrate the Pasch, the city was full of people. All of them were stirred by the news and filled the streets up to the very palace of Pilate. It was a Friday, the day of the Parasceve (Jn. 19:14), which in Greek signifies preparation or arrangement, for on that day the Jews prepared themselves and made arrangements for the ensuing Sabbath, their greatest feast, on which no servile work was to be performed, not even such as cooking meals; all this had to be done on this Friday. In the sight of all these multitudes they brought forth our Savior in his own garments and with a countenance so disfigured by wounds, blood and spittle that no one would have again recognized Him as the One they had seen or known before. He appeared, as Isaias said (53:4), *as it were a leper, and as one struck by God*, because the dried blood and bruises had transfigured Him into one wound. At the command of his afflicted Mother the holy Angels had a few times wiped off some of the impure spittle, but his enemies had so persistently continued in their disgusting insults that He now appeared altogether covered by their vile expletions. At the sight of such a sorrowful spectacle a confused shouting and clamor arose from the people such that nothing could be understood, all forming one uproar and confusion of voices. But above all the rest were heard the shouts of the priests and Pharisees, who in their unrestrained rejoicing and derision harangued the people to become quiet and clear the streets through which the divine Victim was to pass so they could hear the sentence of death proclaimed against Him. The people were divided and confused in their opinions according to the suggestions of their own hearts. At this spectacle were present different kinds of people who had been benefited and aided by the miracles and kindness of the Savior, and such as had heard and accepted his teachings and had become his followers and friends. These now showed their sympathy, some by bitter tears, others by asking what this Man

had done to deserve such punishment, while others were dumbfounded and began to be troubled and confused by this universal confusion and tumult.

645. Of the eleven Apostles St. John alone was present. He with the Sorrowful Mother and the three Marys stood within sight of the Lord, though in a retired corner. When the holy Apostle saw his divine Master (by whom he was considered beloved) taken out into the public area, his soul was so wounded with grief that he came to the point of fainting and losing his pulse, and his face took on the appearance of death. The three Marys fell away into a prolonged swoon. But the Queen of virtues remained unconquered, and her magnanimous Heart, though overwhelmed by a grief beyond all conception of man, never fainted or swooned; She did not share the imperfections of discouragement or fainting as the rest. In all her actions She was most prudent, courageous and admirable. Calmly She comforted St. John and the pious women. She besought the Lord to strengthen them so She could have their company to the end of the Passion. In virtue of this prayer the Apostle and the holy women were consoled and encouraged, and thus regained their senses and could speak to the Lady of heaven. Amid all this bitterness and confusion She did nothing unbecoming or inconsiderate, but shed forth incessant tears with the dignity of a Queen. Her attention was riveted upon her Son, the true God. She prayed to the eternal Father and offered to Him his sorrows and torments, imitating in her actions all that was done by our Savior. She recognized the malice of sin, penetrated the mysteries of the Redemption, appealed to the Angels, and interceded for friends and enemies. While giving way to her maternal love and to the sorrows corresponding to it, She at the same time entirely filled up the choir of her virtues to the admiration of heaven and the consummate pleasure of the Divinity. Since it is not possible for me to describe the sentiments filling the Heart of this great Mother of Wisdom, nor those at times also uttered by her lips, I leave them to Christian piety.

646. The servants and priests sought to quiet the multitudes so they would be able to hear the sentence pronounced against Jesus of Nazareth, for after it had been made known to Him in person they desired to have it read before the people and in his presence. Having quieted the multitude, with His Majesty standing in their presence as if He was a criminal, they began to read it in a loud voice so all could understand; afterwards they repeated it in the streets, and lastly at the foot of the cross. The sentence circulates about printed in the vernacular, as I have seen a copy. According to the understanding given to me, in substance it is true, except some words which have been added. I will not discuss them, for the exact words of this sentence have been shown to me, and I give them here without change.

*WORDING OF THE SENTENCE OF DEATH WHICH PILATE PRONOUNCED AGAINST
JESUS OF NAZARETH, OUR SAVIOR.*

647. "I, Pontius Pilate, presiding judge of lower Galilee, Regent for the Roman empire, here present in Jerusalem, within the Executive Palace, judge, sentence and pronounce that I condemn to death Jesus, called by the people a Nazarene, and of the Galilean homeland, a seditious man, opposed to the law, to our Senate, and to the great emperor Tiberius Caesar. For the execution of this sentence I decree that his death be upon the cross, and that He shall be fastened thereto with nails as is customary with criminals; because here, gathering and assembling daily many men poor and rich, He has not ceased to stir up tumults throughout Judea, calling Himself the Son of God and King of Israel, threatening the ruin of this so illustrious city of Jerusalem and its temple, and of the sacred Empire, refusing tribute to Caesar, and for having had the boldness to enter with branches of palm and in triumph, with a great portion of the populace, into this same city of

Jerusalem and into the sacred temple of Solomon. I command the first centurion, named Quintus Cornelius, to take Him through the said city of Jerusalem in disgrace, bound as He is, and scourged by my order. And let his garments be placed upon Him that He may be known by all, as well as his own cross upon which He is to be crucified. Let Him go through all the public streets between the other two criminals, thieves who are likewise condemned to death for the thefts and murders they have committed, so in this manner He may be an example for all the people and evildoers.

“I likewise desire and command by this my sentence that after having thus been led through the public streets this malefactor be taken outside the city through the Pagora gate, now called the Antonian, and upon the proclamation of the herald, who shall mention all the aforementioned crimes set forth in this my sentence, He shall be taken to the mount which is called Calvary, where it is the custom to execute and do justice upon wicked criminals, and there fastened and crucified on the same cross which He shall carry, as stated above, his body shall remain hanging between the aforesaid two thieves. And above the Cross, that is at the top of it, He shall have placed for Him the title of his name in the three languages most commonly in use at this time, namely Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and in all and each one of them shall be written: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS, for all to understand and so it can become known to all.

“I likewise command, under pain of the loss of his goods and life, and of rebellion against the Roman empire, that no one, of whatever state or condition he may be, dare rashly to impede the said justice commanded by me to be done, pronounced, administered, and executed with all rigor according to the decrees and laws of the Romans and Hebrews. Year of the creation of the world 5233, the twenty-fifth day of March.”

Pontius Pilatus Judex et Gubernator Galilææ inferioris pro Romano Imperio qui supra propria manu. (Pontius Pilate, Judge and Governor of lower Galilee for the Roman Empire, who signed the above with his own hand.)

648. According to the above reckoning the creation of the world happened in March, and from the day on which Adam was created until the Incarnation of the Word 5,199 years passed; adding the nine months during which He remained in the virginal womb of his most holy Mother, and the thirty-three years and three months of his life, we complete the 5,233 years which according to the reckoning of the Romans intervened between the anniversary of the creation of Adam and March 25, 5233, the day of the death of Christ. According to the reckoning of the Roman Church there are not more than nine months and seven days to the first year, since it begins its count of years with the first of January of the second year of the world. Of all the opinions of the Doctors I have understood the one which corresponds to the reckoning of the Roman Church in the Roman Martyrology to be the true one, as I also stated in the chapter on the Incarnation of Christ our Lord in Book One of the second Part, chapter XI (*Inc.* 138).

649. The sentence of Pilate against our Savior having been published in a loud voice before all the people, the executioners loaded the heavy Cross on which He was to be crucified upon his tender and wounded shoulder. So He could carry it they loosened the bonds holding his hands, but not the others, since they wished to drag Him along by the loose ends of the ropes which bound his body. In order to further torment Him they drew two loops around his throat. The Cross was fifteen feet long, thick, and of very heavy wood. The herald began to proclaim the sentence, and the whole confused and turbulent multitude of the people, along with the executioners and soldiers, with great noise, uproar and disorder, began to move from the house

of Pilate to mount Calvary through the streets of Jerusalem. But the Master and Redeemer of the world, Jesus, before receiving the Cross, looked upon it with a countenance full of exultation and extreme joy (such as would be shown by a bridegroom looking at the rich adornments of his bride), and upon receiving it He addressed it as follows:

650. "O Cross, desired of my soul, prepared to meet my longings, come to Me, my beloved, in order to receive Me in thy arms, so on them as upon a sacred altar my eternal Father may receive the sacrifice of everlasting reconciliation with the human race. In order to die upon thee I have descended from heaven to live in mortal and passible flesh, since thou shalt be the sceptre with which I shall triumph over all my enemies, the key with which I shall open the gates of paradise for my predestined (Is. 22:22), the sanctuary in which the guilty sons of Adam shall find mercy, and the treasure house which can enrich their poverty. Upon thee I desire to accredit the dishonors and reproaches of men, so my friends embrace them with joy and seek them with anxious longings, in order to follow Me on the path which I through thee shall open up for them. My Father and eternal God, I confess Thee as the Lord of heaven and earth (Mt. 11:25), and obeying thy divine will I shall load upon my shoulders the wood of the sacrifice* of my most innocent and passible humanity, and I accept it willingly for the eternal salvation of men. Receive, eternal Father, this sacrifice as acceptable to thy justice, in order that from now on they may not be servants but children and heirs with Me of thy kingdom" (Rom. 8:17).

651. None of these sacred mysteries and happenings were hidden from the great Lady of the world, Mary most holy, for She had a most intimate knowledge and understanding of them, far beyond that of all the angels. The events which She could not see with the eyes of her body She knew by the understanding and knowledge of the revelation which manifested them along with the interior operations of her most holy Son. By this divine light She recognized the infinite value of the wood of the Cross after it had come in contact with the deified humanity of Jesus our Redeemer. Immediately She venerated and adored it in a manner befitting it; the same was also done by all the supernal spirits who attended upon the Lord and the Queen. She imitated her divine Son in the tokens of affection with which He received the Cross, addressing it in words suited to her office as Coadjutrix of the Redeemer, and She did the same in praying to the eternal Father, imitating Christ in all things to the highest extent as his living image and copy, without failing in the least point. When She heard the voice of the herald publishing and rehearsing the sentence through the streets, the heavenly Mother, in protest against the accusations contained in the sentence, and in the form of comments on the glory and honor of the Lord, composed a canticle of praise and worship of the innocence and sinlessness of her most holy Son and God. The holy Angels helped Her to compose this canticle, and together with them She arranged and repeated it, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem were blaspheming their Creator and Savior.

652. Since all the faith, knowledge and love possessed by creatures during this time of the Passion were enshrined in their highest essence in the magnanimous soul of the Mother of Wisdom, She alone had the most proper conception and correct judgment of the suffering and death of God for men. Without for a moment failing in the attention necessary to exterior actions, her wisdom penetrated all the mysteries of the Redemption and the manner in which it was to be accomplished through the ignorance of the very men who were being redeemed. She penetrated by worthy meditation who it was that was suffering, what He was suffering, and from and for whom He was suffering. Regarding the dignity of the Person of Christ our Redeemer, uniting within Himself two natures, the divine and the human, and regarding their perfections and

* cf. Gen. 22:6 [Ed.]

attributes, only most holy Mary possessed the highest and intuitive knowledge outside of the Lord himself; hence She alone among all mere creatures attached sufficient importance to the Passion and Death of her Son and the true God himself. This guileless Dove was not only an eyewitness of what He suffered, but She experienced it personally within Herself, occasioning the holy envy not only of men but of the angels themselves, who had not attained this grace. Yet they knew the great Queen and Lady felt and suffered in soul and body the same sorrows and sufferings as her most holy Son, and that the holy Trinity was inexpressibly pleased with Her, and therefore they sought to make up by their praise and worship for the pains which they could not share. Sometimes when the Sorrowful Mother could not personally witness the sufferings of her Son, She was made to feel in her virginal body and spirit the effects of his torments before her understanding made Her aware of them. Thus surprised She would say: "Alas, what new martyrdom have they devised for my sweetest Lord and Master!" Then She would receive the clearest knowledge of what the Lord was enduring. The most loving Mother was so admirably faithful in her sufferings and in imitating the example of Christ our Good that She never permitted Herself any easement, either of her bodily pains, such as rest, nourishment or sleep, nor any relaxation of the spirit, such as any consoling thoughts or considerations, except when She was visited from on high by divine influence, for only then would She humbly and gratefully accept relief so She could recover new strength by which to attend still more fervently to her suffering Son and the cause of his torments. She utilized the same science and consideration regarding the malice of the Jews and the executioners, to the needs of the human race and its ruin, and to the ingratitude of men for whom her most holy Son suffered; thus She knew all that was happening in an eminent and most perfect degree, and felt them more deeply than all creatures.

653. Another hidden and admirable work was wrought by the right hand of the Omnipotent through the instrumentality of most holy Mary against Lucifer and his infernal spirits. It took place in the following manner: Since this dragon and his associates were attentive to all that happened in the Passion of the Lord, though they did not fully understand it, at the moment His Majesty received the Cross upon his shoulders all these enemies felt a new weakness and debilitation which due to their ignorance and by its novelty caused them great astonishment and impending doom full of confusion and rancor. Because he felt these new and unstoppable effects the prince of darkness feared that in the Passion and Death of Christ our Lord some dire and irreparable destruction of his reign was imminent. In order not to be overtaken by it in the presence of Christ our Good, the dragon resolved to retreat and flee with all his followers to the caverns of hell. But when he sought to execute this resolve he was prevented by the great Queen and Mistress of all creation, for the Most High, enlightening Her and intimating to Her what She was to do, at the same time invested Her with his power. The heavenly Mother, turning toward Lucifer and his squadrons, by her imperial command hindered them from fleeing and ordered them to await and witness the Passion to the end on mount Calvary. The demons could not resist the command of the mighty Queen, for they recognized and felt the divine power operating in Her. Subject to her sway they followed Christ as so many prisoners dragged along in chains to Calvary, where the eternal Wisdom had decreed to triumph over them from the throne of the Cross, as we shall see further on (701ff.). There is nothing which can exemplify the discouragement and dismay which from that moment began to oppress Lucifer and his demons. According to our way of speaking they walked along to Calvary like criminals condemned to a terrible death and seized by the dismay and consternation of an inevitable punishment. This punishment of the demon was in conformity with his malicious nature and proportioned to the

evil committed by him in introducing death and sin into the world (Wis. 2:24), to remedy which God himself was now undergoing death.

654. Our Savior proceeded on the way to Calvary bearing upon his shoulder, according to the saying of Isaias, his own government and principality (Is. 9:6), which was nothing else than his Cross from whence He was to subject and govern the world* and rescue the human race from the tyrannical power of the demon over the sons of Adam (Col. 2:15), meriting thereby that his Name be exalted above all other names (Philip. 2:9). The same Isaias calls this tyranny *the yoke and sceptre of their oppressor* (9:4) and executor, who was imperiously exacting the tribute of the first guilt. In order to destroy this tyrant and break the sceptre of his reign and the yoke of our servitude, Christ our Savior placed the Cross upon his shoulder, namely upon that place where are borne both the yoke of slavery and the sceptre of royal power. He desired to indicate thereby that He despoiled the demon of this power and transferred it to his own shoulder, so the captive children of Adam, from that hour in which He took up his Cross, would recognize Him for their legitimate Lord and true King. All mortals were to follow Him on the Way of the Cross (Mt. 16:24), and learn that by this Cross they were subjected to his power (Jn. 12:32) and now become his vassals and servants, purchased at the price of his own blood and life (I Cor. 6:20).

655. But O the sorrow of our most ungrateful forgetfulness! That the Jews and ministers of the Passion were ignorant of this mystery hidden to the princes of this world, and that they dared not touch the Cross of the Savior because they considered it an ignominious disgrace, was their own fault and a very great one. However, it not so great as our own, for this sacrament having been already revealed to us, in our belief in this truth we condemn the blindness of those who persecuted our Lord and highest Good; yet if we blame them for being ignorant of what they ought to have known, how much more should we blame ourselves, who knowing and confessing Christ as our Redeemer still persecute and crucify Him by our sins (Heb. 6:6)? O Jesus, my sweetest Love, light of my understanding and glory of my soul! Do not, O my Lord, trust in my tardiness and sluggishness to follow Thee with my cross on thy way trodden by Thee! Take it upon Thee to do me this favor: Draw me after Thee to run after the fragrance of thy most ardent love (Cant. 1:3), thy ineffable patience, thy most eminent humility, contempt and anguish, and the participation in thy ignominies, insults and sorrows. Let this be my portion and my inheritance in this mortal and oppressing life; let this be my glory and my repose; and outside of thy Cross and its ignominy I do not desire to live or be consoled, or partake of any rest or enjoyment. Since the Jews and all of that blind multitude avoided the touch of the Cross of Him who though most innocent was sentenced to die upon it, He opened with it a passage and cleared for Himself a way. His perfidious persecutors looked upon his glorious dishonor as a contagion and they fled from its approach, even though all the rest of the streets were full of shouting and clamoring people who crowded aside as the herald advanced proclaiming the sentence.

656. The executioners, devoid of all human compassion and kindness, dragged our Savior Jesus along with incredible cruelty and insults. Some of them jerked Him forward by the ropes in order to hasten his passage, while others pulled from behind in order to hinder it. Because of this jerking and the weight of the Cross they caused Him to sway to and fro and often to fall to the ground. By the hard knocks He thus received on the rough stones great wounds were opened, especially on the two knees, and they were widened at each repeated fall. The heavy Cross also inflicted a wound on the shoulder on which it was carried. The unsteadiness caused the Cross sometimes to knock against his sacred head, and sometimes his head against the Cross; thus the

* cf. *Vexilla Regis*, (Vesper Hymn for Passion Time), v. 3 [Ed.]

thorns of his crown penetrated deeper and wounded the parts which they had not yet reached. To these torments of the body the ministers of evil added many insulting words and execrable affronts, ejecting their impure spittle and throwing the dirt of the pavement into his face so excessively that they blinded the eyes which so mercifully looked upon them; by this they condemned themselves as unworthy of such a gracious gaze. By the haste with which they dragged Him along in their eagerness to see Him die they did not allow Him to catch his breath, for his most innocent body, having been in so few hours overwhelmed with such a storm of torments, was so weakened and bruised that to all appearances He was ready to yield up life under his pains and sorrows.

657. Among the multitude of people the sorrowful and stricken Mother followed her most holy Son from the house of Pilate, accompanied by St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the other Marys. Since the surging crowds hindered Her from getting very near to the Lord, She asked the eternal Father to be permitted to stand at the foot of the Cross in the company of her Son and Lord so She could see Him bodily. In conformity with the will of the Most High She ordered her holy Angels to manage things in such a way as to make it possible for Her to execute her wishes. The holy Angels obeyed Her with great reverence, and they speedily led the Queen through some bystreet so She could meet her Son. Thus it happened that the Son and the Mother met face to face in most sweet recognition of each other and in mutual renewal of each other's interior sorrows. They did not speak to one another, nor would the fierce cruelty of the executioners have permitted such a conversation; yet the most prudent Mother adored her divine Son and true God laden with the Cross, and interiorly besought Him that since She could not relieve Him of the weight of the Cross, and since She was not permitted to command her holy Angels to lighten it, He would inspire these ministers of cruelty to procure someone for his assistance. This petition was granted by Christ our Good, and from it resulted the forcing of Simon of Cyrene to carry the Cross with the Savior (Mt. 27:32), as we shall presently see (660). Some of the Pharisees and ministers of evil were moved to this measure out of a certain natural humanity, and others for fear that Christ our Lord would lose his life before it could be taken from Him on the Cross, for His Majesty was extremely weakened as mentioned above.

658. The sorrow the most sincere Dove and Virgin Mother felt in this journey to mount Calvary, seeing her own Son carrying the Cross, exceeded all human estimation and language, since She alone could worthily know and love Him. It would have been impossible for Her to live through this ordeal if the divine power had not strengthened Her and preserved her life. With most bitter sorrow She addressed the Lord and spoke to Him in her Heart: "My Son and eternal God, light of my eyes and life of my soul, receive, O Lord, the sorrowful sacrifice of my not being able to relieve Thee of the weight of the Cross and carry it myself, who am a daughter of Adam, in order to die upon it for love of Thee as Thou dost desire to die out of most ardent charity for the human race. O most loving Mediator between guilt and justice! How dost Thou promote mercy amid such injuries and among such offenses? O charity without end or measure, which in order to augment its flame and efficacy yields to torments and insults! O infinite and sweetest Love, would that the hearts and the wills of all men were mine so they would not give such an evil return for all Thou dost suffer! O who will speak to the hearts of mortals in order to announce to them what they owe to Thee, since it has cost Thee so dearly to rescue them from their captivity and remedy their ruin!" Other most prudent and exalted reasonings besides these were spoken by the great Lady of the world which I cannot express by my words.

659. Also following the Lord in the multitude of common people (as the Evangelist St. Luke says in chapter XXIII [v. 27]) were many other women who lamented and wept bitterly. Most

sweet Jesus, turning toward them, addressed them and said (Ib. 28-31): *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?* By these mysterious words the Lord accredited the tears shed because of his most holy Passion, and in a certain manner approved of them, showing Himself as obliged by their compassion in order to teach us in these women the purpose which our tears must have in order to be well suited toward their proper end. At that time these compassionate disciples of the Lord were ignorant of this true purpose of such tears, weeping over his affronts and pains and not over the cause of his sufferings, and thus they merited to be instructed and admonished of the truth. It was as if the Savior had said to them: Weep over thy sins and the sins of thy children, and attribute what I suffer to those sins. I suffer not for my sins, for I am guilty of none, and it is not even possible that I be guilty of any. If I approve of thy compassion for Me as good and just, much more do I desire thee to weep over thy sins for which I suffer, for by this manner of weeping shall pass to thee and thy children the price of my blood and Redemption, ignored by this blind people. For there shall come days (which shall be those of universal judgment and chastisement) in which those shall be held as fortunate who have not begotten children, in which the foreknown shall call upon the mountains and the hills to shield them against my wrath. For if their sins, now only assumed by Me, have such effects upon Me, who am innocent, what horrible punishments will they draw upon those who are so dry and without any fruits of grace and merits?

660. As a reward for their tears and compassion these women were enlightened in order to understand this doctrine. In fulfillment of the petition of most holy Mary the Pharisees and ministers of the Passion were inspired with the resolve to engage some man to help Jesus our Savior in carrying the Cross to Calvary. At this juncture Simon of Cyrene, the father of the disciples Alexander and Rufus (Mk. 15:21), happened to come along. He was called by this name because he was a native of Cyrene, a city of Libya, and had come to Jerusalem. This Simon was now forced by the Jews to carry the Cross a part of the way, since they themselves were ashamed to come near it as being the instrument of punishment of one whom they held to be a notorious evildoer, expecting all the people to understand this by these formalities and precautions. The Cyrenian took hold of the Cross, and Jesus was made to follow between the two thieves so all might believe Him to be a criminal and evildoer like them. The Mother of Jesus our Savior walked very closely behind His Majesty as She had desired and asked of the eternal Father. To his divine will She so conformed Herself in all the labors and torments of the Passion of her Son that although participating and communicating in his torments so closely in all her senses, She never allowed any movement or gesture in her interior or exterior which could portray a recantation of her consent to the sufferings of her Son and God. Her charity and love of men, along with her grace and sanctity, were so great that She vanquished all these movements of her human nature.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

661. My daughter, I desire the fruit of the obedience with which thou dost write the History of my life to be for thee to become a true disciple of my most holy Son and of myself. The divine light thou dost receive regarding such exalted and venerable sacraments, and the teachings which

I so often repeat to thee, is primarily ordained toward this, that thou turn away from, strip thyself of, and distance thy heart from all affection for creatures, neither wishing to possess them nor accept them for other uses. By this precaution thou shalt overcome the impediments which the demon seeks to place in the way of the dangerous softness of thy nature. I who know thee thus advise and lead thee by way of instruction and correction as thy Mother and Instructress. By the divine teaching thou knowest the mysteries of the Passion and Death of Christ, and the one true way of life, which is the Way of the Cross; and thou likewise knowest that not all who are called are chosen.* Many there are who wish to follow Christ, yet very few who truly dispose themselves to imitate Him; for as soon as they feel the cross of suffering they cast it from them and recoil from it. The pain of labors is felt keenly and does violence to human nature according to the flesh, while the fruits of the spirit are more hidden, and few guide themselves by the light. Because of this there are so many among mortals who, forgetful of the truth, seek the flesh and the continual indulgence of its pleasures. They ardently love honor and spurn affronts; they covet riches and detest poverty; they thirst for delight and dread mortification. All these are *enemies of the cross of Christ* (Philip. 3:18), and with dreadful horror they flee from it, deeming it sheer ignominy just like those who crucified Christ.

662. Another deceit has spread through the world: Many imagine they are following Christ their Master though they neither suffer affliction nor engage in any exertion or labor. They are content with avoiding boldness in committing sins, and place all their perfection in a certain prudence or hollow self-love which prevents them from denying anything to their will and from practicing any virtues at the cost of their flesh. They would easily escape this deception if they would consider that my Son was not only their Redeemer but their Teacher, and that He left in this world the treasures of his Redemption not only as a remedy against eternal ruin but as a necessary medicine for the sickness of sin in human nature. No one was more wise than my Son and Lord; no one could better understand the quality of love than His Majesty, who was and is Wisdom and charity itself (I Jn. 4:16); and no one was more able to fulfill all his desires. Nevertheless, although He could do it He did not choose a life of softness and ease for the flesh, but one full of labors and pains, for He judged his instructions to be incomplete and insufficient to redeem man if He failed to teach them how to overcome the demon, the flesh, and their own self, and that this magnificent victory is gained by the cross, by labors, penances, mortifications, and the acceptance of contempt, all of which are the indication and testimony of true love and the insignia of the predestined.

663. Thou, my daughter, knowest the value of the Holy Cross and the honor which it confers upon ignominies and tribulations; do thou embrace thy cross and bear it with joy in following my Son and thy Master (Mt. 16:24). In this mortal life let thy glory be in tribulations, persecutions (Rom. 5:3), contempt, infirmities, poverty, humiliation, and in whatever is painful and averse to mortal flesh. And in order for thee to imitate me and please me in all thy spiritual exercises I desire thee to seek no rest or consolation in any earthly thing. Thou must not dwell in thy thoughts upon what thou bearest, nor seek to alleviate it by outward expression, and even less extol or exaggerate the persecutions or molestations of creatures; nor should it ever be heard from thy lips how much thou dost endure, nor shouldst thou compare thy sufferings with those of others. I do not want to say it is a sin to accept some reasonable and moderate alleviation, or to mention thy afflictions. But in thee, my dearest, much alleviation, if not a sin, would be an infidelity to thy Spouse and Lord, for He has put thee personally under more obligation than

* cf. Mt. 20:16 [Ed.]

many generations of men,* and thy response in suffering and love shall be defective and lacking if it is not complete and loyal in all respects. So faithful does the Lord desire thy correspondence to be that thou must allow thy weak nature not even one sigh for mere natural relief and consolation. If love alone impels thee thou shalt allow thyself to be carried along by its sweet force and rest in it alone, and the love of the Cross shall immediately dispense with such natural relief in the same way as thou knowest I have done in my total self-sacrifice. Let this be to thee a general rule, that all human consolation is an imperfection and a danger, and thou must welcome only that which the Most High sends to thee Himself or through his holy Angels; and even these favors of the divine right hand thou must accept only insofar as they strengthen thee to suffer more constantly and detach thee from all that is pleasurable and which can pass over into the senses.

* cf. Lk. 12:48 [Ed.]