

CHAPTER XXV

How the Queen of Heaven Consoled St. Peter and the Other Apostles; the Prudence with which She Proceeded after the Burial of Her Son, and how She Saw His Most Holy Soul Descend to the Limbo of the Holy Fathers.

743. The fullness of wisdom in the soul of our great Queen and Lady amid all her sorrows permitted no defect or remissness in noticing and attending to all the duties of each occasion and at all times. By this heavenly foresight She met her obligations and practiced the highest and most eminent of all the virtues. She retired (as I have said [738]) to the house of the Cenacle after the burial of Christ our Good. Remaining in the hall of the Last Supper in the company of St. John, the Marys, and the other women who had followed Christ from Galilee, She spoke to them and to the Apostle, thanking them in profound humility and abundant tears for persevering with Her up to this time throughout the Passion of her beloved Son, in whose name She promised them the reward of having followed Him with so much constancy and devotion. At the same time She offered Herself as a servant and friend to those holy women. All of them with St. John acknowledged this great favor, kissing her hands and asking for her blessing. They also begged Her to take some rest and some bodily refreshment, but the Queen answered: "My rest and recovery shall be to see my Son and Lord risen from the dead. My dearly beloved, satisfy your needs as you see fit while I retire alone with my Son."

744. She then retired accompanied by St. John, and being alone with him She fell upon her knees and said: "There is no reason for thee to forget the words which my most holy Son spoke to us on the Cross. He condescended to call thee my son, and me thy mother. Thou, master, art a priest of the Most High; because of this great dignity it is reasonable for me to obey thee in all I am to do, and from this hour I desire thee to order and command me, remembering I shall always be thy servant, and all my joy shall be set upon serving thee until my death." This the Lady said with many tears, and with copious tears of his own the Apostle said: "My Lady and Mother of my Redeemer and Lord, I am the one who must be subject to Thee in obedience, for the name of a son does not denote authority but submission and subjection to his mother. He who has made me a priest has made Thee his Mother, and being the Creator of the universe (Lk. 2:51) was subject to thy will in obedience; hence it is reasonable for me to be likewise subject to Thee, and labor with all my powers in worthy correspondence to the office He has given me of serving Thee as a son, for which I desire to be rather an angel than a creature of earth in order to fulfill it." This answer of the Apostle was very prudent, but it was not enough to overcome the humility of the Mother of virtues, who replied to it and said: "My son John, my consolation shall be to obey thee as my superior, since such thou art. In this life I must always have a superior to whom I surrender my will and judgment; thou, who art the minister of the Most High, canst fulfill this role for me, and as a son thou owest me this consolation in my laborious solitude." "My Mother, may thy will be done," said St. John, "for in it lies my own certainty." Without further answer the heavenly Mother then asked permission to remain alone in meditation upon the mysteries of her divine Son, asking him also to provide some refreshment for the holy women who had accompanied Her, and to assist and console them. She reserved only the Marys, because they desired to persevere in their fast until they would see the Lord risen from the dead, and She asked St. John to allow them to fulfill their affectionate devotion.

745. St. John then went to console the Marys and execute the commands of the great Lady. Having attended to their needs these pious women all retired to spend that night in sorrowful and

bitter meditations on the Passion and mysteries of the Savior. With such divine knowledge most holy Mary labored amid the floods of her sorrows and anguish, without ever forgetting the least point of the most perfect obedience, humility, charity, and prudent foresight for all that was necessary. She did not forget to attend to the necessities of these pious women, nor did She because of this forget anything necessary for the exercise of the highest perfection in Herself. She approved of the fast of the Marys as being strong and fervent in their love, and attended to the necessities of the weaker. She instructed the Apostle in his duties toward Herself, and proceeded in all things as the Instructress of perfection and the Lady of Grace. All this She did when the waters of tribulation had entered into her very soul (Ps. 68:2). Then remaining alone in her retreat She let loose the impetuous floods of her afflicted love and permitted Herself to be possessed interiorly and exteriorly by the bitterness of her soul. She renewed in her mind the recollection of the frightful death of her divine Son; the mysteries of his life, his preaching, and his miracles; the infinite value of the Redemption; the new Church which He had founded and adorned with the riches of the Sacraments and the treasures of grace; the happiness of the human race, now so copiously and gloriously redeemed; the inestimable fortune of the predestined, who would actually obtain that happiness; and the tremendous unhappiness of the reprobate, who by their own fault would make themselves unworthy of the eternal glory merited for them by her Son.

746. In the deep consideration of these high and hidden sacraments the great Lady passed that whole night, weeping and sighing, praising and glorifying the works of her divine Son, his Passion, his hidden judgments, and the rest of the high mysteries of divine Wisdom and the hidden providence of the Lord. All of them, as the only Mother of true wisdom, She contemplated and understood, conferring sometimes with the holy Angels, and at others with the Lord himself, concerning what the divine influences caused Her to feel in her own purest Heart. On the following sabbath morning, after four o'clock, St. John entered to console the Sorrowful Mother. Falling on her knees before him She asked him for his blessing as from her superior and a priest. Her new son on his part asked it of Her with tears in his eyes, and thus they gave their blessing one to the other. The heavenly Queen then ordered St. John to go into the city where he would shortly encounter St. Peter who was looking for him, and receive him, console him, and bring him to her presence, and to do the same with the other Apostles he would encounter, giving them hope of pardon and offering them her friendship. St. John left the Cenacle and a few steps away met St. Peter, who full of confusion and in tears was very timidly seeking the presence of the great Queen. He had just come from the cave where he had wept over his denials, but he was now consoled by St. John and encouraged by the message from the divine Mother. Then these two went in search of the other Apostles. Having found some they went together to the Cenacle, hoping for pardon. St. Peter entered first and alone into the presence of the Mother of Grace, and falling at her feet he said with great sorrow: "I have sinned, Lady, I have sinned before my God, and have offended my Master and Thee." He could not speak another word, being oppressed by tears, sighs and sobs which came from the depths of his afflicted heart.

747. The most prudent Virgin, seeing Peter kneeling on the ground, and considering him on the one hand as doing penance for sins so recently committed, and on the other hand as the head of the Church, chosen by her most holy Son as his vicar, did not deem it proper to prostrate Herself before the pastor who had just denied his Master, but neither would her humility suffer Her to withhold the reverence due to his office. In order to satisfy both obligations She judged it proper to give him reverence while hiding her motive. For this purpose She fell on her knees to do him reverence, at the same time concealing her intention by saying: "Let us ask pardon for thy guilt

from my Son and thy Master.” She prayed for him and revived his hope by reminding him of the merciful behavior of the Lord in regard to well-known sinners, and pointing out his own obligation as head of the Apostolic College to give the example of constancy in the confession of the faith. By these and other arguments of great force and sweetness She confirmed Peter in the hope of pardon. Then the other Apostles presented themselves, prostrating themselves before most holy Mary and asking pardon for their cowardice in forsaking her divine Son during his sufferings. They all wept bitterly over their sin, being moved to greater sorrow by the presence of this Mother so full of sorrowful pity.* Her wonderfully sweet countenance caused in them divine movements of contrition for their sins and love of their Master. The great Lady raised them up and encouraged them, promising them the pardon they sought and her intercession to obtain it. Then all of them in their turn related what had happened to each in his flight. Though the heavenly Lady knew all concerning these events, even to the last particulars, She heard them all kindly, taking occasion from what they said to touch their hearts, confirm them in their faith in their Redeemer and Master, and arouse in them divine love. In this the heavenly Lady succeeded completely, for they all went away from this conference burning with new fervor and justified by new increases of grace.

748. These were the occupations of the heavenly Queen during part of the sabbath. At the approach of evening She again retired, leaving the Apostles now renewed in spirit and full of consolation and joy in the Lord, yet also full of grief for the Passion of their Master. In her retirement during this evening the great Lady contemplated the doings of the most holy soul of her Son after leaving the sacred body, for from the time of his death the most blessed Mother knew that the soul of Christ, united to the Divinity, descended into limbo in order to release the holy Fathers from the subterranean prison where they had been detained since the death of the first just man who had died in expectation of the advent of the Redeemer of the whole human race. In order to speak about this mystery, which is one of the articles of faith pertaining to the most sacred humanity of Christ our Lord, it seems best to mention that which has been given me to understand regarding that place of limbo and its location. Thus I say the diameter of the earth’s globe, passing through the center from one surface to the other, measures two thousand, five hundred two leagues;† and from the surface to the center, one thousand, two hundred fifty-one leagues; and according to the diameter is to be calculated the circumference of this globe. In the center is the hell of the damned, as in the heart of the earth. This hell is a chaotic cavern which contains many dark dwellings for diverse punishments, all of them dreadful and terrible. All of these together form a vast globe like a huge round jar, with an opening or mouth of vast expansion. In this horrible dungeon filled with confusion and torments are the demons and all the damned (Mt. 25:41), and shall be there for all eternity, as long as God is God, for in hell there is no redemption.

749. To one side of hell is purgatory, where the souls of the just are purged, and where they purify themselves if they have not satisfied for their faults in this life, or have not departed from this earthly life entirely free from the defects incapacitating them for the beatific vision. This cavern is also large, but much smaller than hell, and though there are severe punishments in purgatory they have no connection with those of the hell of the damned. To the other side is limbo with two different divisions, one for the children who die without Baptism and tainted

* the exact opposite of the pitiless rebuke the chief priests and ancients gave Judas; cf. Mt. 27:4 [Ed.]

† A Spanish league being commonly accepted as approximately three miles, this diameter of the earth revealed by Ven. Mary is precisely correct. [Ed.]

only with original sin, without either good or bad works of their own election, and the other which served as a retreat for the just who were already purged from their sins but could neither enter heaven nor enjoy the vision of God until human Redemption was accomplished and Christ our Savior opened the gates of heaven closed by the sin of Adam (Ps. 23:9). This cavern of limbo is likewise smaller than hell and has no connection with it, nor are there in it the pains of the senses as in purgatory, for it was destined for the souls already purified in purgatory and implied only the absence of the beatific vision, which is the pain of privation. Hence in this part of limbo were all the purified souls who died in the state of grace until the death of the Redeemer. To this place of limbo the most holy soul of Christ, united to the Divinity, descended and to which we refer in saying that He descended into hell, for the word *hell* may be used to signify any of the infernal regions in the depths of the earth, though commonly we apply it only to the hell of the demons and the damned. This is the most notable meaning of this word, just as *heaven* ordinarily signifies the empyrean, the habitation of the Saints, where they are to dwell forever, while the damned remain forever in hell. The other parts of hell have also the more particular names of purgatory and limbo. After the Last Judgment only heaven and hell are to be inhabited, since purgatory shall become unnecessary, and from limbo the infants also shall depart to another different habitation.

750. To this cavern of limbo then the most holy soul of Christ our Lord went in the company of innumerable Angels, who gave glory, strength and divinity to their victorious and triumphant King. In accordance with his greatness and majesty they commanded the portals of this ancient prison to be opened so the King of glory, mighty in battles and Lord of virtues, would find them open and unobstructed at his entrance. At their command some of the rocks of the passage were rent and shattered, although this was not truly necessary since the King and his legion were immaterial spirits. By the presence of the most holy soul of Christ this obscure cavern was converted into a heaven and was filled with a wonderful splendor, and to the souls therein contained was imparted the clear vision of the Divinity. In one instant they passed from the state of long-deferred hope to the possession of glory, and from darkness to the inaccessible light which they now enjoyed. All of them recognized their true God and Redeemer and gave Him gratitude and glory, breaking forth in canticles of praise, saying: "*The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive divinity, power and strength* (Apoc. 5:12). *Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom, and we shall reign* (Ib. 9-10). Thine, O Lord, is the power, thine the reign, and thine is the glory of thy works." Then the Lord commanded the Angels to bring all the souls in purgatory, and at once they were all brought into his presence; and as a premier of human Redemption they were absolved by the Redeemer from the punishments they still needed to suffer, and were glorified with the other souls of the just by the beatific vision. Thus on that day in the presence of the King were depopulated the prisons of both limbo and purgatory.

751. But for the damned in hell this was a terrible day, because by the disposition of the Most High all of them were made to see and feel the descent of the Redeemer into limbo, and likewise the holy Fathers and the just were made witnesses of the terror caused by this mystery to the demons and the damned. The demons were yet terrorized and oppressed by the ruin which they had undergone on mount Calvary (as related above [710]), and when they heard (according to their manner of hearing and speaking) the voices of the Angels advancing before their King to limbo they were confounded and terrified anew. Like serpents pursued they hid themselves and clung to the most remote caverns of hell. The damned were seized with confusion upon confusion, becoming still more deeply conscious of their aberration and the loss of salvation,

now secured to the just. Since Judas and the impenitent thief had so recently and signally shared this unhappiness their torments were greater, and the demons were more highly enraged against them; as far as was allowed them the malignant spirits resolved to persecute and torment more grievously the Catholics who professed their faith, and those who fell away from it or denied it, for they concluded these merited greater punishment than the infidels to whom the faith is not preached.

752. Of all these mysteries, and of other secrets which I cannot mention, the great Lady of the world had a clear knowledge and vision from her retreat. Although this knowledge in the higher parts of her being or in her soul where this knowledge originated caused wonderful joy, yet She did not permit it to overflow into her virginal body, her senses, or her inferior faculties, to which it would naturally have been communicated. On the contrary, when She felt some of this joy overflow into the inferior parts of her being She besought the eternal Father to retard this overflow, for She did not wish to permit such enjoyment to her body as long as that of her divine Son rested in the grave and was not yet glorified. Such a watchful and faithful love was that of the most prudent Mother toward her Son and Lord, like a living, proper and perfect image of his deified humanity. By this delicate attention She remained full of joy in her soul, yet full of sorrow and anguish in her body, in the manner it happened in Christ our Savior. During this vision She composed songs of praise, magnifying the mysteries of this triumph and the most loving and wise providence of the Redeemer, who as an affectionate Father and omnipotent King desired in his own Person to take possession of the new reign given to Him by the Father, and who now rescued his subjects by his own presence so they could immediately begin to enjoy the reward merited for them. For these reasons, and others recognized by Her in this sacrament, She rejoiced and glorified the Lord as his Coadjutrix and the Mother of the Conqueror.

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

753. My daughter, attend to the teaching of this chapter as being most appropriate and necessary for the state in which the Most High has placed thee, and for what He desires in correspondence to his love. This must be that amid thy labors and communications with creatures, whether as a superior or a subject, governing, commanding or obeying, thou must by none of these, or other exterior occupations, lose the attention and sight of the Lord in the inmost and superior part of thy soul, nor be distracted from the light of the Holy Ghost, who shall assist thee by his constant communications; for my most holy Son desires, in the secret of thy heart, those paths which are hidden from the demon, and where the passions do not reach, because they lead to the sanctuary into which the High Priest alone can enter (Heb. 9:7), and where the soul enjoys the hidden embraces of its King and Spouse when it prepares for Him the bed of its rest unoccupied and entirely for Him. There shalt thou find thy Lord propitious, the Most High generous, thy Creator merciful, and thy sweet Spouse and Redeemer loving; there thou shalt not fear the power of darkness, nor the effects of sin, which are unknown in that region of light and truth.* Yet these paths are closed by the disordered love of what is visible, and by carelessness in the observance of the divine law; they are hindered by any attachment and disorder of the passions, and halted by any useless attention, and much more by restlessness of the spirit, not

* cf. Ps. 42:3; *Prayers at the Foot of the Altar* of Holy Mass [Ed.]

maintaining interior peace and serenity, for the soul is required to be alone, pure and disengaged from all that is not truth and light.

754. Thou hast well understood and experienced this doctrine, and I have manifested it to thee in practice as in a clear mirror in the way I acted amid the sorrows, anguish and afflictions of the Passion of my most holy Son, and amid the cares, attention, occupations and watchfulness with which I attended to the burial, the Apostles, and the holy women; and in all the rest of my life thou hast recognized the same behavior, how I joined these exterior activities to those of the spirit without conflict or hindrance. Thus in order to imitate me in this way of acting, as I require of thee, it is necessary that neither by the obligatory communication with creatures, nor by the labors of thy state of life, nor by the hardships of this life of exile, nor by the temptations or malice of the demon, thou permit in thy heart any affection which can hinder thee, or attention which distracts thy interior recollection. And I warn thee, my dearest, that if thou art not very vigilant in this carefulness thou shalt lose much time, squander endless and extraordinary benefits, frustrate the most exalted and holy ends of the Lord, and grieve me and the Angels, since we all desire thy conversation to be with us; thou shalt lose the tranquility of thy spirit and consolation of thy soul, many degrees of grace and increases of divine love as thou desirest, and finally the most copious reward in heaven, so important it is for thee to hear and obey me in what I teach thee with the condescension of a Mother. Consider this, my daughter, ponder it, and attend to my words in thy interior, so thou mayest put it into practice through my intercession and by divine grace. I likewise admonish thee to imitate me in the fidelity of my love by which I avoided joy and delight in order to imitate my Lord and Master, and to praise Him for this and for the benefit He bestowed upon the Saints in limbo when his most holy soul descended to rescue them and fill them with the joy of his sight, all of which were works of his infinite love.