

CHAPTER VII

The Apostles and Disciples Meet in order to Resolve Some Doubts, in Particular Regarding the Form of Baptism; They Administer that Sacrament to the New Catechumens; St. Peter Celebrates the First Mass; and how Most Holy Mary Labored in All This.

96. It does not pertain to the intention of this History to continue in it the order of the Acts of the Apostles as written by St. Luke, nor to record all they did after the descent of the Holy Ghost, for though the great Queen and Lady certainly knew all that passed, yet many things happened when She was not personally present. Of such it is not necessary to speak here, nor would it be possible to describe the manner in which the heavenly Queen cooperated in the works of the Apostles and disciples, and in all else that happened, for in order to do this it would require many large volumes. It is sufficient for my purpose and the sequence of this History to select the salient points of the Acts of the Apostles written by the Evangelist and make intelligible much of what he omits concerning our Queen and what was not to his purpose nor proper for him to write at that time.

97. As the Apostles continued their preaching and wonders in Jerusalem the number of the faithful increased, and seven days after the coming of the Holy Ghost it reached five thousand as St. Luke says in chapter IV of the Acts (v. 4). All were busy catechizing the newcomers in preparation for Baptism, though that work was done principally by the disciples, for the Apostles were preaching and conducting some controversies with the Pharisees and Sadducees. On this seventh day the Queen of the Angels, being in the retirement of her oratory and considering how the little flock of her divine Son was increasing, asked the Lord to give light to the Apostles in order for them to begin instituting a government for the better direction of these new children of the faith. Prostrate upon the floor She adored the Lord and said: “Most high and eternal God, as a vile worm of the earth I desire to praise and exalt Thee for the immense love Thou hast manifested for the human race, and because Thou showest the mercy of a Father in calling so many to the knowledge and faith of thy divine Son, glorifying and spreading the honor of thy holy Name throughout the world. I beseech Thy Majesty, my Lord, to enlighten and instruct thy Apostles, my masters, regarding all which is advisable for thy Church, so they can dispose and ordain the government necessary for all that concerns its growth and preservation.”

98. Then the most prudent Mother in the vision of the Divinity She had at that time perceived the Lord was very well pleased, and He answered Her: “Mary my Spouse, what dost Thou desire? For what dost Thou ask Me? Thy voice and thy sighs have sounded sweetly in my ears (Cant. 2:14). Ask what Thou dost desire, for my will is inclined toward thy petitions.” Most holy Mary answered: “My Lord and my God, Master of all my being, my desires and my sighs are not unknown to thine infinite wisdom (Ps. 37:10). I desire, seek and solicit thy greater pleasure and satisfaction, thy greater glory, and the exaltation of thy Name in the holy Church. I present to Thee these new children with whom Thou hast so quickly fructified it, and also my desire that they receive holy Baptism since they have already been instructed in the faith. And if it is according to thy will and service I desire also for the Apostles to begin even now to consecrate the body and blood of thy and my Son, so by this new and admirable sacrifice they can give Thee thanksgiving and praise for the benefit of human Redemption and all the favors Thou hast through it conferred upon the world, and also so according to thy will the children of the Church may in it receive the nourishment of eternal life. I am but dust and ashes, the least handmaid of

thy faithful and a woman, and hence I hesitate in proposing this to thy priests and Apostles. But do Thou, O Lord, inspire the heart of Peter, thy Vicar, to ordain what Thou dost desire.”

99. For this benefit the new Church owed even more to most holy Mary, for by her most prudent attention and through her intercession the Apostles began to consecrate the body and blood of her most holy Son, and the first Mass was celebrated in the Church after the Ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost. It was only reasonable that through her diligence the bread of life (Jn. 6:35) would begin to be distributed among her children, since She was the richly laden and prosperous vessel which brought it from heaven (Prov. 31:14). The Lord then answered Her: “My beloved Dove, let what Thou askest and desirest be done. My Apostles with Peter and John shall speak to Thee, and Thou shalt order through them what Thou dost desire to be done.” Immediately all of the Apostles entered the presence of the great Queen, and She received them as usual by reverently falling on her knees before them and asking their blessing. St. Peter, as the head of the Apostolic College, gave it to Her. He spoke for all of them and represented to most holy Mary how the newly converted had already been instructed in the faith and mysteries of the Lord, and how it was just that they receive Baptism, being marked as the children of Christ and admitted to the bosom of the Church. He therefore asked the heavenly Mistress to point out the order to be followed as most appropriate and pleasing to the Most High. The most prudent Lady answered: “My master, thou art the head of the Church and the Vicar of my most holy Son in Her; all that shall be ordained by thee in his name shall be approved by his most holy will,* and his will with thine shall be mine.”

100. Thereupon St. Peter ordained that on the following day (which corresponds to Trinity Sunday) Baptism would be administered to those who had been converted during that week. This arrangement of St. Peter was satisfactory to our Queen and the other Apostles. Immediately there arose a doubt as to what baptism they were to receive, that of St. John the Baptist or of Christ our Savior. To some it seemed the baptism of St. John, which was that of penance, should be given to them, and that through it they were to enter into the faith and justification of their souls. On the contrary, others of that congregation said that with the baptism of Christ and his death the baptism of St. John had expired, since it had served merely to prepare the hearts for the reception of Christ the Redeemer; that the baptism of His Majesty gives grace sufficient for justification and the washing of all the sins from those properly disposed; and that it was necessary to introduce it immediately into the Church.

101. This opinion was approved by St. Peter and St. John, and was confirmed by Mary most holy. With this settled, the Apostles then determined to institute at once the Baptism of Christ our Lord and confer it on the new converts and the rest who came to the Church. In regard to the matter and form of this Baptism there was no doubt among the Apostles, for all of them agreed the material must be natural and elementary water, and the form must be “I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” because these were the matter and form designated by the Lord our Savior, and these He utilized when He himself baptized. This manner of baptizing was always observed from that day on. Wherever in the Acts of the Apostles it says they baptized in the name of Jesus (2:38), it is not to be understood as referring to the form but to the Author of the Baptism, namely Jesus, in contradistinction to the author of the other baptism, namely St. John. To baptize in the name of Jesus was the same as to baptize with the Baptism of Jesus; however, its form was that which the Lord himself had given and contains the express mention of the three Persons of the most holy Trinity (Mt. 28:19) as the foundation

* cf. Mt. 16:19 [Ed.]

and beginning of all Catholic truth and faith. The Apostles therefore ordained that all the catechumens gather in the house of the Cenacle in order to be baptized, and the seventy-two disciples would have charge of preparing them for that occasion.

102. Then the great Lady, having asked permission, spoke to that whole congregation and said: “My masters, the Redeemer of the world, my Son and the true God, out of the love which He had for men, offered to the eternal Father the sacrifice of his sacred body and blood, consecrating Himself under the species of bread and wine. Under these appearances He resolved to remain in his Church so its children would have in it the sacrifice and food of eternal life they are to expect hereafter. Through this sacrifice, which embodies the mysteries of the life and death of the Son, the Father is to be placated, and in it and through it the Church shall give the thanksgiving and praise which it owes to Him as its God and Benefactor. Thou art the priests and ministers who alone are to offer it. It is my desire, if such be thy will, for thee to begin to offer this unbloody sacrifice and consecrate the body and blood of my divine Son so we can offer our gratitude for the benefit of his Redemption and for having sent the Holy Ghost into the Church, and so the faithful, by receiving this Sacrament, can begin to enjoy this bread of life in all its divine effects. All those may partake of the sacred body who shall have received Baptism and who seem to be more fit and better prepared, but Baptism is the first requisite for its reception.”

103. All the Apostles and disciples conformed to the will of most holy Mary, and they thanked Her for her solicitude and instruction. It was resolved that on the following day, after the Baptism of the catechumens, the body and blood of Christ would be consecrated, and St. Peter would be the celebrant since he was the supreme Pontiff of the Church. The holy Apostle consented. But before dismissing them he proposed another difficulty to the consideration of all, namely concerning the order to be observed in receiving and distributing the alms and goods of the newly converted.

104. He therefore said: “My dearest brethren, you already know that Jesus our Redeemer and Master, by his example, doctrines and commands, ordained and taught the true poverty in which we should live (Mt. 6:20, 8:20; Lk. 14:33), abhorring and shunning the cares entailed by riches and possessions, and neither desiring nor amassing wealth in this life. Besides this salutary doctrine we have before our eyes the recent and formidable example of the perdition of Judas, who was an Apostle as we ourselves, and who by his avarice and covetousness went astray and fell from the dignity of the apostolate into the abyss of wickedness and eternal damnation. Such a tremendous danger we must separate far from us so no one may possess or handle money in order to imitate and follow the most exalted poverty of our Leader and Master. I know all of you desire this, well understanding that in order to preserve us from this contagion the Lord has placed this risk and chastisement before our eyes; hence, that we all may be free from the hindrances connected with the gifts and alms brought to us by the faithful, it is necessary to arrange some form of administration. In this matter it is proper that you now determine the manner and order which must be maintained in receiving and dispensing the money and gifts offered to us.”

105. The whole gathering of the Apostles and disciples was somewhat at a loss to find the proper course to be pursued, and several opinions were proposed. Some of them suggested that a chief steward be chosen who would receive all the money and gifts, and distribute it according to the necessities of all; but this suggestion was not favored by this gathering of the poor and the disciples of the Master of poverty because of the example of Judas so recently before their eyes. To others it seemed good to make a deposit of all the goods into the hands of a reliable person not belonging to the Apostolic College who would be master of it and apply the profits or rents

according to the needs of the faithful, but this also seemed inappropriate, just as the other measures also proposed. The great Mistress of humility, Mary most holy, listened to all without saying a word because She desired to show this reverence to the Apostles, and because no one would have advanced his own opinion if She had first made known her view. Although She was the Teacher of all She always conducted Herself as a disciple who listened and learned.* But St. Peter and St. John, perceiving the diversity of opinions among the rest, besought the heavenly Mother to show them the right way in their doubts and declare what would be most pleasing to her divine Son.

106. She obeyed, and speaking to the whole gathering said: “My masters and brethren, I was in the school of our true Teacher, my divine Son, from the time when He was conceived in my womb until He died and ascended into heaven; and in the course of his holy life I never saw or knew Him to handle money or deal with it with his own hands, nor accept any gift of much value or price. When shortly after his birth He accepted the presents offered to Him by the Kings of the Orient at their adoration (Mt. 2:11), it was due to the mysterious signification connected with them and in order to not frustrate the pious intentions of those Kings, who were the firstfruits among the gentiles. Yet without delay, while resting on my arms, He ordered me immediately to distribute them among the poor and the temple, as I also did. Many times during his life He told me one of the high purposes of his coming into the world was to raise up poverty and teach it to mortals, who stand in horror of it. In his conversations, his teachings, and his most holy life He manifested to me and made me understand that the holiness and perfection which He came to teach was to be founded upon the most perfect voluntary poverty and contempt of riches, and the more these would be cultivated in the Church so much the greater would be her sanctity in the course of the ages, and this shall become evident in the future.

107. “Since we must follow the footsteps of our true Master, practice his teachings, and put into practice his doctrine in order to imitate Him and found his Church by his doctrine and example, it is necessary that we all embrace the most strict poverty, and honor and revere it as the mother of all virtues and sanctity. Hence I am of the opinion that we must all detach our hearts from the love of money and riches, and refuse to handle it or accept valuable and precious gifts. So no one might be defiled by avarice, six or seven persons of approved life and established virtue could be appointed who are to receive the alms, offerings, and whatever else the faithful wish to deposit in their desire to live more securely and follow Christ my divine Son without the embarrassment of possessions. All of this must be given in the form of alms, not in the manner of rents,[†] income or capital. All of it must be used for supplying the needs of the community and of our brethren the poor, the needy, and the infirm; and no one in our congregation, nor in the whole Church, must consider any of these goods as belonging to himself any more than to any of the brethren. If the alms thus offered for the sake of God does not suffice for the maintenance of all, let those who are appointed for this work ask for more in the name of God. Let all of us understand that our lives depend upon the most high providence of my most holy Son and not upon the solicitude for acquiring money, nor upon increasing our possessions under the pretext of providing for our sustenance. Let us rather have confidence, and if necessary rely on the beneficence of almsgiving.”

108. None of the Apostles nor the other faithful of that gathering objected to the decision of their and our great Queen and Teacher, but all of them heartily embraced her doctrine, knowing

* cf. James 1:19 [Ed.]

† cf. *Coronation* 245 [Ed.]

that She was the only and legitimate disciple of the Lord and the Teacher of the Church. The most prudent Mother, by divine disposition, would not delegate to one of the Apostles this instruction and the laying of this solid foundation of evangelical and Christian perfection in the Church, because such an arduous task required the authorship and example of Christ and his most holy Mother. They were the Inventors and Institutors of this most noble poverty, and they were the first to honor it by an open profession of it; and these two Teachers were followed by the Apostles and by all the children of the primitive Church. This manner of poverty persisted afterwards for many years. Later on, through human frailty and by the malice of the enemy, it decayed in some of the Christians, and finally it came to be restricted to the ecclesiastical state. And because the course of time made this form of poverty difficult or impossible also for this state, God raised up the religious communities where with some diversity the primitive poverty was renewed and kept alive in its entirety or in its main intent. Thus it shall be preserved in the Church to the end, securing its privileges to its devotees according to the degree in which they follow, honor and love this virtue. None of the states of life approved by the Church is excluded from its proportionate perfection, and none living in those states are excused from striving after its highest perfection in their own lives. Yet since in the house of God there are many mansions (Jn. 14:2), so there are also different orders and grades of inhabitants; let each one live up to the poverty which is in accordance with his state. But let all of us understand that the first step in the imitation and following of Christ is voluntary poverty, and those who pursue it more closely can so much the more freely rejoice in sharing with Christ its advantages and perfections.

109. With the decision of the Blessed Mother the meeting of the Apostolic College was closed, and six prudent men were chosen to receive and dispense the alms. The great Lady asked the blessing of the Apostles, who again returned to their work of preparing the catechumens for Baptism on the following day. The Queen, with the assistance of her Angels and of the other Marys, proceeded to prepare and adorn the hall in which her divine Son had celebrated the Last Supper, and with her own hands She cleansed and scrubbed it for his return in the consecration to be performed on the next day. She asked the owner to furnish it in the same way as I have described for the Thursday of the Last Supper (*Tran.* 447, 470), and the devout host deferred to her desires with deepest reverence. She also prepared the unleavened bread and the wine necessary for the consecration, together with the same paten and chalice with which the Savior had consecrated. For Baptism She provided pure water and the basins for administering it with ease and reverence. Then the loving Mother retired and passed the night in most fervent aspirations, prostrations, thanksgiving, and other exercises of exalted prayer, offering to the eternal Father all that She in her heavenly wisdom knew would help worthily prepare Herself and all the rest for the worthy administration of Baptism.

110. Early the next day, which was the octave of the coming of the Holy Ghost, all the faithful and catechumens gathered with the Apostles and disciples in the house of the Cenacle. St. Peter preached to this gathering, instructing them in the nature and excellence of Baptism, the need in which they stood of it, its divine effects, and how they would through it be made members of the Mystical Body of the Church, receive an interior character, and be regenerated to a new existence as children of God and inheritors of his glory through the remission of sins and sanctifying grace. He exhorted them to the observance of the divine law to which they subjected themselves by their own free will, and to humble gratitude for this benefit and for all the others which they received from the hands of the Most High. He also explained to them the truth of the sacrosanct mystery of the Eucharist, which was to be celebrated in the consecration of the true

body and blood of Jesus Christ, and he especially admonished all those who were to receive Holy Communion after their Baptism.

111. Through this sermon all the converts were inspired with additional fervor, for their dispositions were altogether sincere, the words of the Apostle full of life and penetration, and the interior grace very abundant. Then the Apostles themselves began to baptize amid the most devout and orderly attention of the others. The catechumens entered one door of the Cenacle, and after being baptized they passed out through another, while the disciples and others of the faithful acted as ushers. Most holy Mary was present at the entire ceremony, though keeping to one side of the hall. She prayed for all of them and broke forth in canticles of praise. She recognized the effects of Baptism in each one according to the greater or lesser degree of virtues infused into their souls. She beheld them renewed and washed in the blood of the Lamb and their souls restored to a divine purity and spotlessness. In witness of these effects a most clear light, visible to all who were present, descended upon each one who was baptized. By this miracle God desired to authenticate the first beginnings of this Sacrament in his holy Church and console both those first children and us, who are made partakers of this blessing without much notice or gratitude for it.

112. This administration of Baptism was continued on that day until all were baptized, even though there were about five thousand to receive it. While the baptized were making their thanksgiving for this admirable blessing the Apostles with all the disciples and the faithful spent some time in prayer. All of them prostrated themselves on the ground adoring the infinite and immutable God, and confessing their own unworthiness of receiving Him in the most august Sacrament of the Altar. In this profound humility and adoration they made their proximate preparation for Holy Communion. They then recited the same psalms and prayers which Christ had recited before consecrating, imitating faithfully that sacred function just as they had seen it performed by their divine Master. St. Peter took in his hands the unleavened bread, and after raising his eyes up to heaven with admirable devotion, he pronounced over the bread the words of consecration of the most holy body of Christ as had been done before by the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 11:24). Immediately the Cenacle was filled with the visible splendor of innumerable Angels, and this light converged in a most singular manner on the Queen of heaven and earth and was seen by all those present. Then St. Peter consecrated the chalice, and performed all the ceremonies which Christ had observed with the consecrated body and blood, raising them up for the adoration of all the faithful. After this the Apostle administered Holy Communion to himself and then to the eleven Apostles as most holy Mary had instructed him. Then the heavenly Mother received Communion by the hand of St. Peter, while the celestial spirits there present attended with ineffable reverence. In approaching the altar the great Lady made three profound prostrations, touching the ground with her face.

113. She returned to her place from whence She had come, and it is not possible to manifest in words the effects of this Communion of the Eucharist in this supreme creature, for She was entirely transformed and elevated, being completely absorbed in that divine fire of the love of her most holy Son by partaking of his most holy body. She remained elevated and withdrawn, but the holy Angels shielded Her somewhat from view by the will of the Queen herself so the attention of those present would not be unduly attracted by the divine effects apparent in Her. The Apostles continued to distribute Holy Communion, first to the disciples and then to the others who had been believers before the Ascension; however, of the five thousand newly baptized only one thousand received Communion on that day, because not all were entirely prepared or furnished with the insight and attention required for receiving the Lord in this great

Sacrament and mystery of the altar. With regard to the manner of Holy Communion on that day the Apostles gave both species of bread and wine to most holy Mary and the one hundred twenty upon whom the Holy Ghost had come, but the recently baptized partook only of the species of bread. This distinction was not made because the new faithful were less worthy of one species than the other, for the Apostles knew in either species they received the same sacramental God whole and entire; that there was no precept, and likewise no necessity, for each one to receive both species; and for the multitude there would be great danger of irreverence and other very grave inconveniences in communicating the Precious Blood in the species of wine, while this was not to be feared in the Communion of the few who received both species at that time. However, I have been made to understand that the custom of receiving Holy Communion under the species of bread alone for all those who were not the Celebrant at Mass began from the early Church. Although for some time some who were not priests received Communion under both species, yet as soon as the Church increased and spread over the whole world She very wisely ordained, being guided by the Holy Ghost, that laymen and those not celebrating Mass would receive only the sacred body, and that it belonged to those who were celebrating these divine mysteries to receive under both species which they had consecrated. Such is the secure practice of the holy Roman Catholic Church.

114. When the distribution of Holy Communion to all communicants had finished, St. Peter ended the sacred mystery with some prayers and psalms which he and the other Apostles offered up in thanksgiving, for at that time the other rites, ceremonies and petitions which later on were added at diverse times in order to accompany the sacred act of consecrating, as well before as after the Consecration and Communion, had neither been chosen nor ordained. In our most happy day the holy and wise Roman Church has mandated all that is contained in the holy Mass as celebrated by the priests of the Lord. The Apostles spent some more time in prayer, and when it was time to leave (for it was late in the day) they proceeded to other business and ate the necessary food. Our great Queen and Lady rendered gratitude to the Most High for all of them, and the Lord was pleased with her thanksgiving, granting the petitions which his Beloved offered up for the present and the absent in the holy Church.*

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

115. My daughter, though in the present life thou canst not penetrate into the mystery of the love which I had and still have for men, yet in addition to that which thou hast understood I desire thee for thy better instruction to notice anew how the Most High, when in heaven He gave me the title of Mother of the holy Church and Teacher thereof, He then infused into me an ineffable participation in his infinite charity and mercy for the children of Adam. Since I was a mere creature and this blessing so immense, its effects would have deprived me many times of life if the divine power had not miraculously sustained me. These effects I felt frequently in my thanksgiving when souls were received into the Church or were made partakers of eternal glory, for I alone could know and estimate this happiness in its entirety, and since I realized it I rendered gratitude for it to the Almighty with intense fervor and deepest humility. But the

* It is interesting to note here that prayers for both those *present* and *absent* are part of the Roman Rite of the Mass as codified by St. Pius V, and by this practice the Church imitates what Our Immaculate Queen did at the First Mass offered after the Last Supper. [Ed.]

occasions in which I was affected most deeply were when I asked for the conversion of sinners, and when any of the faithful fell into eternal perdition. At such times and others, experiencing the extreme opposite of my joys, I suffered much more than the martyrs in all their torments. I exerted myself for each soul with an eminent and supernatural force. For all this the children of Adam stand indebted to me, since I offered up for them so many times my own life. Though at present I am not any more in a condition to offer it for them, yet my love which seeks their eternal salvation is not diminished, but rather more exalted and perfect.

116. If the love of God exerted such force in me when my neighbor was concerned, by this thou mayest discern my love toward the Lord himself when receiving Him in the Blessed Sacrament. I shall tell thee a secret concerning what happened when I received Holy Communion for the first time from the hands of St. Peter: On this occasion the Most High gave such sway to the violence of my love that my heart literally opened up, and as was my desire permitted the sacramental Lord to enter and take his rest there as in his legitimate throne and tabernacle. From this thou shalt understand that if in the glory which I now enjoy I could be sorrowful, one of the reasons for being so would be the dreadful carelessness and presumption with which mortals approach to receive the sacred body and blood of my divine Son; some of them unclean and abominable, others without veneration and respect, and nearly all of them without attention, appreciation or consideration for the value of that food, which is nothing less than God himself for eternal life or eternal death.

117. Fear then, my daughter, this dreadful danger; weep to see it in so many children of the Church, and ask the intervention of the Lord. In pondering over my teachings make thyself worthy to understand profoundly this mystery of love, and when thou art permitted to receive Him detach and cleanse thy interior from all earthly things, attending only to the fact that thou art about to receive the infinite and incomprehensible God himself. Surpass thyself in love, humility and thanksgiving, since all thou canst ever do shall be less than is demanded by such an exalted mystery.* For thy better preparation let that which I did on such occasions be thy model and example. I desire thee especially to imitate me interiorly, for example in the three bodily prostrations. It is also pleasing to me that which thou hast added in order to give reverence to the part of the flesh and blood contained in this Sacrament which is of my womb and was nourished and grown from my milk; continue always this devotion, for it is true that this consecrated body contains part of my own blood and substance, as thou has understood. And if in thy love thou wouldst deeply grieve to see the sacred body and blood ignominiously and sacrilegiously trampled underfoot, thou shouldst feel the same grief and shed bitter tears at seeing so many children of the Church treat it with irreverence and without any fear or decorum. Weep then over this misfortune; weep, because there are few who weep over it; and weep, because the evident designs of the love of my divine Son are thus frustrated. And so thou mayest weep more bitterly, I tell thee that just as in the primitive Church there were so many who were saved by the most Blessed Sacrament, now there are so many who damn themselves through it. I do not tell thee what happens in this regard every day, lest if thou knew it and have within thee any love thou wouldst die of grief. This damage is done because the children of the faith are following darkness, love vanity, covet riches, and nearly all of them seek after vain and deceitful pleasure, which blinds and obscures the understanding and covers up the light with darkness, which knows no distinction between the good and the bad, and does not penetrate the truths of the evangelical doctrine.

* cf. Sequence for Corpus Christi, *Lauda Sion* by St. Thomas Aquinas, verse 2 [Ed.]