

CHAPTER XIII

Most Holy Mary Sends the Symbol of the Faith to the Disciples and Other Faithful; They Work Great Miracles with It; the Apostles Resolve to Partition the Earth among Themselves; and Other Works of the Great Queen of Heaven.

222. The most prudent Mary was so diligent, vigilant and solicitous in the government of her family the holy Church that She was like the mother and the strong woman of whom Solomon says that she considered the paths and the ways of her household in order not to eat her bread in idleness (Prov. 31:27). The great Lady knew and considered these paths and ways with the plenitude of knowledge, and since She was clothed in the purple of her charity and the spotless white of her peerless purity,* She therefore in the fullness of her insight forgot nothing that was needed by her children and domestics, the faithful. As soon as the Symbol of the Apostles was established She provided innumerable copies of it, both with her own hands and with the assistance of her holy Angels, who helped and served as her secretaries, so without delay it could be received by all the disciples who were wandering and preaching throughout Palestine. She sent several copies to each one for distribution, ordering this by a special letter in which She also informed them of the manner and the way in which the Apostles had taken care in composing that Symbol and commanding it to be preached and taught to all who would come to the faith so they could believe and profess it.

223. Since the disciples were scattered throughout different cities, some near and others far, She sent the Symbol and letter to those in the neighborhood by some of the faithful, and to those farther off by her Angels. To some of the disciples, in fact to the greater number of them, the Angels appeared visibly, while to others they did not appear, but placed these documents into their hands in an invisible manner, at the same time admirably moving their hearts. Through these inspirations as well as from the letter of the Queen the disciples knew from whence these messages had come. Moreover She exhorted the Apostles to distribute the written Symbol in Jerusalem and in other places, and to instruct the faithful how the Lord had sent the Holy Ghost to inspire and approve it in such a signal manner, thereby imposing its veneration upon all. She told them to omit no means of making it well understood that this was the only, unchanging and secure faith which was to be believed, confessed and preached throughout the Church as the only means of obtaining grace and life everlasting.

224. By this instruction and these errands the written copies of the Apostles' Creed were distributed in a very few days among the faithful to their incredible benefit and consolation, for in their fervor they received them with the highest reverence and devotion. The Holy Ghost, who had ordained this Creed for the stability of the Church, immediately began to confirm it by new miracles and prodigies worked not only through the hands of the Apostles and disciples but also through many of the other faithful. Many who received a copy with special veneration and affection received the Holy Ghost in visible form, who came upon them with a divine light which exteriorly enveloped them and filled them with heavenly knowledge and celestial effects. By this wonder others were moved and enkindled with the most ardent desire of possessing and reverencing the Creed. Others restored the sick to health, raised the dead, or expelled the demons from the possessed merely by placing the Creed upon them. Among other marvels it happened

* cf. Prov. 31:22 [Ed.]

one day that an unbelieving Jew, hearing a Catholic devoutly reading the Creed, became angry with the believer and in great rage went to take it from his hands; yet before the Jew could snatch it he fell dead at the feet of the Catholic. Those who from then on were being baptized as adults were required to profess the faith according to the Apostolic Symbol, and with this profession and affirmation the Holy Ghost visibly came upon them.

225. The gift of tongues likewise continued, for the Holy Ghost gave it not only on the day of Pentecost but to many of the faithful afterwards who assisted in preaching or giving instruction to the new believers, and whenever they spoke or preached to many together of different nationalities they were understood by each nationality, though they spoke only in the Hebrew language. In like manner they were able to speak in other languages when they happened upon a gathering of people all speaking the same foreign language, as I related above (83) regarding the coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Besides these miracles the Apostles wrought many others, and whenever they laid their hands upon the believers, or Confirmed them in the faith, the Holy Ghost descended. There were so many miracles and prodigies worked by the Most High in those beginnings of the Church that it would take many volumes to write them all down. St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles describes those in particular which were more appropriate to write so the Church would not be entirely unaware of them. He adds in a general way that they were very numerous (Acts 2:43), and hence they could not all be included in his short history.

226. In pondering and writing of these matters I was greatly astonished at the most generous goodness of the Almighty in so often sending the Holy Ghost upon the believers in the primitive Church. In response to my wonder I was informed of two reasons for this liberality. First, insofar as it weighed so heavily in the wisdom, goodness and power of God to bring men to the participation of his divinity in eternal happiness and glory that in order to achieve this end the eternal Word descended from heaven in visible, communicable and passible flesh, so likewise the third Person descended in another visible and appropriate form upon the Church so many times in order to found and establish it with equal firmness and demonstrations of the divine omnipotence and the love He has for it. Second, because in the beginnings of the Church the merits of the Passion and Death of Christ had been on their part more recently acquired; they therefore, together with the prayers and intercession of his most holy Mother, in the acceptance of the eternal Father (according to our way of understanding) acted with greater force, since the children of the Church had not yet interposed the many and grievous sins which have been committed since then and which have placed such great obstacles to the benefits of the Lord and his divine Spirit. Hence the Holy Ghost does not now manifest Himself so familiarly to men as in the primitive Church.

227. Already a full year had passed since the death of the Savior, and now the Apostles by divine impulse began to consider going forth to preach the faith throughout the world, for it was time for the name of God to be publicized to the nations and for them to be taught the way of eternal salvation. In order to consult the will of God in the assignment of the kingdoms and provinces in which each one was to preach, upon the advice of their Queen they resolved to fast and pray for ten consecutive days. This practice of fasting and praying for ten days, which they had observed immediately after the Ascension in disposing themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, they afterwards also retained in preparing themselves for the more important undertakings. Having completed these exercises the Vicar of Christ celebrated Mass on the last day and gave Holy Communion to most holy Mary and the eleven Apostles as had been done in order to establish the Symbol as mentioned in the last chapter. After Mass they all persevered

with their Queen for some time in most exalted prayer, ardently imploring the Holy Ghost to assist them and manifest his holy will in this matter.

228. Having done this St. Peter spoke to them as follows: “Dearly beloved brethren, let us together prostrate ourselves before the divine throne, and with all our heart and with highest reverence let us confess our Lord Jesus Christ as true God, the Master and Redeemer of the world, and let us profess his holy faith by the Symbol which He has given us by the Holy Ghost, offering ourselves for the accomplishment of his divine will.” This they did, and having recited the Creed they then continued praying vocally with St. Peter, saying: “Most high and eternal God, we insignificant men, worms of the earth, whom Our Lord Jesus Christ by the sole condescension of his clemency chose as ministers in order to teach his doctrine, preach his holy faith, and found his Church throughout the world, prostrate ourselves in thy divine presence with one heart and one soul. In order to accomplish thy eternal and holy will we offer ourselves to suffer and sacrifice our lives for the confession of thy holy faith, teaching and preaching it throughout the world as Our Lord and Master Jesus has commanded us. We desire to be spared no labors, inconveniences or tribulations, since for this work it shall be necessary to suffer unto death. Yet mistrusting our weakness we beseech Thee, Lord and God most High, send upon us thy divine Spirit to govern and direct our footsteps on the right path in imitation of our Master,* and visit us with new fortitude; and now manifest to us and teach us which kingdom or provinces shall be most agreeable to thy divine pleasure for us to divide among ourselves in order to preach thy holy Name.”

229. At the end of this prayer a wonderful light descended upon the Cenacle surrounding them all, and a voice was heard saying: “My vicar Peter shall point out the provinces for each one, and that shall be his lot. I shall govern and assist him with my light and spirit.” The appointments themselves the Lord left to St. Peter in order to confirm anew on that occasion the power He had given him as head and universal pastor of the entire Church, and so the other Apostles would understand it must be founded throughout the world under obedience to St. Peter and his successors, to whom as Vicars of Christ they were to be subject and subordinate. All of the Apostles understood this, and it was made known to me that such was the will of the Most High. In order to execute this mandate St. Peter, upon hearing this voice, proceeded to partition out the provinces. He began with himself and said: “I, my Lord, offer myself to suffer and die, following my Redeemer and Master, preaching his holy Name and faith at present in Jerusalem, and afterwards in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia and Cappadocia, provinces of Asia, taking up my seat first in Antioch and afterwards in Rome, where I shall set up and found the *cathedra* of Christ our Savior and Master, and thus the head of his holy Church shall have his place there.” St. Peter said this due to a command of the Lord, who had designated the Roman Church as the seat and head of the entire universal Church, and without this command St. Peter would not have decided such a difficult and important matter.

230. St. Peter continued and said: “The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Andrew shall follow Him preaching his holy faith in the Scythian provinces of Europe, Epirus and Thrace; and from the city of Patras in Achaia he shall govern all of that province and the others of his lot as far as possible.

“The servant of Christ, our dearest brother James the Greater, shall follow Him preaching the faith in Judea, in Samaria, and in Spain, from whence he shall return to this city of Jerusalem and preach the doctrine of our Lord and Master.

* cf. Lk. 4:1 [Ed.]

“The dearest brother John shall obey the will of our Savior and Master as manifested to him from the Cross, fulfilling the office of a son toward our great Mother and Lady. He shall serve Her and assist Her with filial reverence and fidelity; he shall administer to Her the sacred mystery of the Eucharist, and also take care of the faithful in Jerusalem during our absence. And when our God and Redeemer shall take unto Himself in heaven his Blessed Mother, he shall follow his Master preaching the faith in Asia Minor, taking care of the churches established there from the island of Patmos, where he shall go due to persecution.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Thomas shall follow Him preaching in India, in Persia, and among the Parthians, Medes, Hyrcanians, Brahmans, and Bactrians. He shall baptize the three Magi Kings and shall instruct them fully in all things according to their expectations, and they themselves shall seek him out because they shall hear of the fame of his preaching and miracles.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother James shall follow Him by being pastor and bishop of Jerusalem, where he shall preach to the Jews and shall assist John in the attendance and service of the great Mother of our Savior.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Philip shall follow Him preaching and teaching in the provinces of Phrygia and Scythia in Asia, and in the city called Hierapolis in Phrygia.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Bartholomew shall follow Him preaching in Lycaonia, part of Cappadocia in Asia; and he shall go to Nearer India and afterwards to Armenia Minor.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Matthew shall first teach the Hebrews, and afterwards follow his Master going to preach in Egypt and in Ethiopia.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Simon shall follow Him preaching in Babylon, Persia, and also in the kingdom of Egypt.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Judas Thaddeus shall follow our Master preaching in Mesopotamia, and afterwards shall join Simon to preach in Babylon and in Persia.

“The servant of Christ and our dearest brother Matthias shall follow Him preaching his holy faith in the interior of Ethiopia and in Arabia, and afterwards he shall return to Palestine.

“And may the Spirit of the Most High guide us all, and govern and assist us, so in every place and time we may fulfill his holy and perfect will, and now may He give us his blessing, in whose name I give it to all.”

231. All this St. Peter said, and the instant he stopped speaking a loud thunder of great power was heard and the Cenacle was filled with splendor and refulgence as of the presence of the Holy Ghost. In the midst of this splendor was heard a pleasant and strong voice saying: “Let each one accept the lot which has fallen to him.” They prostrated themselves upon the ground and together said: “Most High Lord, thy word and that of thy Vicar we obey with promptitude and joy of heart, and our souls rejoice and are filled with thy sweetness in the midst of thy wonderful works.” This entire and ready obedience the Apostles gave to the Vicar of Christ our Savior, since it was the effect of the ardent charity by which they desired to die for his holy faith, disposed them on this occasion for the grace of once more receiving the Holy Ghost, who confirmed and augmented the favors they had already received. They were filled with new light and knowledge concerning the nations and provinces which St. Peter had assigned to them, and each one recognized the conditions, nature and customs of the kingdoms singled out for him, and the lay of the land and its location in the world, as if they had written in their interior a most distinct and copious map. The Most High gave them a new gift of fortitude for their labors and agility for their journeys, though in this regard they would many times have the help of the holy

Angels, and the interior of each one was enkindled with the fire of divine love like the Seraphim, elevating them far beyond the condition and sphere of nature.

232. The most blessed Queen of the Angels was present at all these events, and the workings of the divine power in the Apostles and in Herself were very clear to Her, for on this occasion She experienced more of the divine influences than all of them together. Just as She was supremely exalted above all creatures, so the increase of her gifts was in like proportion, transcending immeasurably those of the others. The Most High renewed in the most pure spirit of his Mother the infused knowledge concerning all creatures, and especially concerning the kingdoms and nations assigned to the Apostles. She knew all that each one knew, and more than all of them together, because She received a personal and individual knowledge of each person to whom the faith of Christ was to be preached, and She was made relatively just as familiar with all the earth and its inhabitants as She was with her oratory and all those who entered therein.

233. This knowledge of the Blessed Mother was that of a supreme Teacher, Mother, Governess and Lady of the Church, which the Almighty had placed into her hands as I have said above (*Tran.* 790) and shall of necessity touch upon many more times.* She was to take care of all, from the highest in sanctity to the lowest, and also the miserable sinners, children of Eve. Since no one was to receive any blessing or favor from the hands of her Son except through the hands of his Mother, it was necessary for this most faithful Dispensatrix of grace to know all of her family whom She was to guard as a Mother, and such a Mother. The great Lady therefore had not only infused images and knowledge of all this, but She actually experienced it as the Apostles and disciples proceeded in their work of preaching. Before Her lay open all their labors and dangers, the attacks of the demons against them, and the petitions and prayers of these and all the faithful, in order to aid them with her own prayers, or by means of her Angels, or by Herself in person, for in all these different ways She rendered them assistance as we shall see in many events yet to be described (318, 324, 339, 567).

234. I wish merely to state here that besides the knowledge derived by our Queen from infused images She also had in God himself another knowledge of things through her abstractive vision by which She continually saw the Divinity. Yet there was a difference between these two kinds of knowledge: When She saw in God the labors of the Apostles and all the faithful of the Church, there was in that vision such joy and a certain participation of the Blessed that it did not cause the sensible sorrow and compassion which the most pious Mother had when She knew these tribulations only in themselves, since in this kind of vision She felt and bewailed them with maternal compassion. So this merit and perfection would not be lacking in Her, all this knowledge was granted to Her by the Lord for the time in which She was yet a viator. Together with this plenitude of infused species and knowledge She also held absolute command of her faculties, as I said above (126), and thus She admitted no images or ideas except those necessary for sustaining life, or for some work of charity or perfection. With this adornment and beauty, which was evident to the angels and saints, the heavenly Lady was an object of admiration, inducing them to praise and glorify the Most High for the worthy exercise of all his attributes in most holy Mary.

235. On this occasion She offered a most profound prayer for the perseverance and courage of the Apostles in their preaching throughout the world, and the Lord promised Her He would guard and assist them in order to manifest in them and through them the glory of his Name, and would in the end worthily reward them for their labors and merits. By this promise most holy Mary was

* cf. *Coronation* 494 [Ed.]

filled with joy and gratitude, and She exhorted the Apostles to give themselves up to this work with all their heart and to set out joyfully and confidently for the conversion of the world. Speaking to them many other words of sweetness and life She congratulated them on her knees in the name of her divine Son for the obedience they had shown, and in her own name She thanked them for the zeal they had manifested for the honor of the Lord and for the benefit they were to gain for the souls for whose conversion they sacrificed themselves.* She kissed the hands of each of the Apostles, offering her prayers and services and asking them for their blessing which they, as priests of God, gave Her.

236. A few days after the partition of the earth among the Apostles they began to leave Jerusalem, especially those who were allotted the provinces of Palestine, and the first was St. James the Greater. Others stayed longer in Jerusalem because the Lord desired the faith of his holy Name to be preached there first with greater force and abundance, and the Jews called in the first place and invited to the marriage feast of the Gospel[†] to see if they desired to come and enter it, for in the blessing of the Redemption this people, though more ungrateful than the heathens, was especially favored. Afterwards all the Apostles gradually departed for the regions assigned to them according to the demands of the time and season, being governed in this by the divine Spirit, the counsel of most holy Mary, and obedience to St. Peter. But before leaving Jerusalem each one visited the holy places, such as Gethsemane, Calvary, the Holy Sepulchre, the place of the Ascension, Bethany, and the other memorable spots as far as possible. All of them showed their veneration, moved even to tears and regarding with loving wonder the very earth which the Savior had touched. Then they visited the Cenacle and venerated it for the mysteries which had been worked therein, and took leave of the great Queen of heaven, again commending themselves to her protection. The most blessed Mother dismissed them with words full of sweetness and divine virtue.

237. Admirable was the solicitude and maternal care of the most prudent Lady in showing Herself as a true Mother of her sons in taking leave of the Apostles. For each of the twelve She made a woven tunic similar to that of Christ our Savior, of a color between brown and ash-gray, and in order to weave these garments She called upon the ministry of her holy Angels. She furnished each of the Apostles garments of the same kind and like to that formerly worn by their Master Jesus, for She desired them to imitate Him even in their garments and thereby be known exteriorly as his disciples. The great Lady made twelve crosses out of rods or poles the height of each of the Apostles and gave one to each so as a witness of their doctrine and for their consolation they could carry it along in their wanderings and preaching. Each of the Apostles preserved and carried this cross with him to his death, and since they praised the cross so much some of the tyrants took occasion to martyr them on the very cross they carried, and they happily died upon it.

238. In addition the devout Mother furnished each one of them with a small metal case, made for this purpose, in which She placed three of the thorns from the crown of her divine Son, some pieces of the cloths in which She had wrapped the infant Savior, and pieces of the linen with which She had wiped and caught the most precious blood at the Circumcision and Passion of the Lord. She had preserved all these sacred pledges with consummate devotion and veneration as a Mother and the Depositary of the treasures of heaven. In order to give them to the twelve Apostles She called them together, and with the majesty of a Queen and the tenderness of a

* cf. Rom. 10:15; Is. 52:7; Nahum 1:15 [Ed.]

† cf. Mt. 22:1ff. [Ed.]

Mother She told them these pledges with which She would enrich them at their departure were the greatest treasures in her possession, for in them they would carry with them the living memory of her most holy Son and the certain assurance the Lord loved them as sons and ministers of the Most High. Then She gave them those relics, which they received with tears of consolation and joy. They thanked the great Queen for these favors and prostrated themselves before them, adoring those sacred relics. Embracing one another they bade farewell to each other, St. James the Greater being the first to depart for his mission.

239. I was given to understand the Apostles preached not only in the countries assigned to them by St. Peter but in many other neighboring and more remote regions. This is not difficult to understand, because many times they were carried from one territory to another by the ministry of the Angels,* and this not only in order to preach but to consult with each other, especially with St. Peter the Vicar of Christ, and much more frequently were they brought to the presence of most holy Mary, whose favor and counsel they needed in the arduous enterprise of planting the faith in so many different and barbarous nations. If in order to bring nourishment to Daniel the Angel took Habacuc to Babylon (Dan. 14:35), it is not strange for such miracles to be performed for the Apostles so they could preach Christ, make known the Divinity, and plant the universal Church for the remedy of the entire human race. Above I have made mention of the Angel who carried Philip (208), one of the seventy-two disciples, from the road of Gaza to Azotus, as related by St. Luke (Acts 8:40). All these miracles, and innumerable others unknown to us, were necessary for these men who were sent to so many kingdoms, provinces and peoples yet in the possession of the demon, full of idolatries, errors and abominations, which was the condition of the world at the time the incarnate Word came to redeem it.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS.

240. My daughter, by the lessons contained in this chapter I desire to draw thee to deplore with inmost groaning and sighing, and if possible with tears of blood, the difference between the holy Church in its present state and that of its beginnings, how the most pure gold of sanctity has been obscured and the color of health changed (Lam. 4:1), losing that ancient beauty in which the Apostles founded it, and seeking foreign and deceitful powders and paints to cover the ugliness and confusion of vice. In order for thee to penetrate this truth thou must renew in thyself the consideration of the force and weight with which the Divinity is inclined to communicate his goodness and perfections to his creatures. So great is the impetus of the river of the goodness of God overflowing upon mankind that only the free will of man, which He has given to him in order to receive his benefits, can raise a dam against it; and whenever through his free will man resists the inclination and influences of the infinite Goodness, he (according to thy mode of understanding) violently opposes and grieves his immense love in his most eminent liberality. But if creatures would place no obstacle, and permit Him to work in his efficacious manner, the whole soul would be inundated and satiated with participation in his divine essence and attributes. He would raise the fallen from the dust, enrich the indigent children of Adam, place them above all their miseries, and seat them with the princes of his glory (I Kg. 2:8).

* Ven. Mary herself signally participated in such miraculous transport by bilocating over 500 times to what is now the southwest United States in order to preach and plant the faith among the native Indians there, a fact authenticated not only by Church authorities but by historians and local legend. [Ed.]

241. From this, my daughter, thou shalt understand two things which human wisdom ignores. The first is the pleasure and service given to the highest Good by those souls who with an ardent zeal for his glory by their labor and solicitude help to remove from other souls the obstacle which their sins have placed in the way of their justification by the Lord, and the communication of such goods as in his immense goodness they could participate and which the Most High desires to work in them. The satisfaction His Majesty receives from this work, in which He assists those who labor in it, cannot be known in this mortal life. This is why the ministry of the prelates, priests and preachers of the divine word is so highly exalted, for they follow in their office the Apostles who founded the Church and labored for its preservation and extension, since all of them must be cooperators and executors of the immense love which God has for the souls He created to be sharers in his divinity. Secondly, thou must ponder the greatness and abundance of the gifts and favors which the infinite power communicates to those souls who do not hinder his most generous goodness. The Lord manifested this truth immediately in the beginnings of the evangelical Church when to all those who entered into it He showed his bounty by such great prodigies and wonders, so frequently sending the Holy Ghost in a visible manner upon them, the miracles of which thou hast written which were performed by the faithful with the Creed, and other hidden favors they received from the hand of the Most High.

242. But most of all shone forth his almighty power and munificence in the Apostles and disciples, because in them there was no hindrance to his eternal and holy will, and they were true instruments and executors of the divine love, imitators and successors of Christ and followers of truth. Hence they were elevated to an ineffable participation in the attributes of God, especially regarding his knowledge, sanctity and omnipotence, working for themselves and for souls such wonders as mortal man can never worthily extol. After the Apostles were born in their place other children of the Church in whom, from generation to generation, this divine wisdom and its effects were transplanted (Ps. 44:17). Leaving aside at present the innumerable martyrs who shed their blood for Christ and gave their lives for the holy faith, consider the founders of religious orders, the great Saints who flourished in them, the doctors, bishops, prelates, and apostolic men in whom was so abundantly manifested the goodness and omnipotence of the Divinity so the rest would have no excuse if in them, who are ministers of the salvation of souls, and in all the other faithful, God does not work the wonders and favors which He worked in the first ones, though He yet continues his operations in those whom He finds suitably disposed for his works.

243. And to the greater confusion of the wicked ministers which the holy Church has today, I desire thee to understand that in the eternal decree by which the Most High resolved to communicate his infinite treasures to souls He chiefly and immediately directed these benefits toward the prelates, priests, preachers and dispensers of his divine word,* so as far as the will of the Lord was concerned all of them could be angelic rather than human in their sanctity and perfection, and enjoy many privileges of grace and exemptions of nature among the rest of the living, and by these singular benefits become fit ministers of the Most High, if only they would not pervert the order of his infinite wisdom and live up to the dignity to which they were called and chosen among all others. This infinite kindness of God is just as great now as in the first ages of the Church; the inclination of the highest Good to enrich souls is not changed, nor can it be; his condescending generosity has not diminished; the love of his Church is always at its height; his mercy is just as much concerned about the miseries of men, which in our times have become innumerable; the clamor of the sheep of Christ is louder than ever; the prelates, priests and

* cf. I Cor. 4:1 [Ed.]

ministers are more numerous than before. If this is so, to what is to be attributed the loss of so many souls and the ruin of the Christian people? Why is it the infidels not only do not enter the Church but subject it to so much affliction and sorrow? Why do the prelates and ministers not shine before the world, exhibiting the splendors of Christ as in ages gone by and in the primitive Church?

244. O my daughter, I invite thee to let thy tears flow over this loss and ruin. Consider how the stones of the sanctuary are scattered about in the streets of the city (Lam. 4:1). See how the priests of the Lord have assimilated themselves to the people (Is. 24:2), whereas they should make them a holy people and similar to themselves. The sacerdotal dignity and the precious vestments of virtue are soiled by the contagion of the worldly; the anointed of the Lord, consecrated solely to his communication and worship, have degraded themselves from their noble and godlike station; they have lost their beauty in debasing themselves to vile actions, unworthy of their exalted position among men. They affect vanity; they indulge greed and avarice; they serve their own interest;* they love money; they place their hopes in treasures of gold and silver; they submit to the flatteries and slavery of the worldly and powerful; and to their still lower degradation they subject themselves to the petty whims of women, and sometimes make themselves participants in their counsels of malice and wickedness. There is hardly a sheep in the fold of Christ which recognizes in them the voice of its Pastor,[†] or finds from them the nourishment of that redeeming virtue and holiness which they should show forth. The little ones ask for bread, and there is none to distribute it (Lam. 4:4); and if it is dealt out in self-interest or out of compliance, how can it give salutary nourishment to the necessitous and infirm from such leprous hands? And how shall the supreme Physician confide to them the medicine in which life consists? If they are guilty of greater sins than those for whom they are to intercede and mediate, how can they obtain mercy for the sins of those less or even similarly guilty?

245. These are the causes why the prelates and priests of our times do not perform the miracles of the Apostles and disciples, and those in the primitive Church who imitated their lives by an ardent zeal for the honor of the Lord and the conversion of souls. Because of this the treasures of the blood and death of Christ in the Church do not bear the same fruits, neither in his priests and ministers nor in the other mortals; for if priests neglect and forget to make them fruitful in themselves, how can they expect them to overflow onto the other children of this family? For this reason the infidels are not converted upon learning of the true faith, though they live within sight of the ecclesiastical princes, ministers and preachers of the Gospel. The Church in our times is richer in temporal goods, rents^Δ and possessions; it abounds with learned men, great prelaties, and multiplied dignities. Since all these advantages are due to the blood of Christ they ought all to be used in his honor and service, promoting the conversion of souls, supporting his poor, and enhancing the worship and veneration of his holy Name.

246. If the temporal goods are being put to such good use, ask the captives whether they are ransomed by the incomes of the churches, the infidels whether they are converted, whether the heresies are extirpated, and hence this is how the ecclesiastical treasures are employed. But the public voice will loudly proclaim that from these same treasures palaces were built, entailed estates established, the airy towers raised up; and what is most lamentable, it is known to what profane and vile uses those who succeed in the ecclesiastical offices put the treasures of the

* cf. Mt. 23:11 [Ed.]

† cf. Jn. 10:4-5 [Ed.]

Δ cf. *Coronation* 107 [Ed.]

Church, how they dishonor Christ the High Priest, and in their lives depart just as far from the imitation of Christ and the Apostles as the most profane men of the world. If the preaching of the divine word by these ministers is so dead and without power for vivifying the hearers it is not the fault of truth or the Holy Scriptures, but rather due to the abuse of their preaching and the distorted intentions of those who preach. They seek to compromise the glory of Christ with their own selfish honor and vain esteem, the spiritual goods with the base acquisition of stipends;* and if those two selfish ends are attained, they care not for other fruit from their preaching. Thus they depart from the sincerity and purity of sound and holy doctrine (and sometimes even from the truth) which the sacred authors have recorded in Holy Scriptures and the holy doctors have explained, reducing it to their own ingenious subtleties which cause more admiration and pleasure in their hearers than spiritual profit. Since such a sermon reaches the ears of sinners so adulterated they recognize it as the doctrine of the ingenuity of the preacher rather than the charity of Christ; they bring with it no power or efficacy for penetrating hearts, though delighting the hearers by its artifice.

247. Let not the chastisement of these vanities and abuses, and of others which the world does not ignore, astonish thee, my dearest, and be not surprised that divine justice has so much forsaken the prelates, ministers and preachers of his word, or that the Catholic Church is now in such an oppressed state after having been so exalted in its beginnings. And if there are some priests and ministers who are not infected with these lamentable vices the Church owes so much the more to my divine Son in a time when He is so offended and disobliged. With these good priests He is most generous, but they are few in number as is evident from the ruin of the Christian people and the contempt into which the priests and preachers of the Gospel have fallen, for if there were many perfect and zealous laborers for souls without a doubt sinners would reform and amend their lives, many infidels would be converted, and all would look upon and hear with reverence and holy fear such preachers, priests and prelates. They would respect them for their dignity and holiness, and not for the authority and ostentation by which they gain this reverence, which is more appropriately called worldly applause and without benefit. Do not be afraid or abashed for having written all of this, for they themselves know it is the truth, and thou dost not write of thy own choice but under obedience to me, that thou mayest weep and invite heaven and earth to help thee in thy weeping, for there are few who sorrow because of it, and this is the greatest injury received by the Lord from all the children of the Church.

* cf. I Peter 5:2 [Ed.]