

CHAPTER XVII

Lucifer Directs a New Persecution against the Church and Most Holy Mary; She Manifests This to St. John, and by His Order She Determines to Go to Ephesus; Her Most Holy Son Appears to Her and Commands Her to Visit the Apostle St. James in Saragossa, and what Happened on This Visit.

334. In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (v.1ff.) St. Luke narrates the persecution incited by hell against the Church after the death of St. Stephen. He calls it a great persecution because through the zealous efforts of St. Paul before his conversion the infernal dragon succeeded in raising it to the highest pitch; of this persecution I have spoken in chapters XII and XIV of this part. Yet from what I have said there it will be understood this enemy of God did not rest or consider himself so vanquished as not to raise new persecutions against the holy Church and most holy Mary. From what St. Luke himself says in chapter XII concerning the imprisonment of St. Peter and St. James by Herod (Acts 12:2-3), it is clear this persecution began anew after the conversion of St. Paul, not even considering his express statement it was this same Herod who sent soldiers to afflict some of the faithful of the Church (Ib. 1). So what I said and shall say may be better understood I repeat these persecutions were all plotted and set in motion through the demons by inciting certain malicious men, as I have related in various places (141, 186, 205, 250). And because divine Providence at times gave the demons this permission, and at other times revoked it, casting them into hell as at the conversion of St. Paul and on other occasions (208, 297, 325, etc.), for this reason the primitive Church sometimes enjoyed tranquility and calm, as has happened in all the ages of the Church, yet at other times when this truce was broken it was molested and afflicted.

335. Peace was favorable to the conversion of the faithful, and persecution increased their merit and practice of virtue, and this alternation is and always shall be ordained by divine Wisdom and Providence. Hence after the conversion of St. Paul the Church enjoyed some months of peace, namely from the time when Lucifer and his companions were hurled vanquished into hell until their return to the earth, of which I shall presently speak. St. Luke speaks of this time of tranquility in chapter IX of the Acts of the Apostles (v. 31), where after relating the conversion of St. Paul he says *the Church had peace throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and was edified, walking in the fear of the Lord and the consolation of the Holy Ghost*. Although the Evangelist mentions this after speaking of the coming of St. Paul to Jerusalem yet it occurred long before, for the coming of St. Paul to Jerusalem happened more than five years after his conversion (487), and St. Luke in writing his history anticipates this coming of St. Paul to Jerusalem, as happens with many other events related by the Evangelists, who often anticipated these events in order to finish saying that which concerned the intention of what they were relating; for they did not write in chronological order all the events of their histories, although in that which was essential they preserved the temporal sequence of events.

336. This being understood and following up what I said in chapter XV concerning the meeting called by Lucifer after the conversion of St. Paul, I wish to say this conference lasted for some time and the infernal dragon with his demons considered and adopted various ways and means by which to destroy the Church and for the possible debasement of the great Queen from her high state of reputed holiness. But the ignorance of the serpent regarding Her was incomparably greater than his knowledge. The days of peace enjoyed by the Church being past, the princes of darkness issued forth from the abyss in order to execute their malicious designs fabricated in the

infernal dungeons, and at the head of them all came forth Lucifer. It is worthy of attention that so great was the fury and indignation of this bloodthirsty beast against the Church and most holy Mary that he brought with him from hell more than two thirds of his demons for this enterprise, and without a doubt he would have emptied hell of all of its demons if a part had not been necessary for the torture of the damned souls; for not only are the damned ceaselessly burning in the fires administered by divine justice, but this dragon never permits the absence of all the demons, which would relieve them of the sight and company of their tormentors. Though Lucifer is so ravenous for the destruction of mortals on earth, he is just as unwilling to grant any relief to the damned in hell, and hence he will never entirely empty it of the demons. Such an impious, cruel and inhuman master the unfortunate sinners on earth continue to serve!

337. The wrath of this dragon had been raised to the highest and inconceivable pitch by the events he came to know after the death of our Redeemer, and by the sanctity of his Mother and the favor and protection which the faithful experienced from Her as exhibited in St. Stephen, St. Paul, and other cases. Therefore Lucifer took up his seat in Jerusalem in order to personally implement the engines of war against the very stronghold of the faith and direct the operation of all the infernal squadrons, for the demons preserve order among themselves only for the purpose of warfare against men, while in all the rest they are full of discord and confusion. The Most High has never permitted full sway to their envy, for in one moment they would overturn and destroy the whole world; yet He gave them limited freedom so by affliction the Church could take deep roots in the blood and merits of the Saints, and so in persecution and torments would be manifested the wisdom and power of the Pilot who governed this little ship of the Church. Lucifer immediately commanded his ministers of evil to scour the whole earth in order to find out where the Apostles and disciples were preaching the name of the Lord. In Jerusalem the dragon sought the localities most remote from the places consecrated by the mysteries and blood of the Lord, for he and all the demons dreaded these spots, and the nearer they approached the more they felt themselves weakened and oppressed by the divine power. This effect they experience to this day, and shall feel it to the end of the world. It is certainly a great sorrow this sacred city for the faithful is today in the power of pagan enemies because of the sins of men; yet happy are the few children of the Church who enjoy this privilege, such as the sons of our great father and repairer of the Church, St. Francis!

338. Through the information brought by his demons Lucifer learned the condition of the faithful in all the places where the faith of Christ was being preached. He issued new orders for the persecution of Christians, assigning more or less powerful demons as he thought it necessary against the different Apostles, disciples, or followers of the faith. Others he appointed as messengers to furnish him with accounts of what was happening or transmit his orders for conducting the warfare against the Church. Lucifer also pointed out to his demons unbelieving, perfidious, evil-minded and depraved men whom they were to irritate and provoke to envious wrath against the followers of Christ. Among these were Herod and many Jews, who abhorred the Crucified and wished to blot out his very Name from the land of the living (Jer. 11:19). They also availed themselves of the gentiles who were most depraved and given to idolatry, selecting from both the former and the latter the worst and most perfidious to act as helpers and instruments of their malice. In this way they began the persecution of the Church, and they continued in succeeding ages to use similar diabolical arts for the ruin of virtue and the fruits of the Redemption and blood of Christ. In the primitive Church the infernal dragon caused great havoc among the faithful, persecuting them by diverse kinds of tribulation which were not written down and hence are not known to the Church, though to a greater extent than which St.

Paul says in his epistle to the Hebrews (11:35-38) regarding the ancient Saints happened to those of the New Testament. In addition to these exterior persecutions the demons afflicted all the just, Apostles, disciples and believers with hidden temptations, suggestions, illusions, and other wickedness as he does in our day with all those who desire to walk according to the divine law and follow Christ our Redeemer and Master. It is not possible in this life to know all Lucifer did against the primitive Church in order to extinguish it, as he continues to do now with the same intention.

339. Yet nothing of all this was hidden to the great Mother of Wisdom because in the clearness of her eminent knowledge She perceived all the secrets of hell which were hidden to the rest of mortals. Although blows and wounds when they find us prepared do not usually cause as much harm to us, and the most prudent Queen had such a capacity for the coming tribulations of the holy Church, and none of them could come upon Her unexpectedly or find Her ignorant of them, yet since they concerned the Apostles and all the faithful, for whom She had such an endearing love of a most pious Mother, the prospect of these afflictions wounded her most tender Heart and filled Her with sorrow in proportion to her almost boundless charity. This sorrow would have deprived Her of life many times if (as has been repeated in diverse parts of this History) the Lord had not wonderfully preserved it. In truth all just souls who are perfected in divine love would be moved at seeing the wrath and fury of such a host of demons, so vigilant and astute, exerted against the few faithful in their needy and frail condition and burdened with so many miseries of their own. In consideration of their danger most holy Mary forgot all that concerned Herself and was ready to undergo any possible suffering for the protection and consolation of her children, multiplying for them her prayers, sighs, tears and diligence. She sought especially to fortify and encourage the Apostles and disciples by renewing her counsels and exhortations. Many times She restrained the demons by her sovereign commands as Queen, and snatched from their claws innumerable souls whom they were deceiving and perverting, thus rescuing them from eternal death. At other times She prevented great cruelties intended for the ministers of Christ, for Lucifer sought the lives of the Apostles (as he had already done before through Saul as narrated above [252]), and the same happened with the other disciples who were preaching the faith.

340. By these cares and compassion, though the heavenly Teacher kept consummate interior tranquility and composure without which the solicitude of the attentive Mother would have disturbed Her, and in her exterior preserved the equanimity and serenity of a Queen, yet despite all of this the sorrows of her Heart revealed a little of her grief in her countenance, though within the range of her composure and gentleness. And since St. John attended upon Her with the vigilant attention and devotion of a son, it was not possible to hide from the vision of this sharp-eyed eagle the slight change in the countenance of his Mother and Lady. He was deeply afflicted, and having in vain battled with his anxiety, he went to the Lord seeking enlightenment, saying: "My Lord and God, Savior of the world, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Thee for having without my merits and out of pure condescension given me Her as a Mother who is thine own, who conceived Thee, bore Thee, and nursed Thee at her bosom. Through this blessing I am made rich and prosperous in the possession of the greatest Treasure of heaven and earth. But thy Mother and my Lady is left alone and poor without thy royal Presence, and for this neither men nor angels can compensate, much less myself, a vile worm and a slave. My God and Savior of the world, I now see sorrowful She who gave Thee human form and who is the joy of thy people. I desire to console Her and alleviate her grief, but I find myself incapable of doing it. Reason and love urge me on, but reverence and my frailty prohibit it. Give me, O Lord, virtue and light for doing what shall please Thee and serve thy Mother."

341. After this prayer the Saint debated with himself for some time whether he should ask the great Mistress of heaven concerning her sorrow or not; on the one hand his love urged him thereto, while on the other he was restrained by his holy fear and reverence for Her. Three times he approached the door of Her oratory and was as many times withheld by his reverence from asking the question. The heavenly Mother knew all St. John was doing and what passed in his heart. Out of respect for him as a priest and minister of the Lord She rose from her prayer and sought him out, saying: “Master, tell me what thou commandest of thy servant.” I have already stated the Lady called the priests and ministers of her Son “masters” (99, 102, 106, etc.). The Evangelist was consoled and encouraged by this advance, and with some hesitation answered: “My Lady, my office and desire of serving Thee has caused me to notice thy sorrow, and I am troubled at thy suffering which I am anxious to alleviate.”

342. St. John added no more words, yet the Queen knew his desire to be informed of her trouble, and in most prompt obedience She fulfilled his desires as those of her superior even before he could express them. Most holy Mary turned to the Lord and said: “My God and my Son, in thy place Thou has left thy servant John so he could accompany and assist me, and I have received him as my prelate and superior, whose desires and will, upon knowing them, I desire to obey, so I thy humble servant may live and always be governed by thine obedience. Give me permission to manifest to him my concern, since he desires to know it.” She felt at once the *fiat* of the divine will, and falling on her knees at the feet of St. John She asked his blessing and kissed his hands. Having asked his permission to speak, She said: “Master, the sorrow of my heart is well founded, for the Most High has shown to me the tribulations which are to come over the Church and the persecutions which all of its children, especially the Apostles, shall suffer. In preparation and for the execution of this evil in the world I have seen the infernal dragon with innumerable legions of evil spirits issuing forth from the caverns of the abyss, all filled with implacable wrath and fury for the destruction of the Church. This city of Jerusalem shall be the first and foremost in their assault. In it one of the Apostles shall meet his death, and others shall be imprisoned and afflicted at the instigation of the demon. My heart is filled with compassion and sorrow at the opposition of these enemies to the exaltation of the holy Name of God and the salvation of souls.”

343. Thus informed the Apostle was likewise aggrieved and somewhat troubled; but in the strength of divine grace he answered the Queen, saying: “My Mother and Lady, thy wisdom is not ignorant that the Most High shall draw great fruits for his Church and for his faithful children from these trials and tribulations, and shall assist them in their affliction. We Apostles are prepared to sacrifice our lives for the Lord, who has offered his own for the whole human race. We have received great blessings, and it is not just they remain idle and useless. When we were little ones in the school of our Teacher and Lord we behaved like children;* but since He has enriched us with the Holy Ghost and enkindled in us the fire of love, we have lost our cowardice and desire to walk the Way of the Cross taught us by his doctrine and example. We know the Church is to be established and preserved by the blood of its ministers and children; pray Thou for us, my Lady, that by the divine power and thy protection we gain victory over our enemies and for the glory of the Most High triumph over all of them. But if this city of Jerusalem is to bear the brunt of the persecution, it seems to me, my Lady, Thou shouldst not await it here, lest the fury of hell, by inciting the malice of men, attempt some indignity to the tabernacle of God.”

* cf. I Cor. 13:11 [Ed.]

344. The great Queen and Lady of heaven, full of love and compassion for the Apostles and all the other faithful, and spurning all fear, would rather have stayed in Jerusalem in order to visit, console and encourage all in their impending tribulation. But this preference, though so holy, She did not make known to St. John, for since it was the choice of her Heart She preferred to disregard it and yield in humble obedience to the desires of the Apostle whom She held as her prelate and superior. In this subjection, giving no direct answer, She thanked the Evangelist for his courageous desire of suffering and dying for Christ; as for departing from Jerusalem, She told him to command and dispose as he thought fit, for She would obey him in all things as his subject and would ask the Lord to guide him by his divine light according to his glory and pleasure. Upon obtaining this consent of the Blessed Mother (giving us such a great example and reprehending so much our disobedience) the Evangelist proposed to go to Ephesus in the confines of Asia Minor. In suggesting this journey to most holy Mary he said: “My Lady and Mother, in order to leave Jerusalem and seek occasion to labor for the exaltation of the name of the Most High, it seems best for us to retire to the city of Ephesus, where Thou canst bring forth the fruits of faith which are not to be expected in Jerusalem. Would I were one of the Angels who assist at the throne of the blessed Trinity in order to serve Thee worthily in this journey, but I am only a vile worm of the earth; however, the Lord shall be with us, and Thou shalt have in Him a propitious Helper as thy God and thy Son.”

345. Having resolved upon this journey the necessary notice and advice was yet to be given to the faithful in Jerusalem. The great Lady therefore retired to her oratory and prayed as follows: “Most high and eternal God, this humble handmaid prostrates herself before thy royal presence, and from my inmost heart I beseech Thee to direct and guide me in thy greater pleasure and good will. I shall make this journey in obedience to thy servant John, whose will shall be as thy own. It is not just for thy handmaid and Mother, who has been so favored by thy right hand, to take any step which is not for the greater glory and exaltation of thy holy Name. Attend, O Lord, to my desires and prayers, so I may act most appropriately and justly.” The Lord then answered Her and said: “My Dove and dearest Spouse, I have ordained this journey for my greater pleasure. Obey John and go to Ephesus, for there in due time I desire to manifest my clemency to some souls through thy mediation and presence.” By this answer of the Lord by which She was informed of the divine will most holy Mary was much consoled, and She asked the Lord for his blessing and permission to prepare for her departure at the time set by the Apostle. Full of the fire of charity She was inflamed with the desire for the good of the souls in Ephesus, regarding which the Lord had given Her hopes that He would draw fruit for his pleasure and complaisance.

Mary Most Holy Journeys from Jerusalem to Saragossa in Spain, according to the Will of Her Son Our Savior, to Visit St. James there; what Happened on this Journey, and the Year and the Day of this Visit.

346. All the solicitude of our great Mother and Lady was centered upon the increase and spread of the holy Church, the consolation of the Apostles, disciples, and the other faithful, and their defense against the persecutions and assaults prepared by the infernal dragon and his hosts. Before She departed from Jerusalem to take up her abode in Ephesus, in her matchless charity She ordered and arranged many things, both by Herself and through her holy Angels, in order to provide as far as possible all that seemed proper for the needs of the Church in her absence, for at that time She had no knowledge of the duration of her sojourn or of her return to Jerusalem. The most efficacious service She could render to the faithful was her continual prayer to secure the

assistance of the infinite power of her Son for the defense of the Apostles and faithful against the proud and vaunting schemes of Lucifer's wickedness. The most prudent Mother knew among the Apostles James the Greater would be the first one to shed his blood for Christ our Savior, and because She loved him in a special manner (as I have stated above [320]) She offered up more particular prayers for him than for the other Apostles.

347. While the heavenly Mother continued in these prayers, one day, which was the fourth before leaving for Ephesus, She felt in her most chaste Heart new and sweetest affections as was usual when She was about to receive some signal favor; they are called words of the Lord in the language of Holy Scriptures.* Responding to them most holy Mary, as the Mistress of knowledge, said: "Lord, what dost Thou command me to do? What dost Thou desire of me? Speak, O Lord, for thy handmaid heareth." Repeating these words She saw her divine Son descending in person to visit Her, seated upon a throne of ineffable majesty and accompanied by innumerable Angels of all the heavenly choirs and hierarchies. With all his court the Lord entered the oratory of his Blessed Mother, and the pious and humble Virgin worshipped Him in deepest reverence from the inmost of her purest soul. Then the Lord spoke to Her, saying: "My most beloved Mother, from whom I have received human nature in order to save the world, I am attentive to thy petitions and holy desires, and they are pleasing to Me. I shall defend my Apostles and my Church, and I shall be their Father and Protector so it shall not be overcome nor the gates of hell prevail against it (Mt. 16:18). As Thou dost already know, it is necessary for my glory for the Apostles to labor with my grace, and in the end they must follow Me on the Way of the Cross and to the death which I suffered in order to redeem the human race. The first one who is to imitate Me therein is my faithful servant James, and I desire him to suffer martyrdom in this city of Jerusalem. And in order for him to come here, and for other purposes of my glory and thine, it is my will for Thee to presently visit him in Spain where he is preaching my holy Name. I desire Thee, my Mother, to go to Saragossa where he now is and command him to return to Jerusalem. But before he leaves that city he is to build a temple in thy Name and Title, where Thou shalt be venerated and invoked for the welfare of that country, for my glory and pleasure, and that of the most blessed Trinity."

348. The great Queen of heaven accepted this commission from her divine Son with new jubilation of her soul, and with most sincere gratitude responded: "My Lord and true God, let thy holy will be done in thy servant and Mother for all eternity, and let all creatures praise Thee for the admirable works of kindness done for thy servants. I, O Lord, bless and magnify Thee in them and render humble gratitude for them in the name of the entire Church and in my own name. Grant me, my Son, that in the temple Thou commandest to be built by thy servant James I may be permitted to promise the special protection of thy almighty arm, and that this sacred place be part of my inheritance for the use of all those who call upon thy holy Name with devotion and ask me to intercede for them with thy clemency."

349. Christ our Redeemer responded: "My Mother, in whom I am well pleased, I give Thee my royal word I shall look with special clemency and fill with blessings all those who with devotion and humility call upon Me through thy intercession in that temple. Into thy hands I have deposited and delivered all my treasures; as my Mother, who holds my place and power, Thou canst signalize that place by depositing therein thy riches and promising in it thy favors, for all shall be fulfilled according to thy will and pleasure." Again most holy Mary thanked her Son and omnipotent God for this promise. Then at the command of the Lord a great number of the Angels

* cf. Ps. 11:7; Ecclus. 42:15 [Ed.]

who accompanied Her formed a royal throne of a most resplendent cloud and placed Her thereon as the Queen and Lady of all creation. Christ our Savior gave them his blessing and ascended with the rest of the Angels to heaven. The Mother most pure, borne by the hands of the Seraphim and accompanied by her thousand Angels and the rest, departed body and soul for Saragossa in Spain. Though this journey could have been made in the shortest moment of time the Lord ordered it to proceed in this manner, that the holy Angels form choirs of sweetest harmony and move along singing to their Queen high praises of rejoicing and happiness.

350. Some of them sang the *Ave Maria*, others the *Salve sancta Parens** and *Salve Regina*,† others *Regina coeli laetare*,‡ etc., alternating these canticles and hymns with choir answering choir in such concerted harmony and consonance as to be outside the realm of human capacity. The great Lady, with such humility of heart as to match the greatness of this favor and benefit, also opportunely responded, referring all this glory to the Author who had given it to Her. She repeated many times: “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts* (Is. 6:3), have pity on the poor children of Eve. Thine is the glory, thine the power and majesty. Thou alone art holy, the Most High, and Lord of all the celestial armies and of all creation.” The Angels would then respond to these canticles so sweet in the hearing of the Lord. Proceeding in this manner they arrived in Saragossa when it was approaching midnight.

351. The most fortunate Apostle St. James was encamped with his disciples outside the wall running along the banks of the river Ebro. In order to engage in prayer he had separated some distance from his companions. Some of his disciples had fallen asleep and others were absorbed in prayer, all of them far from expecting this strange event. The procession of the Angels spread out somewhat and sang still louder so not only St. James but also his disciples could hear them from afar. Those who were asleep awoke, and all of them were filled with interior sweetness, wonder, and heavenly consolation which caused them to remain speechless with admiration and shed tears of joy. They saw in the sky a most brilliant light, brighter than the sun, yet it was not diffused beyond a certain space and seemed like a large luminous globe. Lost in admiration and joy they stood motionless until called by their master. Through the miraculous effects which they felt within them the Lord desired to prepare them for what would be manifested to them concerning this great mystery. The holy Angels placed the throne of their Queen and Lady within sight of the Apostle, who was still rapt in most exalted prayer and heard much more plainly the celestial music and saw more of the light than his disciples. The Angels bore with them a small column hewn of marble or jasper, and a not very large image of their Queen, made of some other material. This image was carried by the Angels with great veneration. During that night the Angels, exerting their skill in fashioning the things of nature, had prepared all this for the occasion.

352. Seated on her throne in the cloud and surrounded by the choirs of Angels, the Queen of heaven manifested Herself to St. James. In wonderful beauty and refulgence the great Lady far outshone all the Angels. The blissful Apostle prostrated himself upon the earth and in deepest reverence venerated the Mother of his Creator and Redeemer. He was shown at the same time the image and the pillar or column in the hands of some of the Angels. The loving Queen gave him her blessing in the name of her divine Son and said: “James, servant of the Most High, be thou blest by his right hand; may He raise thee up and show thee the light of his divine

* cf. *Introit*, Common Mass of the B.V.M. [Ed.]

† cf. *Anthem to the B.V.M.*, Sunday at Compline, Trinity Sunday to Advent [Ed.]

‡ cf. *Anthem to the B.V.M.*, Sunday at Compline, Easter Sunday to Trinity Sunday [Ed.]

countenance.” All the Angels answered: “Amen.” The Queen of heaven continued: “My son James,* this place the most high and omnipotent God of heaven has destined to be consecrated by thee upon earth for the erection of a temple and house of prayer where under my patronage and name He desires to be glorified and magnified, and where the treasures of his right hand shall be distributed and all his ancient mercies shall be opened up for the faithful through my intercession if they ask for them in true faith and sincere piety. In the name of the Almighty I promise them great favors and blessings of sweetness, and my protection and assistance, for this is to be my house and temple, my inheritance and possession. A pledge of this truth and of my promise shall be this column with my image placed upon it. In the temple which thou shalt build for me it shall remain and be preserved, together with the holy faith, until the end of the world. Thou shalt immediately begin to build this temple of God, and after thou hast completed it thou shalt depart for Jerusalem, for my divine Son desires thee to offer the sacrifice of thy life in the same place where He offered his for the Redemption of the human race.”

353. The great Queen finished speaking and ordered the holy Angels to set up the column and upon it the sacred image in the same place where they now stand, and the Angels fulfilled her command in one moment. As soon as the column and the image were in place the Angels and the holy Apostle recognized that spot as a house and portal of God (Gen. 28:17), as holy ground, consecrated as a temple to the glory of the Most High and the invocation of his Blessed Mother. In testimony of this they immediately rendered supreme worship, adoration and reverence to the Divinity. St. James prostrated himself upon the ground and with the holy Angels celebrated with new canticles the first dedication of a temple instituted in this world after the Redemption of the human race and in the name of the great Lady of heaven and earth. This was the most happy origin of the sanctuary of our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa, which is justly called the angelic chamber, God’s own house and that of his most pure Mother, worthy of the veneration of the whole world and a secure pledge and earnest of the favors and benefits not prevented by our sins. It seems to me our great patron and Apostle, the second Jacob, gave a more glorious beginning to this temple than the first Jacob to his in Bethel (Ib. 18) when he journeyed to Mesopotamia, though in that name and on that rock was built the temple of Solomon. There Jacob saw in his sleep the mystical and figurative representation of the ladder with the accompanying Angels; but here our Jacob saw the true Stair of Heaven with his bodily eyes, and accompanied by many more Angels. There the stone was consecrated as a temple which was to be destroyed many times and after some centuries was to cease to exist; but here, in the firmness of this truly consecrated pillar, was established the temple, the faith, and the worship of the Most High until the end of the world, where the Angels were to ascend with the prayers of the faithful and descend with incomparable blessings and favors to be distributed to all those who in this place devoutly call upon and venerate this great Queen and Lady.

354. Our Apostle rendered humble gratitude to most holy Mary, and asked Her for the special protection of this Spanish kingdom, and particularly of this place consecrated to her devotion and name. The heavenly Mother granted him all his requests, and having again given him her blessing She was carried back to Jerusalem in the same order by the holy Angels. At her petition the Most High charged an Angel with the care and defense of this sanctuary, and from that day until now this Angel fulfills this office and shall continue it as long as the sacred image and column shall remain there. All faithful Catholics may see with their own eyes the wonderful preservation of this sanctuary, since it has remained intact and uninjured for more than sixteen

* cf. Priests’ Preparation for Mass, Ps. 85:16 and 115:16 [Ed.]

hundred years* amid all the perfidy of the Jews, the idolatry of the Romans, the heresy of the Arians, and the savage fury of the Moors and pagans; and still greater would be the astonishment of Catholics if they knew the plots and schemes which all hell has fabricated in different ages through the hands of these infidel nations for the destruction of this sanctuary. I will not detain myself in relating these events because it is not necessary and does not belong to my purpose. Suffice it to say Lucifer, through all these enemies of God, has tried many times to destroy it, and each time the holy Angel who guards this sanctuary has successfully defended it.†

355. But I wish to mention two points which have been made known to me in order to record here. First, the promises referred to here, both those of Jesus Christ and of his most holy Mother, to preserve this temple and its locality, though they seem absolute, contain an implicit or enclosed condition, as is the case with many promises of sacred Scripture in regard to particular blessings of divine grace. The implicit condition here is that we on our part conduct ourselves in such a way as not to oblige God to deprive us of this merciful privilege thus promised and offered to us. Since the Lord hides this compelling measure of sins beneath the mysterious decrees of his justice, this condition is not declared or made manifest to us; moreover, we know from the teachings of the holy Church that his favors and promises are not to be used by us against the Lord, and that we must not sin in reliance upon his liberal mercy, since this more than anything else will make us unworthy of it. So many and so great may become the sins of these kingdoms and of that devout city of Saragossa that we justly draw upon ourselves the loss of this wonderful blessing and the protection of the great Queen and Mistress of the Angels.

356. The second point which I shall touch upon, and which is not less worthy of our consideration, is that Lucifer and his demons, since they know these facts and the promises of the Lord, have attempted and are still attempting to introduce into this illustrious city, with a more refined malice than elsewhere, heinous vices and sins, and especially those which would more highly disoblige most holy Mary and offend against her purity. The purpose of the ancient serpent is to bring about two most execrable effects: First, either to induce the inhabitants of that city, if possible, to so offend God as to cause Him to abolish the sanctuary, thus reaching the end which he could not otherwise attain; or if that is not possible, at least to hinder souls from showing proper reverence and devotion to the sacred temple and the great blessings promised by most holy Mary to all who shall worthily supplicate Her in it. Lucifer and his demons know very well the inhabitants of Saragossa and its neighborhood are much more heavily indebted to the great Queen of heaven than many other cities and provinces of Christianity, for it holds within its walls the storehouse and fountainhead of the favors and blessings which others must come from afar to draw upon; hence if its inhabitants while possessing these advantages would lead a more wicked life, and consequently treat with contempt this condescending clemency which no one could ever merit, then certainly their ingratitude to God and his most blessed Mother would provoke a greater indignation and more grave chastisement by the divine justice. Joyfully shall I confess to all who shall read this History that I consider myself extremely fortunate in being permitted to write it in a place which is a foot journey of only two days from the city of

* The Editor has visited this venerable Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa, Spain, and witnessed for himself how this same pillar and statue have stood unmoved on the exact spot upon which the holy Angels placed it on Jan. 2, 40 AD, nearly 2,000 years ago. [Ed.]

† For example, in the Socialist revolution of the 1930s three bombs were dropped on the Basilica; one exploded in the plaza, but the other two stuck on the roof ! These two bombs were taken down, defused, and can now be seen hanging on the walls of this magnificent Basilica as trophies of the protection of Our Lady and this holy Angel. [Ed.]

Saragossa, and I look upon that sanctuary with inmost affection of soul in acknowledgment of the debt which as all know I owe to the great Mistress of the world. I acknowledge also my obligations and my debt of gratitude toward the piety of that city. In return I urgently desire to bring to the remembrance of its inhabitants the sincere and ardent devotion they owe to most holy Mary, the favors they can obtain for themselves by it, and the blessings they may lose by forgetfulness and inattention. Let them consider themselves as more favored and indebted than the other faithful; let them esteem their treasure and happily enjoy it, and let them not make the propitiatory of their God a useless and common dwelling, converting it into a court of justice, for most holy Mary has appointed it as a workshop or tribunal of her mercies.

357. The vision of Mary most holy having faded away, St. James called his disciples, who were absorbed in the music and in wonder at the brightness, though they did not hear or see anything else. Their great teacher revealed to them as much as was calculated to animate them toward helping to build the temple with which he had been commissioned, and with the assistance of the holy Angels before he left Saragossa he completed the little chapel in which now the image and the column are still preserved. Afterwards the Catholics erected the sumptuous temple and whatever else surrounds and adorns that celebrated sanctuary. The evangelist St. John at the time knew nothing of this coming of the heavenly Mother to Spain, nor did She manifest it to him, for these favors and excellencies did not concern the faith of the universal Church and hence She kept the secret of them to Herself, though She declared other greater favors to St. John and the other Evangelists because they were necessary for the common faith and instruction of the faithful. But during his return journey to Jerusalem St. James visited Ephesus and gave an account to his brother John regarding what had happened to him in his journeying and preaching in Spain. He told him also of the two visions of the Blessed Mother and what had happened in Saragossa in connection with the temple he had erected in that city. Through the Evangelist many of the other Apostles and disciples learned of this miracle, for afterwards in Jerusalem he informed them of it in order to confirm them in their faith and devotion to the Lady of heaven and awaken their confidence in her protection. Hence those who knew of these favors to St. James from that time on called upon Her in their labors and necessities, and the loving Mother helped some of them often and all of them at different times in certain difficulties and dangers.

358. The miraculous appearance of most holy Mary in Saragossa took place in the beginning of the fortieth year of the birth of her Son our Lord, during the evening of the second of January. Four years, four months, and thirteen days had passed from the time when St. James left Jerusalem on his missionary tour until this event, for he had left in the year thirty-five (as I mentioned above [319]) on the twentieth of August; and after the apparition he spent one year, two months, and twenty-three days in building the temple, returning to Jerusalem, and preaching. He died on the twenty-fifth of March in the year forty-one. The great Queen of the Angels at the time She appeared to him in Saragossa was fifty-four years, three months, and twenty-four days old. She then returned to Jerusalem and prepared to depart for Ephesus, as I shall relate in the next Book and chapter, and departed on the fourth day after her return. Thus this temple was dedicated many years before her glorious transition, as shall become evident when I mention her age at her death (742), for from this apparition to her death intervened a longer time than is ordinarily assumed. During all these years She was already publicly venerated in Spain and had temples built in her honor, for in imitation of that in Saragossa others were soon erected where altars were raised in her honor and solemn veneration.

359. This wonderful distinction without a doubt exalts Spain beyond all that can be said in its praise, since thereby it signalized itself before all nations and kingdoms of the earth in the public veneration, reverence and devotion due to the great Queen and Lady of heaven, Mary most holy, and was more zealous to honor and invoke Her even while She was yet in mortal flesh than other nations were after her death and transition to heaven. In return for this ancient and general piety and devotion of Spain to most holy Mary, I was given to understand the loving Mother has publicly enriched these realms so much, with so many images of her apparitions and sanctuaries in them dedicated to her holy name, more than the other kingdoms of the world. By multiplying these favors the heavenly Mother has sought to familiarize communication with Her throughout these kingdoms, offering her protection in so many temples and sanctuaries, and going out to meet* our devotions in all parts and provinces so we could recognize Her as our Mother and Patroness, and also so we could understand the defense of her honor and the spreading of her glory throughout the entire world is entrusted to this nation.

360. Therefore I pray and humbly beseech all the subjects and inhabitants of Spain, and in the name of this great Lady exhort all of them to refresh their memory, enliven their faith, renew and excite their ancient devotion toward Mary most holy, and consider themselves more bound and obliged to her service than other nations. Let them hold especially the sanctuary of Saragossa in highest veneration as excelling all the others, and as being the origin of the piety and devotion to this Queen in Spain. And let all those who read this History believe the former happiness and greatness of this monarchy were received through most holy Mary for the service rendered to Her by the Spanish people. If we in our days see the glory and happiness of Spain so much diminished, it is the fault of our negligence by which we oblige Her to withdraw her protection. If we desire a remedy for so many calamities we can obtain it only through this powerful Queen, gaining her favor by new and extraordinary proofs of our devotion. And since the admirable blessing of the Catholic faith and the other benefits I have mentioned have come to us through our great patron and Apostle St. James, let our devotion and confidence toward him likewise be renewed so the Almighty through his intercession may renew his wonders.

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

361. My daughter, thou hast noticed that not without some mysterious reason I have in the course of this History so many times shown thee the secret machinations and treacherous counsels of hell for the ruin of mankind, and the furious and restless wrath with which Lucifer seeks to accomplish it, losing neither time, place, nor occasion, leaving no stone unturned, neither forgetting any path, state of life, or person in laying snares for their fall; and he pours out his most dangerous, deceptive and hidden snares against those who are the most careful and desirous of attaining eternal life and the friendship of God. Besides these general warnings I have manifested to thee many times the secret meetings and preparations deliberated and resolved against thee in particular. It is important for all the children of the Church to hasten from the ignorance in which they live in such inevitable danger of their eternal perdition, for they do not know or take notice that their ignorance of these secrets is the chastisement of the sin of Adam, and how after being enlightened they again lose it and become more unworthy of it than before through their own sins. Many of the faithful are as oblivious and careless as if there were no

* cf. Lk. 15:20 [Ed.]

demons to persecute and deceive them, and if they sometimes think of them it is superficially and lightly, falling immediately back into their forgetfulness, which for many of them means no less than eternal punishment. If at all times, in all places, in all their works, and on all occasions the demons set their snares, it is but just and proper that Christians on their part take not one step without asking divine light to see and avoid the danger. But since the children of Adam are so sluggish in regard to this matter they perform scarcely one work without being assailed by the infernal serpent and infected by his poison. Thus they accumulate sins upon sins and evil upon evil, irritating the divine justice and shutting out mercy.

362. In these dangers I exhort thee, my daughter, that just as the fury and watchfulness of hell against thee is greater, so also by the divine grace thy watchfulness must be more earnest and continual in order to vanquish those astute enemies. Consider what I did when I saw the designs of Lucifer to persecute me and the holy Church: I multiplied my prayers, tears, sighs and supplications, and when the demons tried to avail themselves of the help of Herod and the Jews of Jerusalem, although I did not need to fear the least for myself in the city and desired to remain there, I nevertheless gave up my desire of staying in order to furnish an example of caution and obedience by fleeing from danger and yielding to the will of St. John. Thou art not strong and art in great danger from creatures; and what is still more, thou art my disciple and hast my life and works for thy model. Therefore I desire thee to flee from danger as soon as thou dost see it, and if necessary avoid it at the cost of the greatest sensible pain, always clinging to obedience to whomever governs thee, which thou must look upon as thy secure north star and thy strong column supporting thee against a fall. Cautiously examine whether beneath some apparent work of piety the enemy has hidden some snare, and make sure not to suffer evil in doing good to others.* Do not trust to thy own judgment, though it may seem good and secure to thee; never hesitate to obey in all things, seeing that I by obedience safely passed through many labors and difficulties.

363. Renew also the loving desire of following my footsteps and imitating me perfectly so as to finish what still remains of my History, at the same time writing it in thy heart. Run on the way of humility and obedience after the aroma of my life and virtues,[†] and if thou obey me (as I have desired and so often asked of thee) I shall assist thee as my daughter in thy necessities and tribulations, and my divine Son shall accomplish his will in thee as thou hast desired before beginning this work, his promises so often repeated to thee shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt be blessed by his powerful right hand.

364. Praise and magnify the Most High for the favor shown to my servant James in Saragossa, for the temple there erected before my Assumption into heaven, for all the wonders concerning it, and because this was the first temple of the evangelical law and was most pleasing to the will of the most blessed Trinity.

END OF BOOK SEVEN

* cf. I Cor. 9:27 [Ed.]

† cf. Cant. 1:3 [Ed.]