

INTRODUCTION

to the Third Part of the Divine History and Most Holy Life of Mary, the Mother of God.

1. He who navigates upon a dangerous and deep sea (Ecclus. 43:26), the farther he ventures into its wide expanses so much the more does he tend to dread the storms, and the more wary he is of pirates, his enemies who could invade him. This concern is increased by his ignorance and weakness, for he does not know when or from where danger may come, and neither is he powerful to avoid it before it comes or resist it when it arrives. This is what is happening to me now since I am engulfed in the immense ocean of the excellence and magnificent works of most holy Mary, though it is a sea full of serenity and tranquility as I know and confess. Yet it is not enough to overcome my fears to find myself so far advanced upon this ocean of grace, having written the first and second Parts of her most holy Life, since in this work itself, as in an immaculate mirror, I have known with greater light and clarity my own insufficiency and vileness, and with it more evident realization that the object of this divine History is most impenetrable and incomprehensible to all created understanding. Nor are the enemies, the princes of darkness, ever at rest, for like the most persistent pirates they continue to afflict and discourage me by false illusions and temptations full of iniquity and astuteness above all my consideration. The navigator has no other recourse than to turn his sight toward the north star, by which as his secure and fixed Star of the Sea he must govern and guide his course amid the waves. I labor to do the same in the torment of my various temptations and fears. Through obedience to my Star of the Sea, most holy Mary, I know I can turn to the north star of the divine will; yet many times afflicted, disturbed and fearful, I cry out from the bottom of my heart and say: "Lord and most high God, what shall I do amid my doubts? Shall I move forward or change the intention to proceed with the discourse of this History? And Thou, Mother of Grace and my Teacher, declare to me thy will and that of thy divine Son."

2. I must confess in all truth, and as due to the divine condescension, that God has always answered my clamors and has never denied me his paternal kindness in making known his will in many ways. Although this is sufficiently evident in the assistance rendered to me in writing the first and second Parts, yet besides this proof there are innumerable other assurances given to me by the Lord himself, by his most holy Mother, and by his Angels, adding conviction to conviction and testimony to testimony in order to overcome my fears and cowardice. What is more, the Angels themselves in visible shapes, who are the princes and ministers of the Lord in his holy Church, have pointed out and reiterated the divine command, bidding me to believe and execute this commission and continue this divine History. Nor was there lacking to me the understanding of the light of infused science which with gentle force and sweet strength called, taught and moved me to know the most exalted in perfection, the most pure in sanctity, the supreme in virtue, and the most agreeable to the will, and that all of this has been offered to me as enclosed and reserved in that mystical Ark of most holy Mary, like hidden manna (Heb. 9:4), so we may approach to taste and possess it.

3. Nevertheless, in entering upon this third Part in order to begin to write it I experienced new and strong contradictions, not less formidable than those experienced in the first two Parts of this History. I can say without fear that I have not composed a sentence or a word, nor have I brought

myself to write the least part of it, without experiencing more temptations than the letters of the alphabet of which it is composed. Although the hindrances caused by my own fear would have been sufficient (since I know who I am and cannot help being timid, nor could ever put more confidence in myself than what my own weakness will warrant), yet neither this nor the magnitude of the undertaking were the real impediments, though these were at first unsuspected. I presented to the Lord the second Part which I had written in the same way as I had presented the first. Under strict obedience I was compelled to begin this third Part, and by the strength which this virtue gives to all who practice it I allayed the fear and faintness of my heart in executing what had been assigned to me; however, fluctuating between my desire and the fear of commencing I was cast about like a vessel combated by violent and contrary winds.

4. On the one hand the Lord bade me proceed in what I had begun since such was his will, nor in my continual prayers have I ever felt impelled to a different course. It is true that for some time I paid no attention to these directions of the Most High and did not manifest them immediately to my superior and to my confessor (not because I wished to conceal them, but in order to act more securely and so they might not suspect I followed only my own insight). Yet His Majesty, who in his works is so uniform, gave to their hearts new strength in order to command me by their orders and precepts, as they always have. Yet on the other hand the envy and malice of the ancient serpent calumniated all I did or was moved to undertake. He raised up against me tormenting and alluring temptations by which he sometimes sought to inspire me with his own boundless pride; at other times, and very often, he sought to cast me down into the deepest dejection and involve me in most dark and disorderly fears, increasing his efforts as this History progressed, and more so when I was inclined to finish it. This enemy also availed himself of the judgment of some persons who justly could claim my respect and who would not further this work. He also caused disturbances among the religious under my charge. It seemed to me that I had no time to spare and was obliged to attend to the welfare of the community, which is the principal duty of a superioress. With all these molestations I did not attain such interior peace as is necessary and proper for the actual enlightenment and intelligence concerning the mysteries of which I write, for this light cannot be perceived nor is it properly communicated amid the spiritual storms of temptation (III Kg. 19:11-13), but will shine only in the peace and serenity of the faculties of the soul.

5. Afflicted and harassed by such a variety of temptations I ceased not in my clamors. On one day in particular I spoke to the Lord: "My most high Master and good of my soul, my groans and my desires to please Thee and avoid errors in thy service are not hidden to thy wisdom (Ps. 37:10). Lovingly I lament in thy royal presence, for either Thou dost command me, O Lord, what I cannot fulfill, or Thou dost permit thy and my enemies by their malice to hinder me in fulfilling it." His Majesty responded to my complaint, and with some severity said to me: "Remember, soul, thou canst not continue what thou hast begun, or finish writing the Life of my Mother, if thou dost not become in all things very perfect and pleasing in my eyes, since I desire thee to gather for thyself the copious fruit of this benefit, and be the first to receive it with plenitude; and in order for thee to achieve this as I desire, it is necessary that all within thee which is earthly and a result of being a daughter of Adam be consumed, namely the effects of sin with its inclinations and evil habits." This answer of the Lord excited in me new solicitude and the most burning desire of performing all that it implied, namely not only a common mortification of all the inclinations and passions, but an absolute death of the animal and terrestrial life, and its renovation and transformation into a celestial and angelic state of existence.

6. Desiring to apply my powers to what was proposed to me I examined my inclinations and

appetites, circling through the streets and corners of my interior, and I felt a most ardent desire to die to all that is visible and earthly. For some days I suffered in these exercises great afflictions and distress, for as my desires grew, so also increased the dangers and occasions of diversions from creatures which were enough to impede my progress. The more I sought to withdraw myself from all my surroundings so much the more did I find myself bound and oppressed by what I abhorred. Of all this the enemy availed himself for my discouragement, representing such a life as altogether impossible for me. To this affliction was suddenly added another new and strange disorder: I felt in my body a condition so sensitive that the least exertion, even the most insignificant mortification, became more intolerable to me than the most severe penances had until then. Those which I was accustomed to undergo most willingly now required the most violent exertion, and I found myself become so delicate that they seemed to inflict upon me mortal wounds. To undergo one discipline caused me to swoon to the point of fainting, and each stroke seemed to divide my heart. Without exaggeration I say that merely touching one hand to the other forced out my tears, causing me great confusion and grief at being so miserable. In forcing myself to labor in spite of this infirmity I found my blood oozing from my fingernails.

7. I was ignorant of the cause of this new experience, and in pondering it within me I said in frustration: "Ah me! What misery is this? What is this change I feel? The Lord commands me to mortify myself and die to all that is earthly, yet I now find myself more alive to it and less mortified." For some days I suffered great bitterness and frustration in my meditations. In order to moderate my affliction the Most High consoled me, saying: "My daughter and spouse, let not thy heart be afflicted by the labor and novelty which thou dost feel in suffering so vividly. I have desired by this means to extinguish in thee the effects of sin and renovate thee for a new life of most exalted operations for my greater pleasure, and until thou hast attained this new state thou canst not begin to write the rest of the Life of my Mother and thy Teacher." With this new response of the Lord I recovered some vigor, for his words are always those of life (Jn. 6:69), vivifying the heart. Yet my troubles and temptations were not lessened, and I prepared myself for labor and battle, always mistrusting my weakness and inability to find a remedy. I sought it in the Mother of life, and I resolved to beseech Her favor with constancy and sincerity, as to a unique and ultimate refuge of the needy and afflicted, as one from whom and by whom have always come to me, the most helpless in the world, many favors and benefits.

8. I prostrated myself at the feet of the great Lady of heaven and earth, and pouring out my spirit in her presence I besought Her mercifully to remedy my imperfections and defects. I represented to Her my desire of pleasing Her and her divine Son, and again offered myself for her service, even if I would have to pass through fire and torments and shed my blood. The kind Mother answered my supplications by saying: "My daughter, thou art not ignorant that the desires which the Most High enkindles anew in thy bosom are pledges and affects of the love by which He calls thee to his intimate communication and familiarity. It is his most holy will and mine for thee on thy part to execute them in order not to hinder thy vocation or retard any longer the pleasure of His Majesty in what He desires of thee. In the entire discourse of the Life which thou art writing I have admonished thee and declared to thee thy obligation in receiving this new and great benefit, namely to imprint in thyself the living seal of the doctrine I give thee and example of my life according to the powers of grace thou dost receive. Thou hast now arrived at the writing of the third and last Part of my History, and it is time thou raise thyself to a perfect imitation of me, clothing thyself with new strength and extending thy hand to strong things (Prov. 31:17, 19). By this new life and operations thou shalt give a beginning to what still remains to be written, since it must be written while putting into practice what thou dost come to

know. Without this disposition thou shalt not be able to write it, since it is the will of the Lord that my Life be written more in thy heart than on paper, so within thee thou feel what thou dost write in order to write what thou dost feel.

9. “For this purpose I desire thee to strip thy interior of all earthly images and affection (Ps. 44:11), so having banished and forgotten all visible things thy conversation and continual interaction be with the Lord himself (Philip. 3:20), with me, and with his Angels; and let all other things be strange and foreign to thee. With the strength of this virtue and purity which I desire of thee thou shalt crush the head of the ancient serpent and overcome the resistance thou dost experience in writing and laboring. By giving place to the vain fears inspired by the demon* thou art tardy in responding to the Lord, in entering upon the path He desires thee to take, and in giving credit to his benefits; and I desire to tell thee now it is for this reason divine Providence has given permission to the dragon so he as the minister of his justice punish thy unbelief and for not submitting thyself to his perfect will. The same enemy has concocted schemes in order to make thee fall into some faults, proposing to thee his deceits in the garb of good intention and virtuous ends; and by working to persuade thee falsely that such great favors and exalted blessings are not for thee since thou cannot merit them, he has made thee dull and sluggish in rendering gratitude for them. And as if these works of the Most High were of justice and not of grace, thou hast been hindered much in this deceit, not working as much as thou couldst with divine grace, and not corresponding to the grace thou hast received without any merit of thine. It is now time, my dearest, for thee to be assured and believe the Lord and me, for I teach thee the most secure and most exalted in perfection, namely my perfect imitation of my divine Son, which shall conquer the pride and cruelty of the dragon and crush his head by divine virtue. There is no reason why thou shouldst impede or retard this grace; rather, forgetting all things, deliver thyself lovingly to the will of my divine Son† and mine, for We desire of thee what is most holy, laudable and pleasing in our eyes and approval.”

10. By this instruction of my heavenly Lady, Mother and Teacher, my soul was replenished with new light and desire of obeying Her in all things. I renewed my good resolutions, I resolved to raise myself by the help of divine grace, and I strove to prepare myself for the fulfillment of the will of the Most High without resistance. I made use of hard and painful mortification, which was difficult for me due to the intensity and sensitivity which I felt (as I mentioned above [6]); yet the war and resistance of the demon did not abate. He knew the undertaking I intended was very arduous, and the state to which the Lord raised me was a refuge, but one very exalted for human weakness and earthly dullness. I was given to understand this truth well, and the slowness caused by my frailty and sluggishness, confessing that the Lord has labored with me during my whole life in order to raise me from the dust and from the dunghill of my vileness,△ multiplying his blessings and favors which exceed all my thoughts. And though He has directed all of this by his powerful right hand for this end, and it is not proper or even possible to enumerate them, yet it also seems to me unjust to be totally silent regarding them, so it can be seen to what a low condition sin has brought us, and what a distance there is between the rational creature and the goal of virtue and perfection of which he is capable, and what it costs to restore it to him.

11. Some years before writing this I received a great and repeated benefit by the hand of God; it was a type of death to all the animal and terrestrial operations, like civil death, and this state

* cf. Eph. 4:27 [Ed.]

† cf. Ps. 54:23 [Ed.]

△ cf. Ps. 112:7 [Ed.]

was followed by another, which was one of new enlightenment and more exalted operations. But since the soul always remains clothed in mortal and earthly corruption, I always feel this weight of the body overwhelming and pressing down the soul (Wis. 9:15), unless the Lord renews his wonders and favors me with the assistance of divine grace. On this occasion this renewal was accomplished in me through the Mother of Piety, who speaking to me in a vision said: "Take notice, my daughter, that now thou must begin to live not thy own life, but the life of thy Spouse Christ in thee (Gal. 2:20); He is to be the life of thy soul and the soul of thy life. For this I desire on my part to reaffirm in thee the death of the old life which has thus far operated in thee, and renew the life which we desire of thee. Let it therefore today be manifested to heaven and earth that sister Mary of Jesus, my daughter and servant, has died to the world, and that the arm of the Most High works effects this in her so this soul may efficaciously live only for that which faith teaches. Just as by natural death all things are left behind, so this soul, fleeing the animal life, by her last will and testament delivers her soul to her Creator and Redeemer, and her body to the earth of self-knowledge and suffering without resistance. My most holy Son and I take charge of this soul in order to fulfill his exalted will and purpose, if she shall obey us promptly. We celebrate her funeral with the inhabitants of our court, in order to bury her in the bosom of the humanity of the eternal Word, which is the sepulchre of those who die to the world while still in mortal life. From now on she must not live in her own self nor for herself by the earthly operations of Adam, because in all things she must manifest in herself the life of Christ, who is her life. I shall beseech his immense kindness to look upon this deceased one and receive her soul only for Himself, and acknowledge her as a stranger and wanderer on the earth, and an inhabitant of the upper and more divine region. I order the Angels to recognize her as their companion and treat and communicate with her as if she was freed from mortal flesh.

12. "I command the demons to leave alone this dead one, just as they must leave alone the other dead who are not under their jurisdiction and in whom they have no part, since from today she shall be more dead to visible things than those who have passed from this world. I call upon men to lose her out of sight and forget her as they forget the dead, so she may rest and not be disturbed in her peace. And to thee, soul, I command and admonish to consider thyself as one who has finished life in this world and entered eternal life in the presence of the Most High. I desire thee in the state of faith to imitate the Blessed, since the security of truth and its Object is the same for thee as for them. Thy conversation is to be on high (Philip. 3:20); thy communication with the Lord of all creation and thy Spouse; thy conferences shall be with the Angels and Saints; and thou must rivet thy entire attention upon me, who am thy Mother and Teacher. For all the rest that is earthly and visible thou must have neither movement of life nor any activity, no more than a dead body which shows neither life nor feeling of life regarding what happens or is done with it. Affronts must not disquiet thee, nor flattery move thee; thou must not feel injuries or be puffed up by honors; let neither presumption inflate thee nor discouragement cast thee down; thou must not consent to any effect of concupiscence or anger within thee, since thy model in these passions must be a dead body, already freed from them. Nor must thou expect any more dealings with the world than what it has with a dead body, for the world immediately forgets those whom it has praised in life; and even their closest friend or loved one, though it be father or brother, the world hastens to put out of sight, and as all this happens the deceased there is no complaint or feeling of being offended. Neither do the dead heed the living, and much less do they attend to them or to what they have left among the living.

13. "Having thus found thyself already dead, it only remains for thee to consider thyself the food of worms and the most vile and contemptible corruption, and having been buried in the

earth of thy self-knowledge in such a manner that thy senses and passions do not audaciously give forth their bad odor before the Lord or among the living as one poorly covered and buried, as happens with a dead body. Greater must be the horror (according to thy understanding) which thou wouldst cause to God and the Saints by manifesting thyself as living in the world, or with thy passions little mortified, than that caused to men by uncovered corpses upon the ground. The use of thy faculties, thy sight, hearing, touch, and the rest in order to serve thy pleasure and delight must be for thee a greater surprise or scandal than if thou didst see a corpse moving itself. Yet by this death thou shalt remain disposed and prepared to be the unique spouse of my most holy Son and my true disciple and beloved daughter. Such is the state which I desire of thee, and thus exalted is the wisdom which I am to teach thee in following my footsteps and imitating my life, copying in thyself my virtues in the degree granted thee. This must be the fruit of recording my prerogatives and the exalted sacraments of my sanctity manifested to thee by the Lord. I do not desire them to issue from the deposit of thy bosom without having worked in thee the will of my Son and mine, which is thy highest and greatest perfection of my own. Drink then the waters of Wisdom in their origin, which is the Lord himself; there shall be no reason why thou shouldst remain void and thirsty for that which thou art to administer to others, nor finish writing this History without seizing the opportunity of this great benefit. Prepare thy heart for this death which I urge upon thee and thou shalt attain my desires and thine.”

14. Such were the words the great Lady of heaven spoke to me on this occasion, and on many others She has repeated this salutary teaching of eternal life, of which I have left much written in the doctrine given me in the chapters of the first and second Part, and I shall say more in this third Part. From all this my tardiness and ingratitude toward such benefits is very apparent, for though I find myself always remiss in virtue and so alive in the habits of a daughter of Adam, yet this great Queen and her powerful Son have many times promised to raise me to a most exalted state and habitation if I die to what is earthly and to myself, which by grace is promised me anew by divine favor. This state is a solitude and a desert* in the midst of creatures, without any interaction with them, participating only in the presence and communication with the Lord himself, and with his most holy Mother and the holy Angels, allowing the Lord to govern all my operations and movements by the force of his divine will for the ends of his greater glory and honor.

15. During the whole course of my life from my childhood the Most High has exercised me with certain labors of continual infirmities, sorrows, and other molestations coming from creatures. But with the advance of years He increased also the sufferings of another kind of trial which made me forget much of those already suffered in the past; it was like a two-edged sword which divided my soul and spirit, as the Apostle says (Heb. 4:12). This trial was that constant fear of which I have so often spoken and for which I have been reprehended in this History. Much of it I felt even from childhood, but it developed and rose to the highest pitch since my entrance into religious life and my total application to the spiritual life when the Lord began to manifest more to my soul. Since that time the Lord himself has placed me upon this cross, or into this winepress of the heart, namely permitting me to remain in the continual dread of not being on the right path, of being deceived, or of having lost the grace and the friendship of God. This labor was much augmented by the publicity which some persons incautiously and to my great grief gave to my affairs, and by the terrors with which others filled me at my danger. So deeply rooted in my heart was this terror that it has never ceased, and I could not entirely conquer it

* cf. Apoc. 12:14 [Ed.]

despite the satisfaction and security my confessors and superiors have given me, their kind encouragement, their corrections, or the many other means they have used for this purpose. What is more, though the Angels and the Queen of heaven, and the Lord himself, have continually calmed and tranquilized me, and though I feel myself free in their presence, yet upon leaving the sphere of that divine light the battle then begins anew with incredible force, which I have recognized to be from the infernal dragon and his cruelty by which I am troubled, afflicted and grieved, truly fearing the danger as if I had not just been reassured. I am most burdened by the terror this enemy loads upon me when I speak about this fear with my confessors, especially to the prelate who directs me, since this prince of darkness fears nothing more than the light and power possessed by the ministers of the Lord.

16. In the bitterness of this sorrow, and the most ardent desire of grace and of not losing God, I have lived many years, and the various and numerous happenings amid this constant strife I cannot record. I believe the root of this fear has been holy, but many of its branches have been fruitless, though the divine Wisdom has known how to use them all for his different ends. For this reason permission was given to the enemy to avail himself of the blessings of the Lord for my affliction, for the inordinate fear which hinders the good, though it appears to imitate ever so much the good, is evil and of the demon.* My afflictions have at times reached such a pass that I considered it a great gain not to lose the life of my body, and especially that of my soul. But the Lord, whom the winds and the waves obey (Mt. 8:27), and whom all things serve (Ps. 118:91), who gives nourishment to every creature in opportune time (Ps. 144:15), has desired in his divine condescension to spread tranquility in my spirit so I could enjoy it with greater respite in writing the rest of this History. Some years ago I was consoled by His Divine Majesty, who promised me He would grant me serenity and the joy of interior peace before I die, also informing me the dragon is highly incensed against me, pursuing me since he would run out of time to persecute me (Apoc. 12:12).

17. In order to write this third Part, His Majesty one day, with singular kindness and condescension, spoke to me as follows: “My spouse and friend, I desire to alleviate thy pains and moderate thy afflictions; calm thyself, my dove, and rest in the secure sweetness of my love and in my powerful and royal word, for by it I assure thee it is I who speak to thee and choose thy paths according to my pleasure. I am He who leads thee along these ways; I am at the right hand of my eternal Father and in the sacrament of the Eucharist in the species of bread. The certainty of my truth I give thee so thou mayest quiet and assure thyself; for I do not desire thee, my friend, as a slave, but for my daughter and spouse, and for thee to enjoy my gifts and delights. Thou hast suffered enough from fears and bitterness; let peace and tranquility come to thy afflicted heart.” One would think such oft-repeated favors and assurances of the Lord would not be humiliating but would cause only joy; however, they are of such a kind that they abase my heart to the lowest dust and fill me with solicitude and foreboding regarding my danger. Whoever would imagine to the contrary has little experience and capacity for these works and secrets of the Most High. It is certain I have been instructed in many new things interiorly, and have been much alleviated in the troubles and temptations caused by these disorderly fears, yet the Lord is so wise and powerful that on the one hand He assures and on the other He awakens the soul, infusing new solicitude regarding its danger of falling, thereby preserving it in self-knowledge and abasement.

18. I must confess that by these and other continual favors the Lord has not so much freed me

* cf. Apoc. 21:8; I Jn. 4:18 [Ed.]

from fears as confirmed me in them, for I live in continual dread lest I disgust or lose Him, show myself ungrateful in corresponding to his fidelity, and fail to fully love Him for Himself as the highest Good, for He well deserves all the love which I can give Him, and even that which I cannot give. Having these misgivings, and because of my great misery, solicitude, and many faults, I said on one occasion to the Most High: “My sweetest Love, Lord and Master of my soul, though Thou givest me so many assurances to quiet my troubled heart, how can I live without my fears amid such a laborious and frightful life, full of temptations and snares, if I hold my treasure in a vase more fragile and weak than any other creature (II Cor. 4:7)?” He responded with paternal condescension and said: “My cherished spouse, I do not desire thee to lose the just fear of offending Me; yet it is my will for thee not to be disturbed and grieved in a disorderly manner, preventing thee from rising to my exalted and perfect love. Thou hast my Mother for a Model and Teacher, to instruct thee and for thee to imitate. I shall assist thee by my grace and guide thee by my direction. Tell Me then what thou askest, or what thou dost desire for thy peace and security.”

19. I replied to the Lord with all the submission of which I am capable and said: “Highest Lord and my Father, much is that which thou askest of me, though I owe it to thy goodness and immense love to fulfill it all. Yet I know my weakness and inconstancy, and I shall only be pacified when I cease offending Thee, either by the slightest thought or the least movement of my faculties, and all my actions are according to thy pleasure and approval.” The Lord answered: “My continual helps and favors shall not fail thee if thou cooperate with Me. In order for thee to better correspond I desire to perform with thee a work worthy of the love with which I love thee. I shall place between my immutable Being and thy littleness a bond of my special providence, and by it thou shalt remain bound and held in such a way that if in thy weakness or by thy will thou dost execute anything disharmonious to what is pleasing to Me, thou shalt feel a force by which I detain thee and draw thee back to Me. The effect of this benefit thou shalt know and feel immediately within thyself, just like a slave who is bound in shackles to prevent escape.”

20. To the great joy and advantage of my soul the Almighty fulfilled his promise, and among many other favors and blessings (which must not be mentioned and do not concern my purpose) none has been so precious to me as this one. I perceive it not only in great dangers but in the smallest, and in such a way that if I neglect or carelessly omit any work or ceremony, though it be no more than to humble myself in choir or kiss the floor upon entering to adore the Lord (as is common in religious orders), I at once feel a sweet force which draws me and calls my attention to the defect, and which on its part permits not the least imperfection. If sometimes in my weakness I fall into any, this divine force is at once present, causing me such pain that my heart is divided. This pain then serves as a restraint which detains me from any disorderly inclination, and as a stimulus to immediately seek the remedy for the fault or imperfection committed. Since the gifts of the Lord are without regret (Rom. 11:29), He has not only bound me with this mysterious chain, but in his divine condescension on a certain day, namely his Holy Name and Circumcision, I perceived that He tripled it in order to restrain me and bind me still more forcibly, since a triple cord (as the Wise Man says) is difficult to break (Eccles. 4:12). All this was necessary due to my weakness so I would not be conquered by such importunate and astute temptations such as those fabricated against me by the ancient serpent.

21. In the meanwhile these temptations increased so much that in spite of the blessings and commandments of the Lord mentioned above, the demands of obedience, and other reasons not to be mentioned here, I nevertheless hesitated to begin the last Part of this History, for I felt again the fury of the powers of darkness which tried to overwhelm me. Thus did I understand it, and I

will explain it by what St. John says in chapter XII of the Apocalypse: That the great red dragon shot forth from its mouth a river of water against that heavenly Woman (Apoc. 12:15), whom he had pursued from heaven; and since he could not touch or destroy Her, he turned in great rage against the remnants and the seed of that great Lady, who are sealed with the testimony of Jesus Christ (Ib. 17) in his Church. During the time of which I am speaking this ancient serpent strained all his wrath to disquiet me and as far as he could to force me to commit some faults which would retard the purity and perfection of life required of me and necessary for writing what I was commanded. While this interior battle continued, the feast of the holy Guardian Angels on the first of March intervened. Reciting Matins in choir I suddenly felt a noise or great disturbance, and I shrank and humbled myself to the earth in reverential fear. Then I saw a great multitude of Angels which filled the whole choir, and in the midst of them came one of greater refulgence and beauty as it were on a platform and tribunal of judgment. I understood at once it was the archangel St. Michael. Without delay they intimated to me that they were sent by the Most High with special power and authority to judge my negligences and sins.

22. I desired to prostrate myself on the earth to acknowledge my transgressions and humbly to weep before those celestial judges, but since I was surrounded by the nuns I dared not make the presence of the Angels known by bodily prostrating myself. I did what was possible interiorly, bitterly weeping over my sins. Meanwhile I knew the holy Angels, speaking and conferring with each other, said: "This creature is useless, slow, and not very fervent in doing what the Most High and our Queen have commanded her; she still will not give credit to the benefits and continual enlightenments which she receives at our hands. Let us deprive her of all these benefits, since she does not make use of them, nor desires to be as pure and perfect as the Lord teaches her, nor proceeds to write the Life of his most holy Mother as He has commanded her to do so many times. Hence if she does not amend herself it is not just for her to receive so many and such great favors and doctrine of such sanctity." Hearing these reasonings my heart was afflicted and my weeping increased, and full of confusion and sorrow I spoke to the holy Angels with inmost bitterness, and I promised them the amendment of my faults unto death by obedience to the Lord and his most holy Mother.

23. By this humiliation and my promises the angelic spirits tempered somewhat the severity they had shown. With greater leniency they told me if I would diligently fulfill what I had promised they would assure me of their continual favor and assistance, and admit me as their friend and companion in order to communicate with me in the same way as they converse with each other. I thanked them for their kindness and besought them to present my gratitude also before the Most High. They disappeared, warning me that for the favors they would show me I must imitate them in purity, committing no fault or imperfection willfully, and this was the condition upon which this promise depended.

24. After these and many other happenings which need not be mentioned I was left in a state of greater humiliation, as was natural with one who had been so severely reprehended for ingratitude, unworthiness, and insensibility toward so many blessings, exhortations and commandments. Full of confusion and sorrow I considered within myself what little excuse or pretext I had for resisting the divine will in view of all I had come to know and its importance for my welfare. I resolved firmly to execute what was commanded me or die in the attempt, and I sought for some powerful and tangible means which would rouse and urge me on to combat my lack of attention, and keep me alert if possible against any imperfection in all my operations and movements so I might always do what is most holy and pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. I went to my confessor and superior and besought him, in all the sincerity and submission of my heart,

to reprehend me severely and constrain me to be perfect and solicitous in the most exact fulfillment of the divine will and the execution of what His Divine Majesty required of me. Although he was most zealous and vigilant as one who took the place of God and knew his will and my prescribed path, yet he could not always come to my assistance or be present because of the absences required by his duties as a religious and a prelate. I resolved therefore to engage also one of the nuns to assist me, asking her to reprehend and advise me often, or warn me and stir me up by threats. All these means and others I sought in the most ardent desire of pleasing the Lord, his most holy Mother my Teacher, and the holy Angels, all of whom were of the same mind in regard to my advance in perfection.

25. In the midst of these solitudes it happened to me one night that my holy Guardian Angel showed himself to me as being particularly pleased and said: "The Most High desires to condescend to thy desires and for me to exercise with thee the office which thou dost desire and hast anxiously sought for someone to perform. I shall be thy faithful friend and companion in order to advise thee and rouse thy attention, and thus thou shalt find me present just as now whenever thou shalt turn thy eyes toward me desiring the greater pleasure of thy Lord and Spouse and preserving entire fidelity to Him. I shall teach thee how to praise Him continually and with me thou shalt alternate his praises, and I shall manifest to thee new mysteries and treasures of his greatness, and give thee particular enlightenments regarding his immutable being and divine perfections. And when thou art occupied in works of obedience or charity, or when by some negligence thy attention is divided by earthly and exterior things, I shall call thee and warn thee to attend upon the Lord, using for this purpose some words of admonition, which often shall be these: *Who is like unto God, who dwells on high* (Ps. 112:5) and in the humble of heart? At other times I shall remind thee of the benefits thou hast received from the right hand of the Most High and what thou dost owe to his love, and other times to look upon and raise thy heart to Him. Yet thou must be punctual, attentive and obedient to these notices and warnings.

26. "In addition the Most High no longer desires to conceal from thee a favor which until now thou hast not known among the many thou hast received from his most generous goodness, and for this thou must now begin to render Him gratitude. It is this, that I am one of the thousand Angels who served as a Guardian Angel of our great Queen in the world, and one of those signalized by the escutcheon of his admirable and holy Name. Look upon me and thou shalt see it upon my breast." I looked and recognized the holy Name written there with great splendor, and I received new consolation and rejoicing of my soul. The holy Angel proceeded and said: "He has also commanded me to give thee notice that only in very rare cases are any of us thousand Angels appointed to guard other souls, and souls we have thus guarded have until now all been of the number of the saints and none of them of the reprobate. Consider then, O soul, thy obligation not to pervert this order, for if in spite of this benefit thou art lost thy punishment and chastisement shall be of the most severe of all the damned, and thou shalt be known as the most unhappy and ungrateful among the daughters of Adam. That thou hast been favored by this benefit of having me to guard thee, who was one of the Guardian Angels of our great Queen and the Mother of our Creator, most holy Mary, was ordained by his most high providence because thou hast been chosen among mortals in his divine mind to write the Life of his most blessed Mother and to imitate Her; and for all this I shall instruct and assist thee as a direct witness of her divine works and excellences.

27. "Although this office shall principally be fulfilled by the great Lady herself, yet after her instruction I am to administer to thee the necessary species in order to declare that which the heavenly Teacher has taught thee; and I am to give thee other enlightenments ordained by the

Most High, so with greater facility thou canst record the mysteries manifested to thee. Thou shalt experience all of them, though thou shalt not always know the order and hidden sacrament of this providence. The Lord himself, exercising this special providence with thee, has chosen me to compel thee with sweet force to the imitation of his most pure Mother and our Queen, and to follow Her and obey Her in her doctrine, and from now on I shall execute this mandate with greater insistence and effectiveness. Determine then to be most faithful and grateful for such singular benefits, and walk upon the lofty and exalted path of perfection taught thee and asked of thee. And take notice that when thou dost attain the perfection of the highest Seraphim thou shalt remain very much indebted to such copious and generous mercy. The new mode of life which the Lord desires to give thee is contained and summarized in the instruction thou receivest from our great Queen and Lady, and in what thou shalt understand and write in this third Part. Listen to Her with a submissive heart and grateful humility, and execute her teaching solicitously and carefully, for if thou shalt do this thou shalt be happy and eternally blessed.”

28. Other things which the holy Angel told me need not be mentioned for my present purpose. But what I have related in this introduction I have left written in order to manifest in part the steps the Most High has taken with me in order to oblige me to write this History, and also so something can be known of the purposes which He in his wisdom has for it. These are not for me alone, but so all who desire may gather the fruit of this benefit as a powerful means to make efficacious our Redemption, each one for himself. It shall also become evident that Christian perfection cannot be attained without great battles with the demon and incessant labor in vanquishing and subjecting the passions and evil inclinations of our depraved human nature. Finally, in order to begin this third Part of her History, the heavenly Mother and Teacher with a pleasant countenance said to me: “My eternal blessing and that of my most holy Son come upon thee, in order for thee to write the rest of my Life, and labor and accomplish with the perfection we desire. Amen.”