

CHAPTER VI

Most Holy Mary Visits the Holy Places; She Gains Mysterious Triumphs over the Demons; She Sees the Divinity in Heaven by Beatific Vision; the Apostles Convoke a Council; and the Hidden Secrets Regarding All of These Events.

480. All of our efforts are gloriously insufficient to describe the plenitude of perfection of all the doings of most holy Mary, for we are always overcome by the grandeur of even the smallest virtue, if indeed there could be anything small regarding any matter in which the great Lady labored. But our efforts shall always be full of blessings for us if without presumptuously attempting to fathom this ocean of grace we humble ourselves in order to glorify and exalt her Maker in Her, and in order to discover more and more what with admiration we can imitate. I shall be very happy if I help the children of the Church to know this, manifesting the favors conferred by God upon our great Queen, though I am incapable of explaining them with appropriate and adequate terms since they are beyond my reach, and moreover in all this I shall still speak as one who is slow, stammering, and without fervor of devotion. Admirable are the events which for this and the following chapters I have been given to understand; regarding them I shall relate that of which I am capable in order to indicate what Christian faith and piety may come to understand.

481. After most holy Mary had obediently complied with the will of St. Peter (as I related in the preceding chapter) She thought it proper to satisfy her piety by visiting the Sacred Places of our Redemption. She performed all her works of virtue with such prudence that She omitted none, assigning to each one its place in order so no circumstance necessary to bring it to perfection would be lacking. Applying her heavenly wisdom She first performed that which was greater and foremost in order, then what seemed of less importance, but as well the one as the other with all the attention of her soul in the measure each required. She left the Cenacle to visit the Sacred Places and was accompanied by her holy Angels, followed by Lucifer and his legions continuing his battle. The battle array of these dragons was terrible to behold, displaying various and hideous shapes, and in this form they hurled their temptations and suggestions. But as soon as the great Lady approached any of the Holy Places to perform her devotions the demons fell back, repelled by divine power; they also felt themselves crushed by the hidden virtue which the Redeemer had communicated to these Holy Places through our Redemption. Lucifer, urged on by the temerity of his pride, attempted to come nearer, for relying upon his permission to tempt and persecute the great Lady he was anxious to gain some victory if possible over Her in the very places where he had been so signally vanquished, or at least hinder Her from venerating them with the reverence and worship which She was accustomed to give.

482. But the Most High ordained that the power of his arm against Lucifer and his demons would be shown through this very Queen, and her exercises which he tried to disturb would be the sword with which he was to be overcome and cut down. And thus it happened, for the devotion and piety with which the divine Mother adored her most holy Son and renewed the memories of and gratitude for the Redemption caused such terror to the demons they could not tolerate it, and they felt a force so oppressive and tormenting proceeding from Her they were obliged to recede still farther from the invincible Queen. They broke out in fearful howlings, audible to Her alone, and exclaimed: "Let us flee from this Woman, our Enemy, who so confounds and oppresses us by her virtues. We seek to blot out the remembrance and the veneration of these places in which men were redeemed and we were despoiled of our dominion,

and this Woman, being a mere creature, hinders our designs and renews the triumphs gained by her Son upon the Cross.”

483. Most holy Mary made all the stations of the Sacred Places in the company of her Angels, and having arrived on mount Olivet, where her Son ascended into heaven, the Lord himself, in ineffable beauty and glory, descended from his throne to visit and console his most pure Mother. He manifested Himself to Her with the affection and bounty of a Son, yet as the infinite and powerful God; and in such a manner did He deify and elevate Her above all earthly existence on this occasion by the favors He gave Her that for a long time She was as it were detached from all that is visible, and though She ceased not to attend to external works it was necessary for Her to exert greater force than at other times in order to attend to them because She remained entirely spiritualized and transformed in her most holy Son. The great Queen knew (for the Lord himself had informed Her) that these favors were part of her reward for her humility and obedience toward St. Peter, executing immediately his mandates and preferring them not only to her devotion but her comfort. He also renewed his promise to assist Her in her battle against the demons, and in immediate fulfillment of this promise the Lord ordained that Lucifer and his hosts would then and there become convinced of a power in Her such as they had not experienced before.

484. The Queen returned to the Cenacle, and when the demons tried to return for their temptations they felt like a puff of wind which strikes with great force against a wall of bronze and promptly rebounds with great speed from whence it came. These vainglorious hosts were hurled back upon themselves with greater force than that with which they had assaulted most holy Mary. They broke out in still more furious howlings, and driven to confess certain truths by their own dismay they said: “O we unhappy ones, who are obliged to look upon such happiness of the human nature! What great excellence and dignity man has now attained in this pure creature! How ungrateful and foolish will men be if they do not profit by the blessings bestowed upon them in this Daughter of Adam! She is their remedy and our destruction. Her Son does great things through Her, but She is not unworthy of them. A cruel scourge is this for us, that we are forced to confess these truths. O that God would conceal from us this Woman, who adds such torments to our envy! How will we vanquish Her if the mere sight of Her is insufferable to us? Let us console ourselves in the fact that men lose so much of what this Woman merits for them, and that they foolishly despise Her. In them we will avenge our injuries, and through them we will exercise our fury, filling them with illusions and errors; for if they would but pay attention to her example all of them would profit by this Woman and follow her virtues. But this is not enough to console me (added Lucifer), for this Woman, his Mother, can please God more than all the sins we can lead men into shall displease Him, and even if this were not so my position does not permit me to remain indifferent at seeing human nature so highly exalted in a mere weak Woman. This wrong is unbearable. Let us return to persecute Her; let us give vent to the fury of our envy even in spite of torment; and though we all suffer by it, let our pride be not dismayed, for possibly some triumph may yet be gained over this our Enemy.”

485. Most holy Mary knew of and heard all these wrathful threats, but as the Queen of virtues She despised them all. Without the least sign of disturbance in her countenance She retired to her oratory in order prudently to confer with Herself concerning the mysteries of this conflict and the difficult business now before the Church in seeking to end circumcision and the ancient law. In this the Queen of the Angels labored for a few days, and remaining very secluded* engaged in

* cf. Mt. 6:6 [Ed.]

continual prayers, petitions, tears and prostrations. Regarding her own affairs She also asked the Lord to stretch out his almighty arm against Lucifer and grant Her the victory over him and the demons. Although the great Lady knew Him to be on her side and that He would not leave Her in tribulation, She ceased not her prayers, acting on her part as if She had been the weakest of creatures in the time of temptation. She taught us what we ourselves should do in temptation, since we are so subject to them and so apt to be overcome. She prayed for the holy Church, asking the Lord to grant to it his evangelical law pure, unsullied, without wrinkle, and unhampered by the ancient ceremonies.

486. This petition most holy Mary made with the most ardent fervor, for She knew Lucifer and all hell sought through the Jews to unite circumcision with Baptism, and the rites of Moses with the truths of the Gospel, and by this deception help to maintain many Jews in their stubborn adherence to the old law during the coming ages of the Church. One of the fruits and triumphs of the great Lady in her battle with the dragon was circumcision immediately began to be prohibited by the Council, of which I shall presently speak, and from that time on in the course of the Church the pure grain of evangelical truth was separated from the chaff, the dried up and fruitless Mosaic ceremonies, as our holy Mother the Church does to this day. All this the Blessed Mother procured through her merits and prayers while knowing St. Paul and St. Barnabas were already coming from Antioch to Jerusalem in order to resolve with St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles the difficulties raised by the Jews, as related by St. Luke in chapter XV of the Acts of the Apostles.

487. St. Paul and St. Barnabas were aware of the return of the Queen of heaven when they came to Jerusalem. In his ardent desire to see Her St. Paul with St. Barnabas at once sought her presence, and they cast themselves at her feet, shedding abundant tears of joy. Not less was the joy of the heavenly Mother upon meeting these Apostles, toward whom She bore a special love in the Lord due to their zealous labors for the exaltation of the name of God and the spread of the faith. The Mistress of the humble desired them to present themselves first to St. Peter and the rest, and last to Her, judging Herself to be the least of all creatures. But they, preserving the proper order in their reverence and love, thought no one should be preferred before Her, for She was the Mother of God, the Lady of all creation, and the beginning of all our happiness. The great Lady prostrated Herself before Sts. Paul and Barnabas, kissed their hands, and asked for their blessing. On this occasion St. Paul was favored with a wonderful ecstatic abstraction in which were revealed to him great mysteries and prerogatives of this Mystical City of God, Mary most holy, and he saw Her as it were completely invested with the Divinity.

488. Through this vision St. Paul was filled with admiration and incomparable love and veneration of most holy Mary. Somewhat recovering himself he said to Her: "Mother of all piety and clemency, pardon this vile and sinful man for having persecuted my Lord thy divine Son and his holy Church." The Virgin Mother responded and said: "Paul, servant of the Most High, if He who created and redeemed thee deigned to call thee to his friendship and made thee a vessel of election (Acts 9:15), how could I, his slave, refuse to pardon thee? My soul magnifies and exalts Him because He desired to manifest Himself so powerful, generous and holy in thee." St. Paul thanked the heavenly Mother for the benefit of his conversion and for the other favors conferred upon him by Her in saving him from so many dangers. St. Barnabas did likewise, and both again asked for her protection and help, which the most holy Mother promised.

489. St. Peter, as the head of the Church, had called the Apostles and disciples then in and around Jerusalem and convoked them to a meeting in the presence of the great Lady of the world. So the most prudent Virgin, in her profound humility, would not absent Herself from this

Council, St. Peter had interposed his authority as Vicar of Christ. All of them being gathered, St. Peter said: "My brethren and children in Christ our Savior, it is necessary for us to come together in order to solve the difficulties and decide upon the affairs which our most beloved brethren Paul and Barnabas have brought to our notice, and to determine other matters regarding the increase of the holy faith. For this it is proper for us to engage in prayer to obtain the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and we shall persevere therein for ten days as is our custom. On the first and the last day we shall celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass, by which we shall dispose our hearts to receive the divine light." All of them approved of this arrangement. In order to celebrate the first of these Masses on the next day the Queen prepared the hall of the Cenacle, cleaning and decorating it with her own hands and holding all things in readiness for her Communion together with the Apostles and disciples during those Masses. St. Peter alone celebrated, observing all the rites and ceremonies which I have described when speaking of the Masses on other occasions (112, 217, 227).

490. The other Apostles and disciples received Holy Communion by the hand of St. Peter, and after all of them most holy Mary, taking the last place. Many Angels had descended to the Cenacle, and at the time of the consecration all those present saw them, and the Cenacle was filled with an admirable resplendence and fragrance through which the Lord wrought divine effects in their souls. Having celebrated this first Mass they agreed upon certain hours in which they were to persevere together in prayer as far as they could without neglecting the necessary ministry of souls. The great Lady retired to a place where She remained alone and motionless for those ten days without eating or speaking to anyone. During that time She experienced such hidden mysteries as to move the Angels to astonishment, and I find myself unable to describe what has been manifested to me concerning them. I shall briefly indicate a small part of these mysteries, for to state all is impossible. The divine Mother, having received Holy Communion on the first of the ten days and retired to pray alone, was immediately raised up at the command of the Lord to the empyrean heaven by her Angels and others there present. Since She was taken up body and soul one of the Angels took her shape so the Apostles in the Cenacle would not become aware of her absence. They bore Her up with the splendor and magnificence which I have described on other occasions (399), and on this occasion it was even greater due to the intentions of the Lord. When most holy Mary arrived in a region of the air far removed from the earth, the almighty Lord commanded Lucifer and all his hellish hosts to come into the presence of the Queen into those higher regions. Immediately all of them came before Her, and She saw them and knew them all just as they were and the condition they were in. The sight was somewhat painful to Her because the demons are so abominable and disgusting; however, She was armed with divine virtue so She could not be harmed by this horrible and execrable sight. Not so for the demons, for the Lord gave them to understand by a special insight the greatness and superiority of that Woman whom they were persecuting as their Enemy, and were made to perceive how foolishly presumptuous they had been in their attempts against Her. To their still greater terror they saw She carried in her bosom the sacramental Christ, and the entire Divinity held Her as it were enveloped under the protection of his omnipotence,* so by the participation of his divine attributes they would be overthrown, humiliated and shattered.

491. The demons moreover heard a voice proceeding from the very being of God, saying: "With this shield of my powerful arm, invincible and strong, I shall always defend my Church. This Woman shall crush the head of the ancient serpent (Gen. 3:15), and shall forever triumph

* cf. Ps. 90:4ff. [Ed.]

over its haughty pride for the glory of my holy Name.” All these and other mysteries concerning most holy Mary the demons perceived and understood while they were gathered around Her in dismay. So great was the despair and crushing pain which they felt they said with loudest clamors: “May the power of the Almighty cast us immediately into hell, and let it not keep us in the presence of this Woman who torments us more than the fire. O Woman invincible and strong, recede from us, since we ourselves cannot flee from thy presence in which we are bound by the chains of the Almighty. Why dost Thou also *torment us before the time* (Mt. 8:29)? Thou alone of all human nature art the instrument of the Omnipotent against us, and through Thee men can acquire the eternal blessings we have lost. And when they have lost hope of seeing God eternally, the vision of Thee, which for us is a chastisement and torment since we abhor Thee, is for them a reward for the good works they owe to their God and Redeemer. Release us, almighty Lord and God; let this new punishment cease, by which Thou dost renew that of our fall from heaven, for in it Thou dost execute the punishment with which Thou didst threaten us in this wonder of thy powerful arm.”

492. During these and other lamentations of despair the demons were held spellbound in the presence of the Queen for a long time, and though they made the most violent efforts to flee they were not permitted to do so as fast as their fury urged them to. So the terror of most holy Mary would strike them so much the deeper and become the more notorious, the Lord ordained that She herself use her authority as Lady and Queen in permitting them to leave. At the instant in which She did this all of them cast themselves from the upper regions into the abyss with all the swiftness in their power. They gave forth dreadful howls, terrorizing all the damned souls with new punishments, and full of dismay and torments in not being able to deny their defeat they proclaimed in their presence the power of God and of his Mother. Having won this triumph the most serene Empress proceeded on her way to the empyrean heaven, where She was received with new and admirable jubilation, remaining there for twenty-four hours.

493. She prostrated Herself before the throne of the most blessed Trinity and adored Him in the unity of his undivided nature and majesty. She prayed for the Church so the Apostles would understand and resolve what was proper for the establishment of the evangelical law and the termination of the law of Moses. In answer to these petitions She heard a voice from the throne in which the three divine Persons, each One singularly and by his order, promised to assist the Apostles and disciples in declaring and establishing the divine truth, assuring Her the Father would direct its establishment by his omnipotence, the Son by his wisdom and as its Head, and the Holy Ghost as its Spouse by his love and the enlightenment of his gifts. Then the divine Mother saw the most holy humanity of her Son present to the Father the prayers and petitions which She herself had offered for the Church, and how approving of them He proposed the reasons why they should be fulfilled so the faith of the Gospel and his entire holy law could be established in the world in accordance with the decrees of the divine will and mind.

494. In execution of this will and proposal of Christ our Savior the Lady herself then saw issuing forth from the Divinity and immutable essence of God the form of a temple or Church so beautiful, clear and resplendent it seemed built of diamond or sparkling crystal, adorned with many enamels and reliefs to enhance its beauty. The angels and saints saw it, and in astonishment exclaimed: “Holy, Holy, Holy and powerful art Thou, Lord, in thy works” (Apoc. 4:8). This Church or temple the most blessed Trinity placed into the hands of the most holy humanity of Christ, and in a manner which cannot be described in words He united it with Himself. And then the Son placed it into the hands of his most holy Mother. At the same time in which Mary received the Church (Cant. 8:2) She was filled with new splendor which

overwhelmed Her within it, and She saw the Divinity clearly and intuitively by eminent beatific vision.

495. The great Queen remained in this joy for many hours, truly introduced into the cellar of fermented wine spoken of in the Canticles (2:4). Since what She experienced and received there surpasses all created thought or capacity, it suffices here to say that anew charity was ordered in Her (Ib.) and directed with new fervor toward the Church consigned to Her under the above symbol. Enriched by these favors She was borne back by the Angels to the Cenacle, having in her hands the mystical temple She had received from her divine Son. She remained in prayer during the other nine days without motion and without interrupting the acts in which She had been left by the beatific vision. They do not fall within human thought, and can much less be indicated by human words. Among other things which She did was to distribute the treasures of the Redemption among the children of the Church. Commencing with the Apostles and going through the different ages, She applied them separately to the just and the saints according to the secret disposition of eternal predestination. The execution of these decrees her divine Son had consigned to Mary most holy, giving Her dominion over the whole Church and the office of dispensing all the graces which each one earns through the merits of the Redemption. Regarding a mystery so exalted and hidden I cannot say more than this.

496. On the last of the ten days St. Peter celebrated another Mass, and all received Holy Communion as on the first. Then all being gathered in the name of the Lord they invoked the Holy Ghost and began to consult about the solution of the difficulties which had arisen in the Church. St. Peter as head and Pontiff spoke first, then St. Paul, St. Barnabas, and St. James the Less, as related by St. Luke in chapter XV of the Acts (v. 7ff.). The first decision determined upon in this Council was that the heavy burden of the law of circumcision and the Mosaic law must not be imposed upon the baptized, since eternal salvation had been given through Baptism and faith in Christ. Though this is the decision principally referred to by St. Luke, yet there were others which defined certain matters regarding the government and the ceremonies of the Church in order to stop some abuses introduced by the indiscreet piety of some of the faithful. This is held to be the first Council of the Apostles, though they had also gathered to establish the Creed and other things as mentioned before (215); however, at that time only the Apostles had convened, whereas now also those disciples who could come took part. Also the manner of conferring and of resolving was different, being a formal decision as is clear from the words of St. Luke (Acts 15:28): *It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*, etc.

497. Using this form of words this Council wrote to the faithful and the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia that which they had defined, and they sent the letters by the hand of St. Paul himself, with Barnabas and other disciples. So the approbation of the Lord would not be lacking, it happened that both in the Cenacle upon coming to their decision and in Antioch when the letters were read before the faithful the Holy Ghost descended in visible fire; hence all the faithful were consoled and confirmed in the Catholic truth. Most holy Mary gave thanks to the Lord for the blessings thus bestowed upon the Church. She immediately dispatched St. Paul and St. Barnabas with the rest, and for their consolation She gave them as relics part of the clothes of Christ our Lord and some objects She had remaining from the Passion. Offering them her protection and prayers She sent them filled with new consolation and spiritual force upon the labors still awaiting them. During all these days of the Council, because of the terror with which most holy Mary had inspired him, Lucifer and his ministers could not come near the Cenacle; yet they prowled about in the distance, without being able to execute any of their malice against its members. Happy age and happy congregation!

498. Since despite his continual prowling about the Queen and his roaring as of a hungry lion Lucifer saw he could gain no advantage himself, he engaged some sorceresses with whom he had made an express pact, and persuaded them to end by curses the life of Mary most holy. These unhappy dupes tried this in several ways, but their curses were of no avail. Many times when they purposely placed themselves in the way of the Queen they were struck dumb and motionless. In the measureless mercy of the most sweet Mother She labored much to undeceive and convert them by words and benefits She gave them, but of the four who were thus sent by the demon only one was converted and received Baptism. Since all his attempts thus came to naught, Lucifer was so confused and enraged that he would many times have given up tempting most holy Mary if his unquenchable pride had permitted him. The Lord almighty ordained all this so the victories and triumphs of his Mother would be more glorious, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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

499. My daughter, in the constancy and invincible fortitude with which I vanquished the demons thou hast one of the most urgent motives for persevering in grace and acquiring great crowns. Human nature and that of the angels (even though they be demons) are subject to contrary and opposite conditions, for the spiritual nature is untiring, and that of mortals weak and so prone to fatigue that it soon tires and succumbs in labor. As soon as it finds any difficulty in the practice of virtue it is discouraged and turns back; what it pursues with pleasure one day it turns away from the next; what seemed agreeable today it finds hard tomorrow; now it wishes, then again it does not wish; sometimes it is fervent, sometimes lukewarm. But the demon is never fatigued or weakened in his efforts in tempting souls; however, the Almighty is not lacking in his Providence, for He limits and restrains the power of the demons so they cannot pass the measure set for them, nor exert all their indefatigable powers for the persecution of souls, and on the other hand He supports the weakness of men, giving them grace and strength to resist and overcome their enemies on the prescribed battleground.

500. Hence it is inexcusable for souls to show inconstancy in virtuously maintaining their position during temptation, and in not bearing with fortitude and patience the brief bitterness of doing good and fighting against the demons. The inclination of the passions, drawing man toward the sensible and pleasurable, suddenly presents itself across the path of duty, and the demons with diabolical astuteness seek to exaggerate the unpleasantness and difficulty of mortification, representing it as dangerous to health and life. By these deceptions he cuts down innumerable souls,* causing them to precipitate themselves from one abyss to another.† In this thou hast before thy eyes, my daughter, a very common aberration of the worldly-minded which is very abominable in the sight of the Lord and myself. Hence it is that many men are weak, wavering, and indisposed toward the practice of virtue or penitential mortification for their sins; and the very ones who are so weak in doing good are strong in doing evil. In the service of the demon they are constant and ready to undergo much more difficult and arduous tasks in sinning than the law of God commands for the practice of virtue. When it comes to saving their souls they are weak and powerless, yet for earning their eternal condemnation they prove strong and robust.

* cf. Lk. 13:3, 5 [Ed.]

† cf. Ps. 41:8 [Ed.]

501. This damage those who profess a life of perfection are also prone to incur in part if they unduly consider the hardships attached to such a life. Drawn into this deception they either hinder their advance in perfection or give the demon many victories in temptation. So thou, my daughter, mayest not incur this danger thou must consider the fortitude and constancy with which I resisted Lucifer and all hell, and the magnanimity with which I despised his illusions and temptations, not permitting myself to be disturbed or pay any attention to them, for this is the best way to overcome his haughty pride. Nor was I ever led by temptation to remissness in my labors or my exercises; rather, I augmented them, together with my prayers, petitions and tears, as is necessary in the time of battle with those enemies. Hence I exhort thee to do the same in eager watchfulness, because thy temptations are not of the ordinary kind, but are directed against thee in highest malice and astuteness, and regarding this I have warned thee many times and experience teaches thee.

502. Since thou hast noticed the great terror caused to the demons upon perceiving the sacramental Lord resting in my bosom, I desire to call thy attention to two things. First, for the overthrow of hell and for causing fear in the demons all the holy Sacraments of the Church are most powerful means, but above all the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. This was one of the hidden purposes of the Lord my Son in instituting this sovereign mystery and the other Sacraments. If in our time men do not ordinarily feel these powerful effects it is because in the frequency of the reception of the Sacraments much of the veneration and estimation in receiving them has been lost. But do not doubt that souls who frequent them with devotion and piety are formidable to the demons and exercise great power and dominion over them in the same way as thou hast seen and described of me. The explanation of this fact is this divine fire in pure souls finds itself as it were in its own element; in me it was active to the limit of possibility in a mere creature, and thus I inspired such terror to the demons.

503. The second proof of the truth of what I say is these blessings were not to have an end with me, for in proportion God has wrought the same effects in other souls. In our own times it has happened that in order to vanquish the demon God showed and opposed to him a soul bearing within it the sacramental species, and thereby so humiliated and annihilated the dragon that for many days he dared not approach this soul, and begged the Omnipotent not to be shown any soul bearing Holy Communion in its bosom. On another occasion Lucifer, in conjunction with some heretics and other bad Christians, schemed to do severe harm to these Spanish kingdoms, and if God had not cut them short through this same person* the whole of Spain would now be lost and in the hands of the enemies. The divine clemency interfered for the defense of Spain by showing this person to the demon and his ministers after Holy Communion; in their terror the demons dropped their malicious designs for the immediate destruction of all of Spain. I shall not tell thee who this person was since it is not necessary, and I reveal this secret to thee for no other purpose than to show how favorably the Almighty looks upon a soul who tries to merit his favors and who worthily receives Him in Holy Communion, and how He manifested Himself so generous and powerful not only with me according to the dignity and sanctity as Mother, but how He also desires in other souls to be known and glorified as relieving the needs of the Church according to time and occasion.

* It is likely this person was Ven. Mary herself. King Philip IV, her contemporary with whom he communicated for 22 years, said this of her: "Through the prayers, influence and advice of Sister Mary the unity of Spain was preserved." (*Cartas de Sor Maria de Ágreda y Felipe IV*, Silvela D. Francisco, Madrid: 1885, p. 102)

504. From this thou canst understand that in the same proportion as the demons fear the souls who worthily receive Holy Communion and the other fortifying Sacraments, so also they exert all their powers to cause those souls to fall and to hinder them from accumulating all this strength of the Lord against them. Labor then against these tireless and astute enemies, and seek to imitate me in fortitude. I also desire thee to hold in great veneration the Councils of the Church and all such gatherings, and whatever is resolved and established by them, for the Holy Ghost assists at these Councils, and in the congregations which gather in the name of the Lord it is promised He shall also be with them (Mt. 18:20); hence what is thus ordained and commanded must be obeyed. Although in our times no visible signs of the assistance of the Holy Ghost occur in such Councils, yet He does not fail to govern them invisibly, for signs and wonders are not any more so necessary as in the first beginnings of the Church; however, such as are necessary are not withheld by the Lord. For all these blessings exalt and praise his generous kindness and mercy, and especially for those which He conferred on me during my mortal life.