

CHAPTER XIII

Most Holy Mary Celebrates other Blessings and Feasts with Her Angels, Especially Her Presentation in the Temple and the Feast Days of St. Joachim, St. Anne, and St. Joseph.

625. Gratitude for the benefits received at the hands of the Lord is a virtue so noble that by means of it we can preserve our communication and correspondence with God himself, He as rich, generous and powerful in conferring upon us his gifts, and we returning our gratitude for them as poor, humble, and aware of our needs. As a general rule one who gives generously and bounteously contents himself with the gratitude of the needy one who receives the benefit out of necessity, and this gratitude is a short, easy and delightful return which satisfies the generous giver and induces him to continue his liberality. If this ordinarily happens among men of generous and magnanimous heart, how much more is it true in the dealings of God with men, for we are misery and poverty itself, while He is rich (Rom. 10:12) and most generous; and if we could imagine any constraint in Him, it would be that of receiving and not that of giving. Since this great Lord is so wise, just and equitable He will never reject us because of our poverty, but only due to our ingratitude. He desires to give to us plentifully, but at the same time He desires us to be grateful, rendering Him the glory, honor and praise contained in gratitude. Such a return for small benefits obliges Him to confer other greater ones,* and if we are grateful for all He multiplies them; however, only the humble secure them, being also grateful.

626. The great Teacher of this science was most holy Mary, for though She alone had received the plenitude of the highest blessings possible to be communicated to a mere creature by the Almighty, She forgot none of them, nor ever ceased to acknowledge them by the most perfect gratitude within the powers of a creature. For each one of the gifts of nature or grace which She acknowledged as having received, and there were none She failed to recognize, She composed particular canticles of praise and thanksgiving, and instituted admirable exercises in special commemoration and acknowledgment. In view of this She had assigned the days of the whole year, and special hours of each day, in which She sought to renew the memory of these graces and render gratitude for them. But in the midst of all these observances and solitudes She never forgot those of the government of the Church, the instruction of the Apostles and disciples, and the counsel and advice to be given to the innumerable persons who came to Her, for She denied Herself to no one who came, nor failed to respond to the needs of any of the faithful.

627. And if worthy gratitude obliges God so much and inclines Him to renew and increase his blessings, what human thought can ever conceive how much his beneficence was called into action by the gratitude shown by his most prudent Mother for his many and exalted blessings, and rendered to Him with all the fullness of humble love and praise due to each? We, the other children of Adam, in comparison with Her are slow, ungrateful, and so dull of heart that the little we do (if we do anything at all) does not appear worthy of consideration; yet the great things which the faithful and grateful Queen performed seemed little to Her, and even when She did all in her power She held Herself to be remiss and failing in diligence. In another place (308) I said the activity of Mary most holy resembled that of God himself, who is a most pure act, operative by his very essence, without the possibility of ceasing in his infinite operations. Of this quality and excellence of the Divinity our great Queen had an ineffable participation, and hence She

* cf. Mt. 25:21 [Ed.]

seemed in Herself to be one tireless and continual act. If grace is altogether impatient of inactivity, and was never idle in Mary, in whom grace was without measure and according to our mode of understanding without the common limits, it is not surprising that it gave Her such an exalted participation in the being of God and his attributes.

628. I can neither extol nor manifest this secret better than by the admiration it caused in the holy Angels, to whom it was more apparent. Many times it happened in their wonder at what they saw in their Queen and Lady that among themselves, and sometimes in speaking with Her Majesty, they said: “Powerful, great and admirable is God in this creature above all his works. Human nature in Her vastly exceeds our angelic nature. Eternally blessed and magnified be thy Maker, O Mary. Thou art the adornment and beauty of the entire human race. Thou dost stir to holy emulation all the heavenly angelic spirits, and to admiration all the inhabitants of paradise. Thou art the wonder of the power of God, the exposition of his right hand, the compendium of the works of the incarnate Word, the well-adjusted portrait of his perfections, and the tracer of all his footsteps, by which Thou dost assimilate Thyself entirely to the One whom Thou didst give human form in thy womb. Thou art the worthy Mistress of the Church Militant and the special glory of the Church Triumphant, the honor of our people* and the Reparatrix of thy own. May all nations know thy virtue and grandeur, and may all generations praise and bless Thee. Amen.”

629. With these heavenly princes most holy Mary celebrated the memory of the blessings and gifts of God. She invited them to assist and help Her in this thanksgiving, a request not only springing from her most ardent and fervent love, which demanded and urged Her to all this by the insatiable thirst caused by the ardent fire of her charity, but also because of her profound humility, which caused Her to acknowledge her obligations beyond all other creatures. Hence She asked all creation to help Her in paying her debt, though no one but She could ever pay it worthily. Filled with this wisdom She drew down to her oratory on earth the court of the supreme King, and changed the world into a new heaven.

630. Every year on the anniversary of her Presentation in the temple She celebrated this benefit, beginning the vigil the evening before and spending the whole night in exercises of thanksgiving as described for the feasts of her Immaculate Conception and Nativity (614, 617). She acknowledged the blessing of having been called by the Lord to his temple and house of prayer at such an early age, and of having received so many favors while residing there. But the most remarkable feature of her celebration was the great Mistress of virtue, full of divine wisdom, renewed in her memory the instructions and doctrine given to Her in the temple by the priest and her teacher at that early age. The same care She took with the teachings which her holy parents Joachim and Anne had given Her, and then all of that which the Apostles had informed Her. All of them She put into practice anew to the degree proper for her advancing age. Although the teachings of her divine Son were eminently sufficient for all of her doings, yet She recalled those received from all the others, for in this matter of humbling Herself, obeying as an inferior, and allowing Herself to be taught, She never allowed the least point or ingenious secret of these virtues to remain idle or unexecuted. O how highly did She esteem the sayings of the wise! *Lean not upon thy own prudence; be not wise in thy own conceit* (Prov. 3:5, 7). “Despise not the warnings and doctrine of the priests, and live always according to their proverbs” (Ecclus. 8:9). “Be not high-minded,[†] but conform to the humble” (Rom. 12:16).

* cf. Judith 15:10; *Gradual* for Dec. 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception [Ed.]

† cf. Rom. 11:20; I Tim. 6:17 [Ed.]

631. When celebrating this feast the great Lady felt a certain natural affection for the quiet retirement of the temple in her youth, even though She had promptly obeyed the Lord in forsaking it and in resigning Herself to the exalted ends for which He had withdrawn Her, and because of this He repaid her generosity by some special favors on this feast. On this day His Majesty descended from heaven with magnificent grandeur and in the company of the Angels as on other occasions, and addressing his most blessed Mother in her oratory He said: “My Mother and my Dove, come to Me, I who am thy God and thy Son. I desire to give thee a temple and habitation more exalted, more secure and divine, which shall be within my own being. Come, my Beloved and my Friend, to thy legitimate dwelling.” At these most sweet words the Seraphim raised their Queen from the floor (because in the presence of her Son She was always prostrate until He commanded Her to rise), and with celestial music placed Her at the right hand of the Lord. She then felt or perceived that the divinity of Christ entirely filled Her as a temple of his glory, and that She was bathed, clothed, and surrounded like a fish in the sea; and by this kind of union and as it were contact with the Divinity She felt new and indescribable effects, because She was given a type of possession of the Divinity which I cannot explain, and in it the divine Mother felt great satisfaction and joy in addition to seeing God face to face.

632. This great favor the prudent Mother called “my most exalted refuge and dwelling,” and the feast itself She called “the feast of the Being of God,” and She composed wonderful canticles to express its significance and render gratitude. At the end of this day She thanked the Almighty for having created the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, including all from Adam to her natural parents in whom her lineage ended. She gave thanks for all the gifts of grace and nature which the divine power gave them, and for all their prophecies and what is recorded of them in Holy Scriptures. Then She turned to her parents St. Joachim and St. Anne and thanked them for having presented Her to God in the temple at such an early age. At the same time, since they were now enjoying the beatific vision in the heavenly Jerusalem, She besought them to thank God in her stead and ask Him to teach Her how to be grateful and to be governed by Him in all her doings. Above all She besought them to give thanks to the omnipotent Lord for having exempted Her from original sin and chosen Her as his Mother, for these two blessings She always considered inseparable.

633. The feast days of St. Joachim and St. Anne She celebrated with nearly the same ceremonies as that of her Presentation. Both of these Saints descended with the Lord to her oratory with an innumerable multitude of Angels; in their presence She gave thanks to God for having provided Her with parents so holy and conformable to the divine will, and for the glory which He had conferred upon them. In acknowledgment of all these works of the Lord She composed new canticles with the Angels, which they sang to sweet and harmonious music. Besides this, another marvel took place on these feast days of her parents: The Angels of the Queen, and others who came from on high, divided into choirs, some explaining to the Queen the attributes or perfections of the Divinity, and others those of the incarnate Word. This colloquy gave Her incomparable joy and new incentive to her loving and inflamed affections, and Sts. Joachim and Anne received from this great accidental joy. Before they returned to heaven the great Lady asked their blessing, and then remained kneeling in renewed thanksgiving for these favors.

634. On the feast of her most chaste and holy spouse Joseph She celebrated her espousal, in which the Lord had given Her a most faithful companion to conceal the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word and execute with such high wisdom the secret works of the Redemption of man. Since all these dealings and eternal counsels of the Most High were recorded in the most

pure Heart of Mary, and since She gave them the worthy contemplation due to them, She commemorated them with ineffable joy and thanksgiving. On this feast St. Joseph came in the splendor of glory and with myriads of Angels in order to solemnize the feast with joyful music and sing the new hymns and canticles which the heavenly Mother composed in thanksgiving for the blessings received by her holy Spouse and Herself at the hands of the Most High.

635. After having consumed many hours in this celebration She spent others of that day in conversing with her glorious Spouse about the divine perfections and attributes, for in the absence of her Lord the most loving Mother delighted most in such discourses and conferences. Upon taking leave of her holy Spouse She begged him to pray for Her in the presence of the Divinity and praise Him in her name. She also recommended to his prayers the necessities of the holy Church and of the Apostles, asking him to pray for all. Then She asked for his blessing, and after he gave it the glorious St. Joseph returned to heaven while Her Highness remained, continuing her customary acts of humility and gratitude. Yet I desire here to mention two things. First, when her Son descended upon earth and was present at these feast days, He was accustomed to show Himself transfigured as He was on Tabor. This favor He showed Her many times, and most often it was on these occasions, for by it He repaid Her in a measure for her devotion and humility, and renewed the divine effects consequent upon these marvels. Second, in order to celebrate these favors and blessings the great Queen, besides what has already been mentioned, added other observances worthy of her piety and our attention; namely, on the days spoken of and on others of which I shall presently speak, She gave food to many of the poor, preparing it Herself and serving them with her own hands, kneeling in their presence while serving them. For this purpose She directed the Evangelist to gather the most needy and destitute, which he faithfully did according to her orders; moreover, She had more costly food prepared to be sent to the poor sick in the infirmaries, whom She could not gather around Her, and afterwards She went in person to console and heal them by her presence. This was the manner in which most holy Mary celebrated her feast days, and which She taught the faithful to imitate in order to be grateful for all things as far as possible by the sacrifice of praise and good works.

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

636. My daughter, the sin of ingratitude is one of the most heinous committed by men against God, and by it they make themselves most unworthy and abominable in the sight of God and the saints, for both have a kind of horror of this vile conduct in men. Yet in spite of its pernicious effects there is no sin which men, and each one in particular, commit more frequently and thoughtlessly. It is true that in order not to disoblige so much the Lord himself by this ingratitude and general forgetfulness of his benefits He desires the holy Church in common to recompense in some way the defect which her children and all men have in their lack of gratitude towards God, and in order to recognize his benefits the Church offers up so many prayers, petitions and sacrifices for his praise and glory as we see ordained in Her. But since the favors and graces of his generous and watchful Providence are not only for the common good of the faithful but for the advantage of each mortal in particular, the debt of gratitude is not paid by this general thanksgiving of the Church; each one for himself owes gratitude for what he receives from the divine bounty.

637. How many are there among mortals who during the whole course of their lives have not excited one sincere act of gratitude for the gift of life, for its preservation, for health, food, honors, possessions, and all the other temporal and natural goods! There are others who if at any time they give thanks for these benefits they do it not because they truly love God, the Giver, but because they love themselves and delight in these temporal and earthly blessings and in the possession of them. There are two indications of this deceit. First, when they lose these earthly and transitory goods they become sad, spiteful and inconsolable, and they do not know how to think of anything else more spiritual and lasting, or ask for it, or value it, since they love only what is visible and transitory. Though many times it is a benefit for the Lord to deprive them of health, honor, wealth, and other similar things so they do not blindly surrender themselves* to a disorderly attachment to them, yet despite this they consider it a misfortune and as it were an injury, their heart always desiring to pursue what perishes and ends with mortal life, in order to perish with it.

638. The other indication of this deceit is, that along with the blind appetite for the transitory goods they do not remember the spiritual benefits, neither to acknowledge them nor to give thanks for them. This guilt among the children of the Church is most dreadful and formidable, since without any obligation on the part of God, and without any merit on their part, the divine mercy seeks to draw them to the secure path of eternal life, specially applying to them the merits of the Passion and Death of my most holy Son. Each one who is today in the holy Church could have been born in other times and other ages before God came into the world; and afterwards he could have been raised among pagans, idolaters, heretics, or other infidels, where his eternal condemnation would be inexcusable.† Without their merit God called such persons to his holy faith, gave them knowledge of the certain truth, justified them in Baptism, and gave them for their use the Sacraments, ministers, teachings and enlightenments of eternal life. He placed them upon the sure path, granted them his assistance, pardoned them their sins, raised them from their falls, waited for their repentance, invited them by his mercy, and rewarded them with a generous hand. He defended them through his holy Angels, and gave them Himself as a pledge and nourishment of eternal life. He thus amassed so many benefits upon them that they are without measure or number, and not a day or hour passes without increasing their indebtedness.

639. Thus tell me, O my daughter, what gratitude is due to such generous and paternal clemency? And how many are there who worthily render this gratitude? The most significant benefit is that this ingratitude has not closed the portals of his mercy or dried up the fountains of his goodness, because it is infinite. The root of this most dreadful ingratitude in men is the boundless desire and covetousness for the temporal, visible and transitory goods. From this insatiable thirst is born their ingratitude, for since they desire so much the temporal goods what they receive seems little to them, and they neither return thanks for them nor resolve to seek the spiritual goods, and hence they are ungrateful for the ones as well as the others. And beyond this ponderous insanity they usually add a still greater one, namely they ask God not for what is necessary for them but for things which are injurious and will bring about their eternal perdition. Among men it is an insult to ask a favor from one they have offended, and still more outrageous to ask a favor for the purpose of committing a still greater offense. What must we then say of a vile earthly being, an enemy of God, when he petitions his Creator for life, health, honor,

* cf. Mk. 8:36-37; II Peter 2:19 [Ed.]

† cf. Jn. 1:9 [Ed.]

possessions, and other things for which he shall never be grateful, and which he does not intend to use for any other purpose than to offend the divine Giver?

640. And if in addition to this such a man never thanks God for having created him, redeemed him, called him, awaited him, justified him, and prepared for him the same glory which God himself enjoys, if such an ingrate still expects this happiness,* it is clearly unbounded temerity and audacity to ask for it when he has made himself so unworthy by his ingratitude, while not even praying to know and sorrow for such an offense. I assure thee, my dearest, such frequent ingratitude towards God is one of the most certain signs of reprobation in those who are guilty of such forgetfulness and carelessness. It is also a bad sign when the just Judge confers temporal blessings upon those who ask for them in forgetfulness of the blessings of the Redemption and justification, for all such souls, oblivious of the means of their eternal salvation, demand but the instruments of their death, and to yield to their demands is not a blessing but rather a chastisement of their blindness.†

641. All these evils I manifest to thee so thou mayest fear them and avoid their causes. But remember thy gratitude must not be of the ordinary or common kind, for the blessings thou hast received go far beyond thy knowledge and power of appreciation. Do not allow thyself to be deceived into shrinking from proper acknowledgment of graces on the plea of humility. Thou knowest the efforts of the demon to make thee forget the works and favors of the Lord by drawing thy attention toward thy faults and miseries, and making thee believe the blessings of truth which thou hast received are incompatible with thy shortcomings. Immediately put an end to this deception and cast it from thee, realizing the more thou dost attribute to God the goods thou dost receive from his extended hand the more dost thou annihilate and humble thyself, and the more thou owest to Him the less able thou art to pay thy debts, since thou canst not pay even for the least of his favors. To be convinced of this truth is not presumption but prudence, and not to acknowledge this indebtedness is not humility but most reprehensible foolishness, for thou canst not be grateful for that of which thou art ignorant, nor canst thou love as much if thou dost not recognize thyself moved and stimulated by the benefits which oblige thee. Thy fears are grounded upon losing the grace and friendship of the Lord, and with good reason dost thou fear if thou dost not make them fruitful, for He has done as much for thee as would suffice to justify many souls. But to have a prudent fear of losing his grace is quite a different thing from doubting it for the purpose of escaping acknowledgment for it, and this is the kind of doubt into which the enemy labors to cast thee, seeking to substitute a stubborn incredulity for holy fear of God by clothing it in the mantle of good intention and humility. Thy fear must exert itself in watching over thy treasure, striving to imitate me with the purity of an angel, and practicing all the teachings which I give thee in this History for this very purpose.

* cf. *Transfixion* 408, last paragraph [Ed.]

† cf. *Transfixion* 385 [Ed.]