

## CHAPTER XII

*How Most Holy Mary Celebrated Her Immaculate Conception and Nativity, and the Benefits which She Received on Those Days from Her Son and Our Savior Jesus.*

611. All the offices and titles of honor which most holy Mary held in the Church, that of Queen, Lady, Mother, Governess, Teacher, and the rest, were given to her by the Omnipotent not as empty titles like those given by men, but with the plenitude of superabundant grace required by each title and which the Almighty could communicate to Her. This plenitude consisted in this, that as Queen She knew all that concerned her reign and its extent; as Lady She knew from whence came her dominion; as Mother She knew all her children and domestics of her household, without excepting anyone through all the ages of the Church until the end; as Governess She knew all who were subject to Her; and as Teacher She possessed the wisdom and science through which the holy Church, by her intercession, was to be instructed and guided,\* while enjoying the presence and the influence of the Holy Ghost until the end of the world.

612. Hence our great Queen had a clear knowledge not only of all the Saints who preceded or followed Her in the Church, their lives, works, death, and rewards in heaven, but also of all the rites, ceremonies, decisions, and festivities of the Church in the course of the ages, and of all the reasons, motives, necessities and opportunities in and for which they were to be established with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, for He gives us our spiritual nourishment in proper time for the glory of the Lord and the increase of the holy Church. Since I have spoken of this matter in the course of this History, especially in the second Part (*Tran.* 23, 78), I need not repeat it here. From her full knowledge and corresponding sanctity there arose within the heavenly Instructress a certain grateful eagerness to introduce into the Church Militant the worship, veneration and festivities observed by the holy Angels in the triumphant Jerusalem, and thus imitate as far as possible what She had so often seen done in heaven for the praise and glory of the Most High.

613. In this more than Seraphic spirit She began to practice by Herself many of the ceremonies, rites and exercises which were afterwards introduced in the Church, and these She also inculcated and impressed upon the Apostles so they could introduce them as far as the circumstances then allowed. She not only invented the exercises of the Passion, of which I have spoken above (577), but many other customs and ceremonies which were later on received in the churches, congregations, and religious orders, for whatever She knew pertained to the worship of the Lord or the practice of virtue She performed, and in her wisdom She was ignorant of nothing that ought to be known. Among these exercises and rites was the celebration of the feasts of the Lord and of Herself, in order to renew the memory of the benefits for which She stood indebted, not only those relating in general to the human race but especially those referring to Herself, thus striving to render gratitude and adoration for all. Although She had spent her whole life in this pursuit without relaxation or forgetfulness, yet when She entered upon this new and mysterious phase of her life She prepared to signalize these feast days by celebrating them with exercises founded on a deeper insight. Since I shall speak of the other festivals in the following chapters, I shall here only describe how She celebrated her Immaculate Conception and Nativity, the first mysteries of her life. These commemorations or feasts She had begun to celebrate since the

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\* cf. Ecclus. 24:46 [Ed.]

Incarnation of the Word, yet She celebrated them more particularly after the Ascension, and especially in these last years of her life.

614. On the eighth day of December each year She celebrated her Immaculate Conception with a jubilation and gratitude beyond all human words, for this privilege was for the great Queen of the highest importance and value, and in order to correspond to it with the gratitude due to it She imagined Herself the least capable. She began her exercises on the evening before and spent the entire night in admirable devotions, shedding tears of joy, humiliating and prostrating Herself, and singing the praises of the Lord. She deeply reflected how She was formed of the same earth and descended from Adam according to the common order of nature, yet only She was chosen, set apart, and among all others preserved from the common law,\* exempted from the heavy tribute of guilt, and conceived with such plenitude of gifts and grace. She invited her own Angels to help Her return proper gratitude, and in union with them She alternated new songs of praise; She then asked the same favor of the rest of the angels and saints in heaven. But during all this time the divine love so inflamed Her that the Lord was obliged to strengthen Her lest all her natural forces be consumed and death ensue.

615. After She had spent nearly the entire night in these exercises Christ descended from heaven, and the Angels raised Her to his royal throne and carried Her to the empyrean heaven where the celebration of the feast was continued with new rejoicing and accidental glory of the courtiers of the heavenly Jerusalem. There the Blessed Mother prostrated Herself and adored the most holy Trinity, again giving thanks for the benefit of her immunity from sin and her Immaculate Conception. Then She again took her place at the right hand of Christ her Son, and the Lord himself as it were acknowledged the goodness of the eternal Father in having given Him a Mother so worthy and so full of grace, exempt from the common guilt of Adam. Anew the three divine Persons confirmed upon Her this privilege, as it were ratifying and approving it and pleasing Themselves in thus having distinguished Her among all creatures. In order to give repeated testimony to this truth a voice proceeded from the throne in the name of the Father, saying: “Beautiful are thy footsteps, O Prince’s Daughter (Cant. 7:1), conceived without sin.” Another in the name of the Son said: “Altogether pure and without contact of guilt is my Mother, who gave Me human form to redeem men.” And in the name of the Holy Ghost: “*Thou art all fair, my Spouse, Thou art all fair* and without stain of the common guilt” (Ib. 4:7).

616. In between these voices were heard the choirs of all the angels and saints, singing in sweetest harmony: “Mary most holy, conceived without original sin.” To all these honors the most prudent Mother answered by thanksgiving, worship and praise of the Most High, rendered with such profound humility that it surpassed all angelic understanding. In order to conclude the solemnity She was raised to the intuitive and beatific vision of the most holy Trinity, and after enjoying this glory for some hours She was brought back by the Angels to the Cenacle. This was the manner in which her Immaculate Conception was solemnized after the Ascension of her divine Son. Now this feast is celebrated in a different manner, as I shall describe in another book which I have been ordered to write concerning the holy Jerusalem, the Church Triumphant, if the Lord shall concede this grace to me. This feast and others She began to celebrate from the time of the Incarnation, for finding Herself to be the Mother of God She began to renew the benefits She had received because of this dignity; thus She kept these festivals with her holy Angels, and by the worship and thanksgiving She gave to her own Son, from whom She had received such graces and favors. The rest of her devotions which She offered in her oratory upon returning

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\* cf. Esther 15:13 [Ed.]

from heaven were of the same kind as I have related at other times after other similar favors (4, 388, etc.), for in all of them did her admirable humility grow.

617. The feast of her Nativity She celebrated on the eighth of September, the day on which She was born. She began the evening before with the same prostrations and canticles as at the feast of her Immaculate Conception. She gave thanks for having been born to life into the light of this world, and for the favor of having been raised to heaven at the hour of her birth to look upon the Divinity intuitively, as I have narrated in the first Part of this History (*Con.* 330, 332). She resolved anew to spend her whole life in fulfilling the pleasure of the Lord, acknowledging that for this purpose alone life was given to Her. Though in the first beginning and entrance of her life She had surpassed in merits the highest Saints and Seraphim, toward the end of her life She resolved to begin to labor anew as if She were just beginning the practice of virtue, and anew She asked the Lord to assist Her, govern Her in all her actions, and lead Her to the highest end proposed for his glory.

618. As for the rest concerning this feast, though She was not raised to heaven as on the day of her Immaculate Conception, yet her divine Son descended from heaven with many choirs of Angels, with the Patriarchs and Prophets, and with St. Joachim, St. Anne, and St. Joseph. With this company Christ our Savior descended in order to celebrate the Nativity of his Blessed Mother upon earth; and this purest of creatures, in the presence of that celestial company, adored the Lord with wonderful reverence and worship, and again expressed her grateful acknowledgment for having been placed upon the earth and for the benefits connected therewith. Then the Angels did the same, and sang *Nativitas tua Dei Genetrix Virgo*,\* etc., which means: Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, announced to all the universe a great joy, for of Thee was born the Sun of justice, Christ our God. The Patriarchs and Prophets also sang their canticles of glory and thanksgiving, as well as Adam and Eve, because the Reparatrix of the damage they had wrought was born, and the Parents and Spouse of the Queen, because they had been given such a Daughter and Spouse. Then the Lord himself raised the divine Mother from the ground upon which She lay prostrate and placed Her at his right hand, and there new mysteries of the Divinity were manifested to Her. This vision, although not intuitive but abstractive, gave Her a still deeper insight and participation in the Divinity.

619. By these ineffable favors She was transformed, inflamed and spiritualized to the likeness of her divine Son in a new and special manner, as if for a new beginning. On these occasions the Evangelist St. John merited some measure of participation in the feast, for he heard some of the music of the Angels and was privileged to offer Mass while the Lord and the Angels were present in the oratory, and gave Holy Communion to the great Queen while Jesus her Son, whom She was receiving sacramentally, was Himself at her side. These spectacles were the source of new joy to the Saints, who also served as witnesses to this Communion, more worthy than was ever seen since Christ lived or ever shall be seen upon earth. Upon receiving Holy Communion her divine Son remained with the great Lady in sacramental form, while in his glorious and natural form He ascended to heaven. O hidden marvels of the divine omnipotence! If with all the saints God manifests Himself as great and wonderful (Ps. 67:36), what would He have done with his worthy Mother, whom He loved above all, and for whom He had reserved the great and special manifestations of his wisdom and power? Let all the creatures confess Him and give Him glory, power and magnificence.

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\* cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vespers of Sept. 8, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Antiphon at the Magnificat* [Ed.]

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

620. My daughter, first of all I desire to enlighten thee concerning certain doubts of thy heart regarding the exalted and extraordinary mysteries of this History. Two misgivings have disturbed thy interior. The first is whether thou, who knowest thyself to be such an insignificant, useless and ignorant woman, art a fit instrument for recording these mysteries, and whether it would be better to let some other person more learned and perfect in virtue write them and thus give them more authority, since thou art the least of all, the most useless and ignorant. The second doubt is whether those who read of these mysteries shall give them credit, for they are very rare and unheard of, particularly the beatific and intuitive visions of the Divinity which I had so many times in my mortal life. To thy first doubt I answer that in truth thou art the least and most useless of all, since thou hast heard it from the mouth of the Lord and I confirm it. But remember belief in this History and in all it contains does not depend on the instrument but on its Author, who is the highest Truth,\* and upon the contents of thy writing; and in this regard not even the most supreme Seraphim could add thereto, nor canst thou detract from or diminish it.

621. For an Angel to write this History would not be appropriate, yet if he would the incredulous† and the sluggish of heart‡ would nevertheless find occasion to slander him. It was necessary the instrument be a human person, but it was not proper for this person to be the most learned or wise, for then this work might be ascribed to his knowledge and thus occasion the danger of having the divine light esteemed no higher, or even lower, than human knowledge, or it might be attributed entirely to human forethought and industry. It is more for the glory of God that this person be a woman, who can rely neither on her own knowledge nor her own industry. I also take special glory and pleasure in this, and that thou art this instrument, because thou (and all others) shalt know there is nothing of thine own in this History, and thou must not attribute more to thyself than to the pen with which thou writest, since thou art but the instrument in the hands of the Lord and the repeater of my words. And since thou art so vile and a sinner, thou must not be disturbed in seeing mortals refuse to believe, since in disbelieving what thou writest they will not do any wrong to thee, but by their unbelief fail in proper reverence for my words. Although thy faults and shortcomings are many, they can all be neutralized by the charity and kindness of the Lord, who has not looked for any other instrument for this work, but has raised thee from the dust and manifested in thee his generous power. He has communicated his doctrine to one in whom the power of his truth would appear more plainly, and hence I desire thee to follow it up in thy conduct and attain the perfection thou dost desire.

622. In answer to the second misgiving and anxiety, whether the greatness of these mysteries shall prevent belief in what thou writest, I have said many things in the course of this History. Those who take care to attain a worthy concept and appreciation of me shall find no difficulty in believing me, for they shall understand the relation and proportion of my privileges to the dignity of Mother of God. They shall understand the works of God are perfect, and if anyone begins to doubt in these matters it is certain he does not know who God is or who I am. And if God has shown Himself so powerful and liberal in the rest of the Saints, many of whom in the opinion of the Church are held to have seen the Divinity in mortal life, and it is certain they have seen Him, how or on what basis can that be denied to me what is conceded to so many others inferior to

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\* cf. Jn. 14:6 [Ed.]

† cf. Jn. 20:27 [Ed.]

‡ cf. Lk. 24:25 [Ed.]

me? All that my divine Son merited and did for them was ordained for his glory, and after that for my glory. The end must be held in higher esteem and value than the means; hence greater was the divine love which inclined God to favor me than all the rest, whom He has benefited for my sake. It is no wonder that what God did one time for others He did many times for Her whom He chose for his Mother.

623. Let the pious and the prudent keep in mind what has been taught in the Church, that the measure of the favors I received from the hands of my divine Son is his omnipotence and my capacity, for He has conceded to me all the favors which He could confer and which I was capable of receiving. These graces were in me not barren,\* but always fruitful to the fullest extent possible in a creature. The divine Master himself was my Son, powerful to operate as far as the creature placed no obstacle; since I placed no such obstacle, how can anyone dare to limit his works of love toward me his Mother, whom He himself had made worthy of his benefits and favors above all the rest of his saints, not one of whom deprived himself as I have of the joy of the beatific vision, even for an hour, for the sake of helping his Church? And if all the rest He did for me seems much, I desire thee and all the rest to understand that all his favors were founded upon and included in my being conceived without sin; for it was a greater favor to make me worthy of his glory when I could not merit it, than to show me his glory when I had merited it and had placed no hindrance.

624. By these considerations thy doubts will be solved; as for the rest, let that be my concern, and let it be thine to follow and imitate me, for as far as thou art concerned this is the purpose of all thou dost understand and write. This must be thy solicitude, to omit the practice of no virtue made known to thee. I desire thee also to attend to what the other saints have done in following my divine Son and me, for thou dost not owe less than they owed to his mercy, and with none have I been more kind and generous. In my school I desire thee to learn the love, the gratitude, and the humility of a true disciple of mine, for I desire thee to distinguish thyself and advance thyself exceedingly. Do thou celebrate all my feast days with a sincere devotion, and invite the saints and angels to assist thee therein, especially the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in which I was so highly favored by the divine power and from which I derived so much joy. In these times, more than in those past, I am solicitous to see it acknowledged by men and to see them praise the Most High for this extraordinary miracle. On the day of thy own birth into the world thou shouldst render special gratitude to the Lord in imitation of me and perform some extra work in his service; above all thou must resolve thenceforth to amend thy life and to begin to labor anew in this. And all mortals, instead of spending the anniversary of their birth in demonstrations of vain earthly joy, should make similar resolutions.

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\* cf. I Cor. 15:10 [Ed.]