

CHAPTER XVII

The Message of the Most High Given to Mary Most Holy through the Angel St. Gabriel Informing Her She had Three Years of Life Remaining, and what Happened at This Notice from Heaven to St. John and to All of Nature.

696. In order to relate what still remains to me of the last years of the life of our only and heavenly phoenix, Mary most holy, it is right for the heart to administer the unction and the eyes the tears with which I desire to record such sweet, tender and touching wonders of the last years of her life. I desire to prevent the devout hearts of the faithful from reading and considering them as past and absent, since the powerful virtue of faith can make these truths present to the mind; and if we look upon them with the proper piety and Christian devotion, without doubt we shall gather the sweetest fruit and our hearts shall feel the effects and rejoice in the good which our eyes cannot see.

697. Most holy Mary had reached the age of sixty-seven years without having tarried in her course, ceased in her flight, mitigated the flame of her love, or slowed the increase of her merits from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception. Since all of this had continued to grow in each moment of her life, the ineffable gifts, benefits and favors of the Lord had made Her entirely deified and spiritual; the affectionate ardors and desires of her most chaste Heart did not allow Her any rest outside the center of her love; the fetters of the flesh were violent for Her; the inclination and weight of the Divinity himself to unite Her to Himself by an eternal and close bond had (according to our mode of speaking) attained the summit of its power; and the earth itself, unworthy of holding within its confines the Treasure of heaven due to the sins of mortals, could no longer retain Her but return Her to her true Master. The eternal Father desired his only and true Daughter, the Son his beloved and most loving Mother, and the Holy Ghost the embraces of his most beautiful Spouse. The angels earnestly longed for the sight of their Queen, the saints for their great Lady, and all the heavens mutely awaited the presence of their Empress which would fill them with her glory, her beauty, and her joy. The only reason which the world and the Church Militant had for retaining Her was their need of such a Mother and Mistress, and the charity with which God himself loved the miserable children of Adam.

698. Yet since it was unavoidable that some term and end had to come regarding the mortal course of our Queen, the most holy Trinity (according to our mode of understanding) conferred in the divine consistory upon the order to be followed in glorifying the most blessed Mother, and He weighed the love which was due to Her alone for having copiously satisfied his mercy toward men during the many years in which the Church Militant had possessed Her as its Foundress and Teacher. The Almighty therefore resolved to sustain and console Her by giving Her definite notice of the term still remaining of her life, so thus guaranteed the day and the hour so desired by Her She could joyfully await the end of her earthly exile. For this purpose the most blessed Trinity dispatched the archangel St. Gabriel, with many other courtiers of the celestial hierarchies, to announce to the Queen when and how her mortal life would come to an end and pass into eternal life.

699. The holy Prince descended with the rest to the Cenacle in Jerusalem and entered the oratory of the great Lady, where they found Her prostrate on the ground in the form of a cross beseeching mercy for sinners. But perceiving the music and presence of the holy Angels She rose to her knees in order to hear and see the Ambassador of heaven and his companions, who in white and refulgent garments surrounded Her with admirable affability and reverence. They all

came with crowns and palms in their hands, each one different, yet all of them representing by their inestimable value and beauty the diverse rewards and glories of their great Queen and Lady. The holy Angel greeted Her with the salutation of the *Ave Maria*, and continuing said: “Our Empress and Lady, the Omnipotent and Saint of Saints sends us from his court to announce to Thee in his name the most happy end of thy pilgrimage and exile in mortal life. Already, Lady, the day and the hour is quickly approaching so desired by Thee in which by means of natural death Thou shalt receive the eternal possession of immortal life which awaits Thee in the glory and at the right hand of thy most holy Son and our God. Exactly three years from today Thou shalt be taken up and received into the everlasting joy of the Lord, where all its inhabitants await Thee, earnestly longing for thy presence.”

700. Most holy Mary heard this message with ineffable joy of her most pure and ardent spirit, and prostrating Herself again upon the earth She answered in the same words as at the Incarnation of the Word: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum** (Lk. 1:38). Then She asked the holy Angels and ministers of the Most High to help Her give thanks for this benefit and news, so joyful for Her Highness. The great Mother began and alternated the verses of a canticle with the Seraphim and the other Angels, which lasted for two continuous hours. Although by their nature and supernatural gifts the angelic spirits are so prompt, wise and intelligent, they were nevertheless excelled in all this by their Queen and Lady as vassals are by their sovereign, for in Her grace and wisdom abounded as in a Mistress, while in them as in disciples. Having finished this canticle, and humbling Herself anew, She charged the sovereign spirits to beseech the Lord to prepare Her for her passage from mortal to eternal life, and to ask all the other angels and saints in heaven to do the same. They offered to obey Her in all things, and then St. Gabriel took leave and returned with all his company to the empyrean heaven.

701. The great Queen and Lady of all the universe remained alone in her oratory, and amid tears of humility and joy prostrated Herself upon the earth and embraced it as the common mother of us all, and speaking to it[†] said: “Earth, I give thee thanks as I ought, because without my merit thou hast sustained me sixty-seven years. Thou art a creature of the Most High, and by his will thou hast sustained me until now. I ask thee to help me during the rest of my dwelling upon thee, so just as I have been created of thee and upon thee I may through thee and from thee arrive at the end I desire, the vision of my Maker.” She turned also toward the other creatures and speaking to them said: “Ye heavens, planets, stars and elements, created by the powerful hand of my Beloved, faithful witnesses and preachers of his grandeur and beauty,[^] I also thank thee for what thou and the creatures within thee have done in the preservation of my life. Help me anew, then, from this day forward, to improve my life by the divine favor in the time still left of my mortal course, in order to be grateful to my and thy Creator.”

702. The day on which this message was given, conformable to the words of the Archangel, was in the month of August, exactly three years to the day before the glorious Transition of most holy Mary, of which I shall speak later (742). From that hour in which She received this notice She was inflamed anew in the fire of divine love, meticulously multiplying all her exercises of devotion in such a manner as if to restore anything which by negligence or lack of fervor She may have omitted until that day. The traveler hastens his footsteps when a great part of his way is still before him as the day declines; the laborer or the merchant redoubles his exertions when

* *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.* [Ed.]

[†] cf. Numbers 20:8 [Ed.]

[^] cf. Ps. 18:2 [Ed.]

evening overtakes him before the completion of his task. But our great Queen hastened on in her heroic efforts not for fear of the approaching night or the risks of journeying in the dark, but urged on by the loving desires of the eternal light and in order to enter more rich and prosperous into the everlasting joy of the Lord. She immediately wrote to the Apostles and disciples to encourage them anew in their labors for the conversion of the world, and repeated this exhortation many times during those three years. With the faithful She personally encountered She made greater efforts, exhorting and confirming them in the faith. And though She guarded her secret from all, yet her works were of one who was already beginning to bid farewell and desires to leave them rich and prosperous, filled with celestial benefits.

703. Yet in regard to St. John the Evangelist She had reasons for taking a different course than the rest, for She regarded him as her son who among all others singularly assisted and served Her. For this reason it seemed a duty to the great Lady to inform him of the message given Her regarding her death. Some days having passed, and first asking for and receiving his blessing and permission, She said to him: "Thou dost already know, my son and my master, that among the creatures of the Most High I am the most indebted and obliged to submit to his holy will. And if all He created depends upon it, in me it certainly must be fulfilled entirely to his satisfaction for time and eternity; and thou, my son, canst help me in this as one who knows the titles by which I belong entirely to my God and Lord. His condescension and infinite mercy have manifested to me the swift approach of the end of my mortal life in order to pass into eternal life, and from the day on which I received this notice there remains only three years until the end of my exile. I beseech thee, my master, to help me in this brief time as I labor to render gratitude to the Most High and give Him some return for the immense benefits which I have received from his most generous love. Pray for me, since I beseech thee from my inmost soul."

704. These words of the most blessed Mother tore the most loving heart of St. John, and unable to contain his sorrow and tears he answered: "My Mother and Lady, to the will of the Most High and thine I surrender myself in order to obey what is commanded of me, though my merits do not approach my obligations and desires. But do Thou, most kind Lady and Mother, help this thy poor child who is to be left alone and an orphan without thy most desirable company." St. John could add no more because of the sighs and tears pressed from him by his sorrow. And though the most sweet Queen encouraged and consoled him by gentle and efficacious reasonings, nevertheless from that day the heart of the holy Apostle remained pierced by a dart of pain and sorrow which left him weakened and languishing, as happens to flowers vivified by the sun when it absents and hides itself; for these flowers, having followed and accompanied the sun in its course, become faint and wither toward evening because the sun is lost from view. So his life would not fade away in this grief, the Blessed Mother came to the relief of St. John by her kind promises, assuring him that She would be his Mother and Advocate with her most holy Son. The Evangelist gave an account of this event to St. James the Less, who as bishop of Jerusalem assisted St. John in the service of the Empress of the world (as St. Peter had commanded and as I said in its place [230]). From that time on the two Apostles, being thus forewarned, kept their Queen and Lady company more frequently, especially the Evangelist, who could not stay away from her presence.

705. During the course of these three last years of the life of our Queen and Lady the divine power permitted a certain hidden and sweet force to throw all nature into mourning and sorrow at her prospective death, She who by her life beautified and perfected all creation. The holy Apostles, though they were scattered over the earth, began to feel new concern which roused their attention, with misgivings regarding the time when their Mistress and Helper would be

missing from them, for already the divine light intimated to them this event could not be far off. Others of the faithful living in Jerusalem and the country around began secretly to feel their treasure and joy would not be theirs much longer. The heavens, stars and planets lost much of their brightness and beauty, like the loss of daylight as night approaches. The birds of the air fell into singular demonstrations of sorrow during these last years, and a great multitude of them ordinarily gathered where most holy Mary happened to be. Surrounding her oratory in extraordinary flights and wriggles, instead of songs they gave forth sad voices like one who is lamenting and groaning with sorrow, until the Lady herself commanded them again to praise their Creator in their natural songs and sounds. Of this wonder St. John was often a witness, joining them in their lamentations. A few days before the Transition of the heavenly Mother innumerable little birds gathered around Her, prostrating their beaks and heads upon the ground and poking their breasts in groans like someone sorrowfully bidding farewell forever and asking her last blessing.

706. Not only did the birds of the air display this sorrow, but also the brute animals of the earth accompanied them in it; for one day, when according to her custom the Queen of heaven went to visit the Holy Places of the Redemption and arrived on mount Calvary, many wild beasts came from the surrounding mountains to wait for Her. Some of them prostrated themselves upon the ground, others bowed their necks, and all of them uttered sorrowful sounds, remaining some hours manifesting to Her the pain they felt because She whom they recognized as the Lady and honor of the entire universe was to absent Herself from the earth where they lived. But the greatest wonder which occurred in the general sentiment and movement among all creatures was that for six months before the death of most holy Mary the sun, moon and stars gave less light than they had until then furnished to mortals, and on the day of her happy Transition they were eclipsed as at the death of the Redeemer of the world (Mt. 27:45). Although many wise and informed men noticed these novelties and changes in the celestial orbs, all were ignorant of the cause and could only express their amazement. Yet the Apostles and disciples, who as I shall relate further on (735) were present at her most sweet and happy death, knew at that time this was the sorrow of insensible nature which worthily anticipated its mourning when human nature, capable of reason, failed to mourn at the loss of its Queen, its legitimate Lady, its true beauty and adorning glory. Insensible nature alone seemed to fulfill the prophecy of Zacharias (12:12) that in that day *the land shall mourn*, likewise the families of the house of God, each one for itself; and this mourning shall be as for the death of the firstborn (Ib. 10), over which all are accustomed to weep. This which the Prophet says of the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father and the Firstborn* of most holy Mary, Jesus Christ our Savior, may also be said respectively regarding the death of his most pure Mother, as the Firstborn and Mother of Grace and of life. And just as the faithful vassals and servants clothe themselves in mourning not only at the death of their prince or queen but also at the danger of their death, becoming sad in anticipation of the sorrow of their impending loss, so the irrational creatures anticipated the sentiment and tokens of their sadness when the Transition of most holy Mary drew near.

707. The Evangelist was the first to share in this sorrow, and above all others felt this impending loss, without being able to pretend nothing had happened or conceal it from the more familiar inhabitants of the house of the Cenacle. Certain members of that household, especially two maidens, daughters of the master of the house, who frequently attended upon and served the Queen of the world, as well as other devout persons noticed the sadness of the Apostle St. John,

* cf. Mt. 1:25; Lk. 2:7 [Ed.]

and repeatedly saw him shedding many tears. Since they knew the equanimity of the Saint, so even-tempered and consistent, it seemed to them this unusual emotion supposed some happening of great concern, and out of kindness they came to him a few times asked him with some urgency to reveal the cause of this new sorrow in order to assist him in it if possible. The holy Apostle hid his grief and for many days concealed its cause, but not without divine dispensation he finally yielded to the importunities of these devout persons and told them the happy Transition of their Mother and Lady was approaching (by this title the Evangelist called most holy Mary in her absence). In this way the news began to spread, and some more familiar with the great Queen began to weep over this hardship impending over the Church some time before it happened, for none of those who came to know of it could contain their tears and such irreparable sorrow. From that time on they visited Her and attended upon Her much more frequently, throwing themselves at her feet, kissing the spots where her sacred feet had trod, asking Her to bless them and take them with Her, and not to forget them in the glory of the Lord into which She was about to carry away with Her the hearts of all her servants.

708. It was a great mercy and providence of the Lord for many faithful of the primitive Church to have such advanced notice of the death of their Queen, for He does not send labors and evils to his people without first manifesting them to his servants, as the prophet Amos assures us (3:7). Although this tribulation was unavoidable for the faithful of that age, the divine clemency ordained that as far as possible the primitive Church would be recompensed for the loss of its Mother and Mistress, obliging Her by its tears and sorrow during the period of time which still remained of her life to favor and enrich them with the treasures of divine grace which as the Lady of all She could distribute to them to console them in her departure, as in fact She did; for the maternal bosom of the most blessed Lady was moved to this extreme compassion by the tears of those faithful, and for them and for all the rest of the Church She obtained in the last days of her life new benefits and mercies from her most holy Son. In order not to deprive the Church of these favors the Lord did not wish to take away from them the heavenly Mother without warning, in whom they had help, consolation, joy, remedy in necessities, alleviation in labors, counsel in doubts, health in sickness, aid in afflictions, and all goods together.

709. At no time and on no occasion did those who sought the assistance of the great Mother of Grace have their hope frustrated; She always relieved and helped all who did not resist her loving clemency. But during the last two years of her life no one could count or weigh the wonders She wrought for the benefit of mortals, for a great number of all types of people frequently gathered around Her. All the sick who presented themselves before Her were given health in body and soul; She converted many to the evangelical truth; and She drew innumerable souls to the state of grace, withdrawing them from sin. She relieved the great necessities of the poor, giving to some what She possessed from what was offered to Her, and helping others by miraculous means. She confirmed all in the fear of God, in the faith, and in obedience to the holy Church; and as the Lady and only Treasurer of the riches of the Divinity and of the life and death of her most holy Son, She desired to open them up with generous mercy before her death in order to leave enriched the faithful children of the Church whom She would leave behind. Above all this She consoled and encouraged them by her promises that She would continue to this day to favor us at the right hand of her divine Son.

*INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE
GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS.*

710. My daughter, in order to understand the joy caused in me by the announcement of the end of my mortal life, men must consider the desire and force of the love which urged me on to reach and see God in the glory He had prepared for me from all eternity. This sacrament entirely exceeds human capacity, and the knowledge the children of the Church could attain of it for their consolation they either do not merit to know or are incapable of knowing, for they do not apply the interior light or purify their consciences in order to receive it. Upon thee my divine Son and I have liberally conferred this and other mercies, and I assure thee, my dearest, that happy are the eyes which see what thou hast seen, and the ears which hear what thou hast heard.* Guard thy treasure, and do not lose it; labor with all thy forces to gain the fruit of this knowledge and of my teaching. I desire of thee that a part of this fruit be to dispose thyself from this hour for thy death in imitation of me, for since thou hast the certainty of its coming any period of time should seem very short for securing the affair which must be resolved for eternal life or punishment. No rational creature had such security of eternal reward as I; yet knowing such infallible truth, and having received notice of my death three years in advance, thou hast seen how I nevertheless disposed and prepared myself as a mortal and earthly creature with the holy fear which must be had regarding that hour. In this I acted as devolved upon me insofar as I was mortal and the Mistress of the Church, giving an example to the rest of the faithful of what they must do as mortals and more in need of this preparation in order not to fall into eternal condemnation.

711. Among the absurd fallacies which the demons have introduced into the world, none is greater or more pernicious than forgetfulness of the hour of death and what shall happen to them at the just judgment of the rigorous Judge. Consider, my daughter, that through this portal sin entered into the world, for the serpent sought to convince the first woman principally that she would not die and need not think of that matter (Gen. 3:4). Thus continually deceived, there are innumerable fools[†] who live without this remembrance of death and who die having forgotten the unhappy lot which awaits them. So thou mayest not be seized by this human perversity, thou hast certainly been warned that death is unavoidable, that thou hast received much and paid little, and the account shall be so much the more rigorous as the supreme Judge has been more generous in the gifts and talents which He has given thee and the expectation He has of thee.^Δ I desire of thee neither more nor less than what thou owest to thy Spouse and thy Lord, which is always to put into practice the best in all places, times and occasions, without permitting any carelessness, forgetfulness or intermission.

712. If in thy weakness thou dost incur the guilt of some omission or negligence, let not the sun go down or the day pass without having sorrowed for it or confessed it if possible, as if for the last account. Proposing amendment, even of the slightest fault, begin to labor with new fervor and solicitude, like one who is running out of time for accomplishing such an arduous and laborious enterprise as obtaining eternal glory and happiness and avoiding the fall into never-ending death and torments. This must be the continual occupation of all thy faculties and senses so thou canst make thy hope certain and joyful (II Cor. 1:7), nor *labor in vain* (Philip. 2:16), nor *run as at an uncertainty* (I Cor. 9:26) like those who content themselves with some good works

* cf. Mt. 13:16-17; Lk. 10:23-24 [Ed.]

† cf. Eccles. 1:15 [Ed.]

Δ cf. Lk. 12:48 [Ed.]

yet commit many reprehensible and detestable crimes. These cannot walk in the security and interior joy of hope, since their own conscience gives them no confidence and saddens them, unless they live in forgetfulness and in the foolish delights of the flesh. In order to fill all thy works with perfection continue the exercises I have taught thee, as well as those thou art accustomed to do in preparation for death, along with all the prayers, prostrations and soul-searching thou dost usually practice. Then mentally receive the Viaticum as one who is departing for the other life, taking leave and forgetting all thou hast in this life. Enkindle thy heart with desires of seeing thy God and rise unto his presence, where thy future habitation shall be and thy present conversation should be (Philip. 3:20).