

## 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 no more than right for our hearts to be filled with tenderness and our eyes with tears at the sweet and touching marvels of the last years of her life. I desire to caution the devout hearts of the faithful not to read or consider 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 career, ceased in her flight, mitigated the flame of her love, or lessened 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 bounds of the flesh were most violently irksome; the inclination and weight of the Divinity to unite Himself with Her by an eternal and close bond had (according to our mode of speaking) attained the summit of its power; and the earth itself, unworthy to possess any longer 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 longed for their Queen, the saints for their great Lady, and all the heavens mutely awaited the presence of their Empress who would fill them with glory and with her beauty and joy. All that could be alleged in favor of Her still remaining in the world and in the Church was the need of such a Mother and Mistress, and the love which God himself had for the miserable children of Adam.

698. But since it was unavoidable that some term and end had to come regarding the mortal career of our Queen, the holy Trinity (according to our mode of understanding) conferred in the divine consistory upon the sequence to be followed in glorifying the Blessed Mother, and He weighed the love which was due to Her alone for having so copiously fulfilled 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 asking mercy for sinners. But hearing the sound of their music and perceiving them present She rose to her knees in order to hear the message and show respect to the Ambassador of heaven and his companions, who in white and refulgent garments surrounded Her with wonderful

courteousness and reverence. All of them had come 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 then added: “Our Empress and Lady, the Omnipotent and Saint of Saints sends us from his heavenly 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 attain the eternal possession of immortal life which awaits Thee in the glory and at the right hand of thy divine 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, longing for thy presence.”

700. Most holy Mary heard this message with ineffable jubilation of her purest and most loving 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 welcome and joyful news. The Blessed Mother sang the responses of a canticle, alternately with the Seraphim and the other Angels, which lasted for two hours. Although by their nature and supernatural gifts the angelic spirits are so subtle, wise and excellent, 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 Teacher, while in them as in disciples. Having finished this canticle, and humiliating Herself anew, She charged the supernal 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 pray for the same favor. 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 humble joy prostrated Herself upon the earth and embraced it as the common mother of us all, saying: “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 now 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 be raised to the blessed vision of my Maker.” She turned also toward the other creatures, saying: “Ye heavens, planets, stars and elements, created by the powerful hands of my Beloved, faithful witnesses and proclaimers of his greatness and beauty, ye also I thank for the preservation of my life. Help me then from today on, that by the divine favor I may begin anew to perfect my life during the time left of my career so I may show myself 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, and was exactly three years before the glorious Transition of most holy Mary, of which I shall speak later (742). But from that hour in which She received this notice She was inflamed anew in the fire of divine love in such a manner, and so multiplied her exercises of devotion, that it seemed as if She desired to make up for any relaxation or negligence in her fervor up to that time. 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 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

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

prosperous into the everlasting joys of the Lord. She immediately wrote to the Apostles and disciples to encourage them in their labors for the conversion of the world, and thereafter repeated her injunctions during those three years more frequently than before. She used still greater diligence in exhorting and confirming the faithful living near Her by her personal communication. Although She kept her own secret, yet her behavior was that of one who begins to take her departure and desires to leave her friends rich and prosperous, filled with celestial benedictions.

703. But in regard to St. John the Evangelist She had reason to take a different course, for She regarded him as her son who attended upon Her and assisted Her in a special manner. Hence it seemed good to the great Lady to inform him of the message regarding her death. Hence after some days, and after having asked his permission and blessing, She said to him: "Thou dost already know, my son and master, that among the creatures of the Most High I am the most indebted of all and under the greatest obligations to submit to his holy will. And if all He created depends upon it, in me it is certainly incumbent to fulfill entirely his good pleasure for time and eternity; and thou, my son, canst help me in this fulfillment as one who knows by how many titles I belong body and soul 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 son, 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 blessings which I have received from his most liberal love. Pray for me, since I beseech thee from my inmost soul."

704. These words of the Blessed Mother tore the heart of St. John, and unable to restrain his sorrow and tears he answered: "My Mother and my Lady, to the will of the Most High and thine I submit in order to obey what is commanded of me, although my merits do not approach my obligations and desires. But do Thou, O Lady and most loving 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 sweetest 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 beginning to wither, 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. Lest he lose his life in this affliction the Blessed Mother came to the relief of St. John by her loving promises, assuring him that She would be his Mother and Advocate with her divine 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, mindful of what was coming, were still more solicitous in their attendance upon their Queen and Lady. This was especially true of the Evangelist, who would not leave 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, although they were scattered over the earth, began to feel new concern which roused their attention, with misgivings regarding the time when they would be deprived of their Teacher and helper, 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 day at the approach of night. 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 wiggles, instead of songs they gave forth sorrowful sounds as if they were lamenting and groaning in their grief, until the Lady herself commanded them again to praise their Creator in their natural songs and sounds. St. John was often a witness of this miracle, joining them in their lamentations. A few days before the Transition of the heavenly Mother innumerable hosts of the little birds gathered, laying their heads and beaks upon the ground and picking at their breasts in groans like someone taking farewell forever and asking her last benediction.

706. Not only the birds of the air indulged in this sorrow but also the brute beasts of the earth, 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, and thus for some hours manifested their grief at the impending departure of Her whom they recognized as the Lady and the honor of the entire universe. The most wonderful sign of this general mourning among the creatures was that the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars was diminished, and on the day of her 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 astonishment. But 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 and creatures 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 (12:10, 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, 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 their queen but also at the prospect of their danger or loss, so the irrational creatures anticipated the sentiment and tokens of their sorrow at the approach of the Transition of most holy Mary.

707. The Evangelist before all others shared in their sorrow, and in a special manner and more deeply than all the rest he felt this impending loss, without being able to pretend nothing had happened or conceal it from the more familiar inhabitants of the house. Two daughters of the master of the house, who attended very often upon the Queen of the world, and some other very devout persons chanced to see him shedding many tears in his sorrow. Since they knew the peaceful and tranquil disposition of the Saint they conjectured this unusual emotion was caused by some very weighty event, and in their kind solicitude a few times they urged him to tell them the cause of this unusual sorrow in order to alleviate it if possible. The holy Apostle suppressed his grief and for a long time concealed its cause, but not without divine dispensation he finally yielded to their importunities and told them the happy Transition of their Mother and Lady was

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

approaching; by this title the Evangelist called most holy Mary in her absence. In this way the news began to spread, and some closer to 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 restrain their tears and irreparable sorrow. From that time on they attended upon Her and visited 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 be thus timely forewarned 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 is said by the prophet Amos (3:7). Although this loss could not be spared to the faithful of that age, the divine clemency ordained that insofar as possible the primitive Church would find compensation for the loss of its Mother and Mistress, and that its tears and sorrow would be the means of obliging Her, during the space 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 confer upon them in her departure, as for their consolation She really did; for the maternal bosom of the most blessed Lady was moved to this extreme piety by the tears of those faithful, and for them and for all the rest of the Church She obtained from her divine Son new mercies and blessings of the Divinity during those last days of her life. In order not to deprive the Church of these new favors the Lord did not wish to take away from them unwarned his Blessed Mother, in whom they trusted for help, consolation, joy, relief in their necessities, the lightening of their labors, counsel in their doubts, aid in their afflictions, and all kinds of blessings.

709. At no time and on no occasion did those who sought the assistance of the great Mother of Grace find themselves frustrated, for She relieved and helped all who did not resist her loving and clement advances; but during the last two years of her life no one could count or estimate the wonders of beneficence She wrought upon the mortals of all classes who flocked in multitudes around Her. All the sick who presented themselves before Her were healed in body and soul, She converted many to the evangelical truth, and She drew innumerable souls from sin to the state of grace. She relieved the great miseries of the poor, dispensing what She possessed or what was offered to Her as gifts, and helped many others by miraculous means. She confirmed all in the fear of God, in the faith, and in obedience to the Church, and as Lady and only Treasurer of the riches of the Divinity and of the life and death of her divine Son She desired to throw open all her riches of liberal mercy before her death in order to enrich all her children in the holy Church. Above all She consoled them and encouraged them by her promise 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 jubilation 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 power to gain the fruit of this knowledge and of my teaching. I desire of thee that 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 was so certain of eternal reward as I; yet notwithstanding this certainty, having received notice of my death three years in advance, thou hast seen how I nevertheless disposed and prepared myself as a mortal and terrestrial creature with the holy fear which must be had regarding that hour. In this I acted as a creature subject to death and as the Teacher of the Church, giving an example to the rest of the faithful of what they are to do as mortals and as more in need of such preparation for avoiding eternal damnation.

711. Among the absurd fallacies introduced by the demon into the world, none is greater or more pernicious than the 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<sup>†</sup> who live without thought of death and who die forgetful of the unhappy lot which awaits them. So thou mayest not be seized by this human perversity, begin now to convince thyself thou must irrevocably die, thou hast received much and paid little, and the account shall be so much the more rigorous as the Judge has been more generous in the gifts and talents which He has given thee and the expectation He has of thee.<sup>‡</sup> 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 forgetfulness, intermission or carelessness.

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 from whom the time is slipping away for accomplishing such an arduous and laborious task as gaining eternal glory and happiness and avoiding everlasting death and punishment. This is to be the continual occupation of all thy spiritual and sensitive faculties 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 which they mix up with many reprehensible and detestable crimes. These cannot walk in the security and joy of interior hope, since their own conscience assails them and saddens them unless they are lost in forgetfulness and in the foolish delights of the flesh. In order to fill all thy works with perfection continue the exercises I have shown thee, as well as those thou art accustomed to do in preparation for death, along with all the prayers, prostrations and aspirations thou dost usually practice. Then mentally receive the Viaticum as if for departure from the earth to the other life, taking leave and forgetting all thou hast in this life. Enkindle thy heart with the desire of seeing thy God, and rise up to his presence where is to be thy future habitation and thy present conversation (Philip. 3:20).

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

† cf. Eccles. 1:15 [Ed.]

‡ cf. Lk. 12:48 [Ed.]