

CHAPTER XX

The Burial of the Sacred Body of Most Holy Mary, and what Happened at That Time.

747. So the Apostles, disciples, and many others of the faithful would not be too deeply oppressed by sorrow, and so some of them might not die of grief caused by the passing away of most holy Mary, it was necessary for the divine power to furnish them by a special providence with consolation, giving them particular courage by which their hearts were dilated in their incomparable affliction, for the suspicion their loss was not to be restored in the present life could not be alleviated; and since the privation of that Treasure could not be recompensed, and the communication and most sweet, charitable and kind conversation of their great Queen had stolen the heart and love of each one, all remained as it were without spirit or the breath of life, missing such protection and company. But the Lord, who well knew the cause of their just sorrow, assisted them in it, and by his divine virtue secretly animated them so they would not pine away, but rather attend to all that was proper for the burial of the sacred body and whatever else the occasion demanded.

748. Thus the holy Apostles, on whom this duty specially devolved, held a conference concerning the burial of the most sacred body of their Queen and Lady. They selected for that purpose a new sepulchre which had been prepared mysteriously by the providence of her divine Son. Since they remembered the deified body of their Master, according to the burial custom of the Jews, had been anointed with precious ointments and spices (Jn. 19:40) and wrapped in the sacred burial cloths and shroud in order to give it burial, it seemed best to them to do the same with the sacred body of his Blessed Mother, and they did not at that time think of doing otherwise. Hence they called the two maidens who had assisted the Queen during her life, and who had been designated as the heiresses of the treasure of her tunics (737), and instructed them to anoint the body of the Mother of God with highest reverence and modesty, and wrap it in the winding-sheet before it would be placed in the casket. With great veneration and fear the two maidens entered the oratory where the venerable deceased lay upon its couch, yet the splendor which vested it halted and dazzled them in such a manner they could neither see nor touch it, nor even ascertain in what particular place it rested.

749. The maidens left the oratory in greater fear and veneration than when they had entered, and in great excitement and wonder they told the Apostles what had happened. They inferred (not without inspiration from heaven) this sacred Ark of the Covenant must not be touched or treated in the common way.* Then St. Peter and St. John entered the oratory and perceived the splendor, and at the same time they heard the celestial music of the Angels, who were singing: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.* Others responded: *A Virgin before childbirth, during childbirth, and after childbirth.* From that time on many of the faithful of the primitive Church expressed their devotion toward most holy Mary by these words of heavenly praise, and from them by tradition the other words by which we confess the praises of Our Lady have been derived and confirmed by the holy Church. The two holy Apostles St. Peter and St. John were for a time lost in admiration at what they saw and heard of their Queen, and in order to decide what to do they fell on their knees, beseeching the Lord to make it known. Then they heard a voice which said: "Let the sacred body be neither uncovered nor touched."

* cf. II Kg. 6:6-7 [Ed.]

750. Having thus been informed of the will of God they brought a bier, and the splendor having diminished somewhat they approached the couch, and with their own hands reverently took hold of the tunic at the two ends, and without changing its posture they raised the sacred and virginal Treasure and placed it on the bier in the same position as it had occupied on the couch. They could easily do this because they felt no more weight than that of the tunic. Placed on the bier the brilliance moderated even more, and all of them could now perceive and know by sight the beauty of her virginal countenance and hands, the Lord ordaining it thus for the common consolation of all those present. As for the rest his omnipotence preserved that divine Treasure of his habitation, so neither in life nor in death anyone would behold any other part of her body except what is common in human conversation, namely her most inspiring countenance by which She had been known and her hands by which She had labored.

751. So great was the care and solicitude for his Blessed Mother that in this particular He used less precaution in regard to his own body than He did with that of the most pure Virgin. In her Immaculate Conception He made Her like to Himself; likewise at her birth, insofar as it did not take place in the common and natural manner of other men. He also preserved Her from impure temptations and thoughts. However, since He was a man and the Redeemer of the world by his Passion and Death, He permitted with his own body what He would not allow with hers as that of a woman, and hence He kept her virginal body entirely concealed; in fact, the most pure Lady during her life had Herself asked that no one be permitted to look upon it in death, which petition He fulfilled. Then the Apostles consulted further about her burial, and through their diligence and the devotion of the faithful, of whom there were many in Jerusalem, they collected a great number of candles, and with these occurred the wonder that all remained lit that day and the following two days, none of them becoming extinguished, or melted, or consumed in any way.

752. In order for this wonder and many others which his powerful arm wrought on this occasion to become better known to the world, the Lord himself inspired all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be present at the burial of his Blessed Mother, and thus there was scarcely any person in Jerusalem, even of the Jews or gentiles, who was not attracted by the novelty of this spectacle. The Apostles raised the sacred body and tabernacle of God, these new priests of the evangelical law carrying upon their shoulders the Propitiatory* of the divine oracles and favors, and in an orderly procession departed from the Cenacle in order to proceed from the city to the valley of Josaphat,† and this procession was visibly accompanied by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But besides this there was another invisible multitude of the courtiers of heaven, for at the head of the procession were the thousand Angels of the Queen continuing their celestial music which was heard by the Apostles, disciples, and many others, in which the Angels persevered for three continuous days with great sweetness and charm. Also many other thousands or legions of Angels had descended from heaven along with the ancient Fathers and Prophets, especially St. Joachim, St. Anne, St. Joseph, St. Elizabeth, and St. John the Baptist, with many other Saints who were sent from heaven by our Savior Jesus to assist at the exequies and burial of his Blessed Mother.

753. In the midst of this celestial and earthly accompaniment, visible and invisible, the Apostles bore along the sacred body, and on the way great miracles occurred which would take much time to relate. In particular all the sick with various diseases (and there were many who had come) were all perfectly cured; many of the possessed were freed, the demons not daring to

* cf. Josue 3:3 [Ed.]

† cf. Joel 3:2, 12 [Ed.]

wait until the sacred body came near the persons thus afflicted; and greater still were the miracles of conversion wrought among many Jews and gentiles, for on this occasion of the burial of most holy Mary were opened up the treasures of divine mercy, and thus many souls came to the knowledge of Christ our Savior and loudly confessed Him as the true God and Redeemer of the world, begging for Baptism. For many days thereafter the Apostles and disciples labored hard in catechizing and baptizing those who on that day had been converted to the holy faith. In carrying the sacred body the Apostles felt wonderful effects of divine light and consolation, in which the disciples shared according to their measure. That entire concourse of people, by the fragrance spread about, the music they heard, and other prodigious signs, was seized with astonishment, and they all proclaimed God as great and powerful in that creature; and in testimony of their acknowledgment they struck their breasts in sorrowful compunction.

754. When the procession came to the holy sepulchre in the valley of Josaphat the same two Apostles, St. Peter and St. John, who had moved the celestial Treasure from the couch onto the bier, with joyful reverence placed it in the sepulchre and covered it with a linen cloth, the hands of the Angels performing more of these last rites than the hands of the Apostles. They closed up the sepulchre with a large stone according to the custom at other burials. The celestial courtiers returned to heaven, while the thousand Guardian Angels of the Queen continued their watch, guarding the sacred body and keeping up the music as at her burial. The concourse of people lessened, and the holy Apostles and disciples, dissolved in tender tears, returned to the Cenacle. During an entire year the most sweet fragrance left by the body of the Queen persisted throughout the Cenacle, and in her oratory it lasted many years. This sanctuary remained a place of refuge for all those who were burdened with labor and difficulties; all found miraculous assistance in sickness as well as in hardships and necessities of other kinds. After these miracles had continued for some years the sins of Jerusalem and of its inhabitants drew upon this city among other punishments that of being deprived of this inestimable blessing.

755. Having again gathered in the Cenacle the Apostles came to the conclusion that some of them and some of the disciples should watch at the sepulchre of their Queen as long as they heard the celestial music, for all of them were wondering when the end of that miracle would be. Hence some of them attended to the affairs of the Church in catechizing and baptizing the new converts, and others immediately returned to the sepulchre, while all of them paid frequent visits to it during the next three days. St. Peter and St. John, however, were more zealous in their attendance, coming only a few times to the Cenacle and immediately returning to where was laid their Treasure and heart. Nor were the irrational creatures missing at the exequies of the Mistress of the universe, for as the sacred body arrived near the grave innumerable large and small birds gathered in the air, and many animals and wild beasts rushed from the mountains toward the sepulchre, the birds singing sorrowfully and the animals emitting groans and doleful sounds, and all of them showing grief in their movements as if mourning over the common loss. Only a few unbelieving Jews, more hardened than the rocks and more impious than the wild beasts, failed to show sorrow at the death of their Restoratrix, as they had also failed to do at the death of their Redeemer and Master.

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

756. My daughter, in commemorating my natural death and burial I desire thee also to die and be buried to all worldly things, and this is to be the fruit and the principal result of thy having known and written my Life. Many times in the course of thy writing I have manifested this to

thee as my desire and intimated it to thee as my will, lest thou waste this singular favor shown to thee by the Lord and by me. It is a particularly ugly offense when any Christian after dying to sin and being reborn in Christ by Baptism, and knowing the Lord died for him, relapses back into guilt, and this is a still greater wickedness in those souls who are called by special grace to be the most dear friends of the Lord, as is the case with those who for that very purpose dedicate and consecrate themselves to his closer service in religion, each one according to his condition and state.

757. In these souls the vices of the world cause horror in heaven itself, because the pride, presumption, haughtiness, lack of mortification, anger, covetousness, impurity of conscience, and other depravities in such souls force the Lord and the saints to withdraw their sight from this monstrosity and rouse them to greater wrath and offense than the same sins in other souls. Thus the Lord repudiates many who unjustly bear the name of being his spouses, and leaves them to their own bad counsels since they have so disloyally broken the fidelity promised to God and to me in their vocation and profession. But if all souls must fear this terrible infidelity, consider well, my daughter, what special abhorrence thou wouldst deserve in the sight of God if thou wert guilty of such disloyalty. It is time for thee to die to what is visible, for thy body to be buried in thy knowledge and abasement, and thy soul to be buried in the being of God. The days of thy life in this world are coming to an end, and I am the judge of this cause to execute in thee the separation of thy life from the world; thou dost not any more need to be seen with those who live in it, nor they with thee. To write my Life and to die to the world, both of these must be in thee one and the same thing, as many times I have exhorted thee and as thou hast repeatedly and expressly promised me with heartfelt tears.

758. I desire this to be the proof of my doctrine and of its efficacy; do not permit it to be discredited in thee to my dishonor, but let heaven and earth perceive the force of its truth and my example in thy works. For this thou must depend neither upon thy understanding nor upon thy will, and still less upon thy inclinations and passions, because all this for thee has come to an end. Thy law must be the will of the Lord and my own, and the dictates of obedience; and so thou mayest never be ignorant of what by these means is the most holy, perfect and agreeable, all thy direction has been provided for by the Lord himself, by me, by his Angels, and by those who govern thee. Do not allege ignorance, pusillanimity or weakness, nor much less, fear. Weigh thy obligation, estimate thy indebtedness, attend to the incessant and continual light; work with the grace thou receivest, so amid these and other benefits there shall be no cross so heavy nor death so bitter as shall not be deemed by thee very light and acceptable. In this death consists all thy good, and it must be thy delight; for if thou dost not complete this death to all things, in addition to thy path being scattered with thorns, thou shalt not reach the perfection thou dost desire nor the state to which the Lord calls thee.

759. If the world will not forget thee, do thou forget it; if it will not leave thee alone, remember thou hast forsaken it, and I have separated thee from it. If it follow thee, flee;* if it flatter thee, despise it; if it despise thee, suffer it; and if it seek thee, let it not find thee except insofar as shall be for the glory of the Most High. But for all the rest thou must no longer remember it, no more than the living remember the dead, and thou must leave it behind as the dead leave behind the living; and I desire thee to have no more interaction with the inhabitants of this age than the dead have with the living. If thou shalt ponder upon what depends on thy practice of this doctrine it shall not seem excessive to thee that I repeat it so often in the beginning, the middle, and at the

* cf. Jn. 6:15 [Ed.]

end of this History. Consider, my dearest, what persecutions the demon has fabricated against thee in secret through the world and its inhabitants under different pretexts and cloaks. If God has permitted them for the purpose of trying thee and for the exercise of his grace, it is proper as far as thou art concerned to take it as a lesson and a warning. Remember, great is the treasure which thou dost carry in a fragile vessel (II Cor. 4:7), and all hell conspires and rises up against thee. Thou livest in mortal flesh, surrounded and assailed by astute enemies. Be a spouse of Christ my divine Son, and I shall be thy Mother and Instructress. Recognize, then, thy necessity and thy weakness, and correspond with me as a dearest daughter and an obedient and perfect disciple in all things.