

CHAPTER XX

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

747. In order that the Apostles, disciples, and many others of the faithful would not remain oppressed, and so some of them might not die of sorrow caused by the Transition 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. Since the suspicion that their loss was not to be restored in the present life could not be alleviated, nor the privation of that Treasure be recompensed, and since the communication and most sweet, charitable and kind conversation of their great Queen had stolen the heart and love of each one, without Her all remained as it were without spirit or the breath of life, missing such protection and company. But the Lord, who knew the cause of their just sorrow, assisted them in it, and by his divine virtue secretly animated them so they would not languish but attend to all that was proper for the burial of the sacred body and all the rest the occasion demanded.

748. For this purpose the holy Apostles, on whom this duty principally devolved, then discussed how they could give proper burial of the most holy body of their Queen and Lady. They selected a new sepulchre in the valley of Josaphat which had been prepared mysteriously by the providence of her most holy Son. Remembering that the deified body of the Lord, according to the burial custom of the Jews, had been anointed with precious ointments and aromatical spices (Jn. 19:40), and wrapped in the sacred burial cloths and shroud, it seemed to them they should do the same with the sacred body of his most blessed Mother, and they did not at that time think of doing otherwise. In order to execute their intentions 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 these two were instructed to anoint the body of the Mother of God with highest reverence and modesty, and wrap it in the winding-sheet so it could 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 rapt in admiration at what they saw and heard regarding the sacred body of the Queen, and

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

in order to decide what to do they fell on their knees in prayer, beseeching the Lord to manifest his will. Then they heard a voice which said: "Let not the sacred body be uncovered or touched."

750. By this voice the Lord gave them understanding of the divine will; they then brought a bier, and the splendor having somewhat moderated they approached the couch, and the same two Apostles with admirable reverence took hold of the tunic at the two ends, and without disturbing it in any way they raised the sacred and virginal Treasure and placed it on the bier in the same posture as it had occupied on the couch. They could easily do this because they felt no weight, nor did they perceive more than when they touched the tunic, which was nearly imperceptible. 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 unavoidable in human conversation, namely her most modest countenance by which She had been known and her hands by which She had labored.

751. So great was the attention and care for the modesty of his most blessed Mother that in this regard He was not as zealous with his own deified body as He was with that of the most pure Virgin. In her Immaculate Conception, exempt from guilt, He made Her like to Himself; likewise at her birth, insofar as She did not sensibly perceive it* in the common and natural manner of other infants. He also preserved and protected Her from impure temptations and thoughts. Yet by concealing her virginal body He permitted with his own body what He would not allow with hers as that of a woman, since He was a man and the Redeemer of the world by his Passion and Death; in fact, the most pure Lady during her life had asked Him to grant this favor, that at her death no one be permitted to look upon her body, which 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 a miracle: All of them 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 moved all the inhabitants of the city to gather at the burial of his most holy Mother, and thus there was scarcely any person in Jerusalem, even of the Jews or gentiles, who did not come to witness the novelty of this spectacle. The Apostles raised the sacred body, the tabernacle of God, and as the new priests of the evangelical law they carried upon their shoulders† the Propitiatory of the divine oracles and favors, and in an orderly procession they departed from the Cenacle in order to proceed from the city to the valley of Josaphat,△ the inhabitants of Jerusalem being the visible accompaniment. Yet in addition to this there was another invisible multitude consisting 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 gentleness. Many other thousands or legions of Angels had also descended from heaven along with the ancient Fathers and Prophets, especially St. Joachim, St. Anne, St. Joseph, St. Elizabeth, and St. John the Baptist,

* cf. *Conception* 325 [Ed.]

† cf. Josue 3:3 [Ed.]

△ Believed to be the place where the nations will be gathered on Judgment Day. cf. Joel 3:12; *Summa*, Suppl., Q.88, Art.4.

with many other Saints who were sent from heaven by our Savior Jesus to assist at the exequies and burial of his most blessed Mother.

753. This entire accompaniment both earthly and celestial, visible and invisible, proceeded with the sacred body, and on the way great miracles occurred, which would necessarily detain me too much to relate them. 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 wait until the sacred body came near the persons thus afflicted; and greater still were the wonders of conversion which occurred 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 Good 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 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 as it were astonished, 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 fortunate sepulchre in the valley of Josaphat, the same two Apostles, St. Peter and St. John, who had lifted the celestial Treasure from the couch onto the bier, with the same reverence and ease 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 stone slab according to the custom at other burials. The courtiers of heaven returned to it, while the thousand Guardian Angels of the Queen remained to continue their watch over the sacred body with the same music as at her burial. The concourse of people dispersed, and the holy Apostles and disciples with 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. That sanctuary remained a house of refuge for all those burdened with labors and necessities who sought their remedy in it, since all found miraculous assistance in sickness as well as in other tribulations and human calamities. After these wonders had continued for some years the sins of the inhabitants of Jerusalem drew upon this city, among other punishments, that of being deprived of this inestimable benefit.

755. In the Cenacle the Apostles determined that some of them and some of the disciples should watch at the holy sepulchre of their Queen while the celestial music persisted, for all of them were wondering when that miracle would end. With that agreement 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 frequently visited it during those three days. Yet St. Peter and St. John were more continuous in their attendance, for though they went to the Cenacle a few times they immediately returned to where their Treasure and their heart was. Nor were the irrational animals missing at the exequies of the common Lady of all, for as the sacred body arrived near the sepulchre innumerable large and small birds gathered in the air, and many animals and wild beasts left the mountains, rushing with great speed toward the sepulchre. The birds sang sorrowfully and the animals emitted groans and bellows, and all of them displaying sorrowful movements as if feeling the common loss and manifesting their bitterness. Only some incredulous Jews, more hardened than the rocks and more cruel than the wild beasts, failed to show sorrow at the death of their Remediatrice, 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, the memory of my natural death and the burial of my sacred body I desire to be linked to thy civil death* and burial, which must be the fruit and primary effect of 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 benefit thou hast received by the condescension shown by the Lord and by me. It is abhorrent when any Christian, after dying to sin and being reborn in Christ by Baptism, and knowing that His Majesty died for him, relapses back into guilt;† and it is even more hideous in those souls who by special grace are chosen and called to be the most dear friends of the Lord, as are those who for this very purpose dedicate and consecrate themselves to his greater service in religion, each one according to his condition and state.

757. In these souls the vices of the world pierce the vault of heaven itself with horror, because the pride, presumption, haughtiness, lack of mortification, anger, covetousness, impurity of conscience, and other depravities force the Lord and the saints to withdraw their sight from this monstrosity and rouse them to greater indignation and offense than the same sins in other souls. Thus the Lord repudiates many who unjustly bear the name of being his spouses, and He leaves them in the hands of their own bad counsels, since being disloyal they have broken the covenant of fidelity promised to God and to me in their vocation and profession. Yet if all souls must fear this wretchedness in order not to commit such terrible betrayal, take notice and consider, my daughter, what abhorrence thou wouldst deserve in the sight of God if thou wert guilty of such a crime. 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 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 this age; 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 I have many times exhorted thee and as thou hast promised me, repeatedly placing these promises in my hands with heartfelt tears.

758. I desire this to be the proof of my doctrine and the testimony of its efficacy; do not permit it to be discredited in thee to my dishonor, but let heaven and earth understand the force of my truthfulness and my example verified in thy operations. For this thou must not avail thyself of thy speech or thy will, and still less thy inclinations and passions, since all this for thee has come to an end. Thy law must be the will of the Lord and mine, and obedience to thy superiors; and so by these means thou mayest never be ignorant of what is the most holy, perfect and agreeable, all thy direction has been provided for thee by the Lord himself, by me, by his Angels, and by those who govern thee. Do not allege ignorance, timidity or weakness, and much less, cowardice. Ponder thy obligation, consider thy debt, attend to the incessant and continual light; work with the grace thou receivest, so with all these gifts and other benefits there shall be no cross so heavy for thee, nor death so bitter, as shall not be very light and agreeable. 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.

* cf. *Intro. to Coronation* par. 11 [Ed.]

† cf. II Peter 2:20-22 [Ed.]

759. If the world will not forget thee, do thou forget it; if it will not leave thee, remember thou hast left it, and I have removed thee from it. If it pursues thee, flee;* if it flatters thee, despise it; if it despises thee, suffer it; and if it seeks thee, let it not find thee except insofar as the Omnipotent be glorified in thee. But for all the rest thou must remember it no more than the living remember the dead; thou must forget it as the dead forget the living; and I desire thee to have no more interaction with the inhabitants of this age than the dead have with the living. It shall not seem excessive to thee that I repeat this doctrine so often in the beginning, the middle, and at the end of this History if thou shalt ponder how important it is for thee to practice it. Take notice, my dearest, what unheard and unseen persecutions the demon has fabricated against thee through the world and its inhabitants under different pretexts and cloaks. If God has permitted them in order to test thee and for the exercise of his grace, it is incumbent and reasonable on thy part to take it as an understood lesson and a warning, acknowledging thy treasure is great 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 most holy Son, and I shall be thy Mother and Teacher. Hence recognize thy necessity and weakness, and correspond with me as a dearest daughter and a disciple obedient and perfect in all things.

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