

CHAPTER X

The Memory and Exercises of the Passion Practiced by Most Holy Mary; the Veneration with which She Received Holy Communion; and Other Works of Her Most Perfect Life.

575. The great Queen of heaven, without ever failing in her attention to the exterior government of the Church (as I have just now written), practiced in secret other exercises and good works by which She merited innumerable gifts and blessings from the Most High for the common benefit of all the faithful, as well as for myriads of particular souls in furtherance of their salvation. As far as I can in these last chapters I shall for our instruction and for the admiration and glory of this most blessed Mother write of these hidden and unknown works. First of all I shall state that in addition to the many privileges which the great Queen of heaven enjoyed, She constantly kept present in her memory the doings and mysteries of the life of her divine Son, for besides the abstractive vision by which She in these last years continually saw the Divinity and knew all things, the Lord had from her Conception conceded to Her the privilege of never forgetting what She had once known or understood, for in this regard She enjoyed the privilege of an angel as I have stated in the first Part (*Con.* 535).

576. I also stated in the second Part, in writing of the Passion, that the heavenly Mother felt in her most pure body and soul all the pains of the torments which our Savior Jesus accepted and suffered (*Tran.* 553, 563, 576, 630), and hence none of them were hidden to Her, nor did She cease to suffer the Passion with the Lord himself. All the images or impressions of the Passion remained imprinted in her interior just as She had received them, for She had made this request of her Lord. These were not blotted out by the vision of the Divinity as were the other sensible images, as stated above (540); on the contrary, they were augmented by God so in her compassion the great Lady could miraculously rejoice in her abstractive vision and at the same time feel those pains as She desired for the time in which She was still to live in mortal flesh, in order to dedicate Herself entirely to this exercise as far as her own will was concerned. She would not permit her most faithful and ardent love to live without suffering with her sweetest Son after She had seen and accompanied Him in his Passion. And though His Majesty had given Her such rare benefits and favors, as can be understood from this entire discourse, yet these gifts were all tokens and demonstrations of the reciprocal love of her most holy Son, who in our way of speaking could not contain Himself or refrain from dealing with his most pure Mother as the God of love, omnipotent, and rich in infinite mercies. Yet the most prudent Virgin did not ask for them or seek them, because her sole desire was to be crucified with Christ and continue within Herself his sorrows and renew his Passion, and without this it seemed to Her useless and idle to live in passible flesh.

577. Hence She ordered all her occupations in such a manner that She could at all times preserve in her Heart the image of her divine Son afflicted, outraged, wounded and disfigured by the torments of his Passion, and within Herself She beheld this image as in a most clear mirror. She heard the injuries, outrages, affronts and blasphemies against Him, with all the circumstances of time and place, and She beheld the whole Passion as in one living and penetrating vista. And though by this sorrowful spectacle She continued throughout each passing day in heroic acts of virtue, and felt great sorrow and compassion, nevertheless her most prudent love did not content itself with these exercises. During determined hours and times in which She was alone She engaged in other exercises with her holy Angels, especially with those I have mentioned in the first Part as bearing the tokens or escutcheons of the instruments of the Passion

(*Con.* 207, 372). With these in the first place, and then with the other Angels, She arranged with their help and assistance the following exercises.

578. For each type of the wounds and sufferings which Christ our Savior suffered She recited special prayers and accolades in order to give them special adoration and worship. For the injurious words of affront and contempt spoken by the Jews and the other enemies of Christ during his most holy life and Passion, whether spoken out of envy for his miracles, or out of vengeance and rage, for each of these injuries and blasphemies She composed special hymns of veneration and honor to make reparation for their attempts at diminishing it. For the insulting gestures, mockeries, and scorn She practiced most profound humiliations, genuflections and prostrations, and in this manner She sought continually to make up for the affronts and injuries heaped upon her divine Son in his life and his Passion, confessing his divinity, humanity, sanctity, miracles, works and doctrine. For all of these She gave Him glory and magnificence, and the holy Angels joined Her in all of these exercises and corresponded with Her, full of admiration at such wisdom, fidelity and love united in a mere creature.

579. Even if most holy Mary during her whole life had engaged in no other occupation than these exercises She would have accomplished and merited more than all the saints in all they have done or suffered for God. By the force of love her sorrow in these exercises was equal to martyrdom many times over, and many times She would have died in them if the divine power had not sustained her life for still greater merit and glory. And if, as is true, in her ineffable charity She offered all of these works for the Church, let us consider the debt which her children the faithful owe to this Mother of clemency for thus increasing the treasure by which we miserable children of Eve are helped. And so our meditation will not be so cowardly or lukewarm, I will say the effects of her contemplations were often astounding. Many times She wept tears of blood which covered her whole face; at other times in her agony She was not only bathed in perspiration but in a bloody sweat, running from Her even to the ground. What is more, sometimes her Heart was wrenched from its natural position by the violence of her grief, and when She was in such extremes her divine Son came from heaven, furnishing Her with new strength and life to soothe her sorrow and heal the wounds caused by love of Him, and thus by such assistance and comfort She could continue the exercises of her compassion.

580. The Lord exempted Her from these affections and sentiments only on the days on which She commemorated the mystery of his Resurrection, as I shall narrate later on (674), so the effects would correspond with their cause. Neither were any of these sorrows and pains compatible with the favors which overflowed in their effects upon her virginal body, because this type of joy excluded pain. Yet She never lost sight of the Lord in his Passion, and by this vision She felt other effects of her compassion by uniting it with gratitude for what her most holy Son suffered, in such a manner that into these benefits She enjoyed there always entered the Passion of the Lord in order to temper in a certain manner by this bitterness the sweetness of the other gifts. She also arranged, with the permission of St. John the Evangelist, to withdraw in order to commemorate the death and burial of her most holy Son on the Friday of each week, and on that day She did not leave her oratory. On those days St. John remained in the Cenacle to receive those who called upon Her and allowed none to interrupt Her, and whenever he could not attend to this duty it was performed by some other disciple. Most holy Mary retired for this exercise at five o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday and did not reappear until around midday of Sunday. During these three days, so no important matter pertaining to the government of the Church would be neglected, the great Lady appointed one of her Angels to assume her shape and briefly

dispatch what would suffer no delay, so provident and attentive was She in all the affairs of charity touching her children and domestics.

581. To describe or comprehend what happened with the divine Mother during the exercises of these three days can never be within our capacity; the Lord alone, who was the Author of them, shall one day manifest it to us in the light of the saints; moreover, I am unable to describe what I myself have come to know of it. I can only say that beginning with the washing of the feet most holy Mary commemorated all the mysteries up to that of the Resurrection, and in each hour and moment She renewed in Herself all the movements, actions, works and sufferings as they had happened in her divine Son. She repeated the same prayers and petitions as He himself had made, and as we have seen described in their place (*Tran.* 451, 473, 501). Anew the most pure Mother felt in her virginal body all the pains endured by Christ our Savior. She carried the cross and placed Herself upon it. To summarize it all, I shall say that as long as She lived the entire Passion of her most holy Son was renewed in Her each week. Through this exercise She received from the Lord great favors and benefits for those devoted to his most holy Passion, and the great Lady as the powerful Queen has promised to all such souls special assistance and participation in the treasures of the Passion, for She desired from her inmost Heart for the Church to continue and preserve its commemoration. In virtue of her desires and prayers the Lord ordained that afterwards many persons in the holy Church would follow these exercises of the Passion in imitation of his most blessed Mother, who was the first one to teach and practice such an exalted profession.

582. In these exercises the great Queen sought especially to celebrate the institution of the most Blessed Sacrament by new hymns of praise, thanksgiving, and fervent love. She was solicitous to invite for this purpose her own Angels and many others from the empyrean heaven in order to assist and accompany Her in these praises of the Lord. And it was a wonder worthy of his omnipotence that since the heavenly Mistress and Mother kept in her Heart Christ himself sacramentally present,* and the sacred species were preserved there from one Communion to the next (as I said above [*Tran.* 486; *Cor.* 118ff.]), His Majesty sent multitudes of Angels from on high in order to gaze upon that prodigy in his most holy Mother and give Him glory and praise for the effects which his sacramental presence produced in that creature more pure and holy than the Angels and Seraphim themselves, the like of which they had not seen or would ever see in all the rest of creation.

583. It was of no less admiration for them (just as it ought to be for us) that although the great Queen disposed Herself in order to worthily preserve Christ sacramentally in her Heart, nevertheless in order to receive Him anew in Holy Communion, which was nearly every day except those on which She did not leave her oratory, She disposed and prepared Herself by new fervent exercises, works and devotions which She reserved for this preparation. She first offered up for this purpose her weekly exercises of the Passion, and in addition to this whenever She retired at nightfall before the day of Communion She began other exercises, such as prostrations upon the floor in the form of a cross, and other genuflections and prayers, adoring the immutable essence of God. She asked permission of the Lord to speak to Him, and receiving it She supplicated Him with profound humility that, despite her earthly lowliness, He permit Her to receive his most holy Son sacramentally in Holy Communion, and that He oblige Himself to grant this benefit by his own infinite goodness and the charity of the incarnate God himself in remaining sacramentally present in the holy Church. She offered to Him his own Passion and

* cf. Cant. 1:12 [Ed.]

Death, the worthiness with which He had received Himself in Holy Communion, the union of his human nature with the divine in his Person of Jesus Christ, all of his works from the moment of his Incarnation in her own virginal womb, all the sanctity and purity of the angelic nature and its works, and all of the good works of the just in the past, present and future.

584. Then She made most intense acts of humility, professing Herself but dust and ashes in comparison with the infinite being of God, to which the highest creatures are so inferior and unequal. In the contemplation of who She was to receive sacramentally She was so affected and so deeply moved it is impossible to describe it in words, for She raised Herself and transcended above the choirs of Seraphim and Cherubim; and since in her own estimation She considered Herself the lowest of all creatures, She called upon her Guardian Angels and upon all the other Angels, asking them with incomparable humility to supplicate the Lord to dispose and prepare Her for receiving Him worthily, since She was but an inferior and earthly creature. The holy Angels, obeying Her in joyful admiration, assisted and accompanied Her in these petitions, in which She persevered for the greater part of the night preceding her Communion.

585. Since the wisdom of the great Queen, although finite in itself, is for us incomprehensible, we can never worthily understand to what height rose her virtues and works of love on these occasions, but they were often of such a kind as to oblige the Lord to respond by a personal visit in which He gave Her to understand with what pleasure He came to dwell sacramentally in her Heart and renew in Her the pledges of his infinite love. When the hour of her Communion arrived She first heard Mass, usually celebrated by the Evangelist. In these Masses, though the Epistles and Gospels were not read, being not yet written, the consecration was always the same as now, and to it were added other rites and ceremonies with many psalms and orations. At the end of Mass the heavenly Mother approached, making three most profound genuflections, and all inflamed She received her Son himself sacramentally, to whom in her virginal womb She had given that most sacred humanity, receiving Him into her bosom and most pure Heart. Having received Communion She retired, and unless some very urgent need of her fellowmen demanded otherwise, remained alone for three hours. During these hours the Evangelist was often privileged to see rays of light darting forth from Her as from the sun.

586. The prudent Mother also provided that for the celebration of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass the Apostles and priests be clothed in ornate and mysterious vestments, different from those they wore in ordinary life. Hence with her own hands She provided sacerdotal vestments and ornaments for its celebration, thus originating the ceremonious observances in the Church. Although these vestments were not quite of the same form as now, yet they were not materially different in appearance from those which in the course of time came into use in the Roman Church. The material was more similar, for She made them of linen and rich silks purchased with the alms and presents made to Her. Whenever She worked on these vestments, sewing or fitting them, She remained on her knees or on her feet, and She would not entrust them to other sacristans than the Angels, who assisted and helped Her in all of these matters. In this way She kept these vestments and the other items for the service of the altar in incredible order and cleanliness, and from such hands as hers all came forth with a celestial fragrance which enkindled the spirit of the ministers.

587. From many kingdoms and provinces where the Apostles were preaching numbers of converts came to Jerusalem in order to visit and converse with the Mother of the Redeemer of the world, and they offered Her rich gifts. Among others four sovereign princes, who were royal governors of provinces, visited Her and brought many valuable presents which they placed at her disposal for her own use and for the Apostles and disciples. The great Lady answered that She

was poor like her Son, and the Apostles likewise were poor in imitation of their Master, and thus these riches were not appropriate to the life they professed. They begged Her to console them by accepting their gifts for the poor or for divine worship. Due to their persistent requests She received part of what they offered, and from some of the rich fabrics She made coverings for the altar, while the rest She distributed among the indigent and the infirmaries, for She was accustomed to visit such places and often served and washed the poor with her own hands, performing such services, as well as distributing the alms, on her knees. Whenever it was possible She consoled the needy and assisted the sick in their last agony, nor did She ever rest from works of charity, either actually engaging in them or pleading and praying for others in her retirement.

588. She gave salutary advice to those princes or kings at their visit, admonishing them and instructing them in regard to the good government of their provinces. She charged them to watch over the equitable administration of justice without acceptance of persons; to consider themselves mortal men as all the rest; to fear the supreme Judge, by whom all are to be judged according to their own works; and above all to further the exaltation of the name of Christ and the propagation and security of the holy faith, in which alone the governments and monarchies can be solidly established,* for without this government is but a lamentable and most unhappy slavery of the demons which is permitted by the hidden judgments of God for the punishment of both those who govern and who are governed. The fortunate princes promised to execute all of her instructions faithfully, and they afterwards remained in communication with the heavenly Queen through letters and other correspondence. The same happened to each one in particular who visited Her, for all of them left her presence more ardent in virtue, full of light, joy, and inexplicable consolation. Many upon seeing Her who were as yet unbelievers loudly professed their belief in the true God, for they were unable to restrain the interior forces awakened by the presence of his most blessed Mother.

589. That all of this happened must not be surprising, since this great Lady was a most efficacious instrument of the power of God and of his grace for mortals. Not only were her words so full of wisdom, admirable and convincing, communicating new light, but on her lips grace was diffused (Ps. 44:3) in order to communicate it to men. She likewise attracted hearts and renewed them by the gracefulness and varied beauty of her countenance, the affable majesty of her person, the modesty of her most sincere demeanor, grave yet pleasing, and by the hidden virtue which went out from Her (like that of her divine Son recorded by the Evangelist [Lk. 6:19]). Some were astonished, some burst out in tears, and others broke forth in remarkable exclamations and praise, confessing as great the God of the Christians, who had formed such a creature. Truly could they testify to what some Saints said of Her, that Mary was a divine prodigy of consummate sanctity.† Let Her be eternally known and praised through all generations (Lk. 1:48) as the true Mother of God, who made Her so attractive to human eyes, such a sweet Mother to sinners, and so amiable to angels and men.

590. During these last years the Queen ate or slept very little, and even this only because St. John asked Her to rest for at least a small portion of the night. But this sleep was only a slight suspension of the senses, lasting no longer than half an hour, during which, in the manner above described, She did not lose the vision of the Divinity (535). Her food was a few mouthfuls of ordinary bread and sometimes a little fish, taken at the request of the Evangelist and in order to

* cf. Mt. 7:24-27 [Ed.]

† St. Ignatius Martyr in epist. I; St. Ephrem orat. in laud. Virg.; etc. [Most Rev. Samaniego]

keep him company, for in this as in other privileges St. John was thus fortunate, not only eating with Her from the same table but having the food prepared for him by the great Queen and administered to him as from a mother to her son, and moreover being obeyed by Her as a priest and a substitute of Christ. Well could the great Queen live without even this sleep or nourishment, which seemed more a ceremony than the sustenance of life; yet still She ate and slept, not from necessity but in order to practice obedience and humility, and thus pay some tribute to human nature, for in all things She was most prudent.

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

591. My daughter, from the whole discourse of my life mortals shall know the remembrance and gratitude I had for the works of human Redemption and for the Passion and Death of my most holy Son, especially after He offered Himself on the Cross for the eternal salvation of men. Yet in this chapter in particular I have desired to give thee notice of the care and repeated exercises by which I renewed in myself not only the memory but the sorrows of the Passion, so by this knowledge the monstrous forgetfulness of redeemed man of this incomprehensible benefit shall remain reprehended and confounded. O how serious, how abhorrent and dangerous is this ingratitude of men! Forgetfulness is a clear indication of contempt; for what is highly esteemed is not so easily forgotten. Hence what reason or judgment can there be for men to despise and forget the eternal good they have received? the love with which the eternal Father surrendered his onlybegotten Son to death (Jn. 3:16)? the charity and patience with which his and my Son endured it for them? The insensible earth responds favorably to the one who cultivates and benefits it. Wild animals are tamed and domesticated, responding to the benefit they receive. Men among themselves consider themselves obligated to their benefactors; and when this gratitude is lacking they resent it, condemn it, and consider it a great offense.

592. Thus what reason is there that only toward their God and Redeemer they are ungrateful, and forget what He suffered in order to rescue them from their eternal condemnation? And in addition to this evil return they complain if He does not come to their aid in everything they want. So they may understand what this ingratitude mounts against them, I inform thee, my daughter, that Lucifer and his demons, recognizing this ingratitude and forgetfulness in so many souls, draw the following conclusion and say to each other: This soul does not remember or appreciate the benefit which God has provided in redeeming it; hence we can be sure that one who is so oblivious in this forgetfulness will also fail to understand our deceits. Let us come together to tempt and destroy it, since it lacks the greatest defense against us. And by long experience which has proven this conclusion to be almost infallible, they zealously strive to erase from the memory of men the Redemption and Death of Christ, and to make it abhorrent to discuss it and preach it; and they have succeeded to a great extent to the deplorable ruin of souls. On the contrary, they distrust and fear tempting those who have accustomed themselves to meditating upon and remembering the Passion; for from this recollection the demons feel against them a force and power which often prevents them from approaching those who with devotion renew in their memory these mysteries.

593. Hence I desire thee, my dearest, not to detach from thy heart and mind this *bundle of myrrh* (Cant. 1:12), and to imitate me with all thy strength in the memory and exercises which I performed in order to imitate my most holy Son in his sufferings, and to make reparation for the affronts which his divine Person received by the injuries and blasphemies of the enemies who

crucified Him. Strive while thou art in the world to compensate Him for the disgraceful ingratitude and forgetfulness of mortals. And in order to do this as I desire of thee, never interrupt the memory of Christ crucified, afflicted and blasphemed. Persevere in the exercises of the Passion, never omitting them unless obedience or a just cause prevents thee; for if thou imitate me in this I shall make thee a participant in the effects which I felt in these works.

594. In order to prepare thyself each day for Holy Communion, apply whatever thou dost perform in these exercises; then imitate me in the other works and diligence which thou hast come to know of me, considering that if I, the Mother of the Lord himself whom I was to receive, did not judge myself worthy of Holy Communion, and by so many means sought the purity worthy for such an exalted Sacrament, what must thou do as poor and subject to so many miseries of imperfections and sins? Purify the temple of thy interior, examining it by the divine light and adorning it with extraordinary virtues, since it is the eternal God whom thou dost receive; and only He himself was worthy to receive Himself sacramentally. Invoke the intercession of the Angels and Saints in order to obtain grace from His Majesty. And above all I urge thee to call upon me and beseech me for this benefit; for I inform thee I am the special Advocate and Protectress of those who desire to approach Holy Communion with great purity. When for this benefit they invoke me, I present myself before the throne of the Most High in heaven, and as one who knows the disposition required for the place where God himself is to enter I beseech his favor and grace for those who thus desire to receive Him sacramentally. And though I am in heaven, I have not lost this solicitude and zeal for his glory which with such diligence I sought while on earth. Then, after my intercession, ask the intercession of the Angels, who also are solicitous that souls approach the Holy Eucharist with great devotion and purity.