

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 Blessed 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 kind of the wounds and sufferings of Christ our Savior She recited special prayers and salutations 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 personal injuries 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 doctrines. 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 how much we are indebted to Her as faithful children for thus increasing the treasures of help which She left at our disposal, we the unfortunate children of Eve. And in order for our meditation to not be so cowardly and 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 in 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. But 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 disturb 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 take 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 blessings 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 not less wonderful to them (just as it ought to be to us) to see though the great Queen was worthy of preserving within Herself the sacred species as in a tabernacle, She was so solicitous in preparing Herself anew by the most fervent exercises and devotions every time She was again to receive Holy Communion, and this She did nearly every day except on those in which She remained in her oratory. 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 in the form of a cross, genuflections, prayers, and adorations of the immutable essence of God. She asked permission of the Lord to speak to Him and to permit Her, in spite of her earthly lowliness, to partake of his Son in the holy Sacrament; She appealed to his infinite bounty and to his love toward the Church in thus remaining sacramentally present as a reason She might be favored with this blessing. She offered to Him his own Passion and Death, the worthiness with which He had received Himself in Holy Communion, the union of his human nature with the divine, all of his works from the moment of

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

his Incarnation in her own virginal womb, all the sanctity and purity of the angelic nature and its works, and all of the past, present and future good works of the just throughout all ages.

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, at the same time offering 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 it She wove rich vestments 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 faithfully to execute all of her instructions, 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 unspeakable 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 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 remained speechless in admiration, some broke forth in tears, and others in exclamations of wonder and praise, confessing that great is 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 this little 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 lost not 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 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

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

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

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, but She partook of them 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 nMARY, QUEEN OF THE ANGELS.

591. My daughter, through the whole course of my life it is evident how gratefully I kept in mind the works of human Redemption, and of the Passion and Death of my divine Son, especially after I had actually seen Him sacrificed on the Cross for the eternal salvation of men. But in this chapter particularly I have desired to draw thy attention to the care and the continual exercises by which I renewed in myself not only the remembrance but the sufferings of the Passion. I desire the knowledge of this to cause men to feel reproach and confusion at their monstrous forgetfulness of the incomprehensible benefit of the Redemption. O what a shameful, what a horrible and dangerous ingratitude of men is this! Forgetfulness is a clear proof of contempt, for one does not forget so easily what one holds dear. What reason or excuse then can there be for men to forget the eternal blessings they have received? Or the love with which the eternal Father has delivered over to death his onlybegotten Son (Jn. 3:16)? Or the charity and patience with which his and my Son accepted it for them? The insensible earth responds to the efforts of those who cultivate it; wild beasts become tame and domesticated in return for benefits; and men among themselves are beholden to their benefactors, and when such grateful feelings are not forthcoming they resent it, condemn it, and call it a great offense.

592. What then is the reason that only toward their God and Redeemer they are ungrateful and forget what He suffered in order to rescue them from eternal damnation? And in addition to this very evil return they complain of not receiving his assistance as they desire. So they may understand what fearful guilt they load upon themselves by their ingratitude I shall remind thee, my daughter, that Lucifer and his demons, seeing so many souls oblivious of the sufferings of Christ, draw the following conclusions and say of such souls: "This soul does not remember or hold in esteem the benefit which God has provided in redeeming it, and we are certain of gaining it over to our side, for the soul who is so foolish as not to remember such a blessing will certainly not detect our wiles. Let us proceed to tempt and destroy it, since it is deprived of its strongest defense." Having in their large experience found their reasoning on this point to be almost infallible, they zealously seek to blot out the memory of the Passion and Death of Christ, and excite contempt for the preaching or discussion regarding it among men; and they have succeeded to a great extent, causing dreadful damage to souls. On the other hand they are wary and fearful of tempting those who have accustomed themselves to meditating upon and remembering the sufferings of Christ, for from this source they feel issuing against them a force and influence which often prevents them from approaching those who thus piously cherish the memory of the Passion.

593. Hence I desire thee, my dearest, not to detach from thy bosom and heart this bouquet of myrrh (Cant. 1:12), and to imitate me closely in the contemplation and the exercises of the Passion, for thus must thou keep alive the memory of the sufferings of my divine Son and satisfy for the injuries and blasphemies inflicted upon his divine Person by his enemies who crucified Him. Do thou seek as long as thou shalt be upon the earth to compensate for the 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 thy exercises, never omitting them except in obedience or in a just cause, for if thou imitate me in this I shall make thee a participant in the effects I myself felt.

594. In order to dispose thyself day by day for Holy Communion thou shouldst apply whatever thou dost perform in these exercises; imitate also the other works and practices which thou hast come to know of me. If I, the Mother of Him whom I was to receive, deemed myself unworthy of Communion, and by so many means sought the purity necessary for such an exalted Sacrament, what must thou do, so poor and subject to so many miseries and imperfections? Purify the temple of thy interior, scrutinizing it by the divine light and adorning it with great 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 to obtain grace from the Lord. Above all I exhort thee to call upon me and ask me to help thee, for I inform thee I am the special Advocate and Protectress of those who desire to attain great purity for receiving Holy Communion. Whenever they invoke me for this purpose I present myself before the throne of the Most High, and as one well knowing the disposition required for harboring God himself I ask his favor and grace for those who are about to receive Him in the Blessed Sacrament, for I have not lost in heaven the solicitude and zeal which I exhibited upon earth. Having asked me, proceed also to ask the intercession of the angels, for they too are very anxious to see souls approach the Holy Eucharist with great devotion and purity.