

PART I

Of the Life and Sacraments of the Queen of Heaven; what the Most High Worked in This Pure Creature from Her Immaculate Conception until the Word was Made Flesh in Her Virginal Womb, the Favors She Received in These First Fifteen Years, and How Far She Advanced by Divine Grace.

BOOK ONE

FIRST OF PART I

Contains the Predestination of Mary Most Holy; Her Immaculate Conception and Nativity; and Her Occupations and Exercises until Her Presentation in the Temple.

CHAPTER I

Two Particular Visions which the Lord Showed to My Soul, and Other Enlightenments and Mysteries which Compelled Me to Withdraw from Earthly Things, and which Raised My Spirit and Habitation Above the Earth.

1. I confess to Thee and magnify Thee, most high King, for by thy condescension and exalted majesty Thou hast hidden these high mysteries from the wise and the masters, and hast revealed them to me thy slave, the smallest and most useless one of thy Church (Mt. 11:25), so Thou mayest be the more admired as the omnipotent Author of this work in proportion as its instrument is most vile and weak.

2. This most high Lord (after the long resistances that I have mentioned and many disordered fears, and great delays born of my cowardice, by the knowledge of this immense sea of wonders upon which I am embarking, and fearful of drowning myself in it) gave me to feel a power from on high, strong, gentle, efficacious and sweet (Wis. 8:1); a light that enlightens the understanding, subdues the rebellious will, calming, rectifying, governing, and calling to the republic of the interior and exterior senses, and surrendering the whole creature to the pleasure and will of the Most High, and seeking in all things his glory and honor alone. Being thus prepared, I heard a voice from the Almighty which called me and raised me up towards Him, exalting my dwelling place on high (Ecclus. 51:13) and strengthening me against the lions who hungrily roared about me in order to snatch my soul (Ib. 4) from the enjoyment of great blessings in the boundless mysteries of this tabernacle and holy City of God. Surrounded by the sorrows of death and perdition (Ps. 17:5), and beset by the flames of this Sodom and Babylon in which we live, it liberated me from the portals of sorrow (Ecclus. 51:5) into which I was enticed to enter. My enemies, forming visions of fallacious and deceitful delights for the misleading of my senses and the capture of them by pretended pleasures, set their allurements about me so I might blindly turn toward these flames and be consumed by them. But from all these snares laid for my footsteps (Ps. 56:7; 24:15) the Most High has delivered me, elevating my spirit and teaching me by the most efficacious admonitions the way of perfection. He invited me to a life spiritualized and angelic, and obliged me to live so cautiously that in the midst of the furnace the fire touched me not (Ecclus. 51:6).^{*} He often liberated me from the impure tongue (Ib. 7) when it sought to communicate to me its earthly fables (Ps. 118:85). His Majesty invited me to rise from the dust and littleness of the law of sin, to resist the defections of nature infected by sin and restrain its disorders, combating them by his enlightening inspirations and raising myself above myself (Lam. 3:28). He called me repeatedly, sometimes by the power of his omnipotence, sometimes

^{*} cf. also Dan. 3:24 [Ed.]

with the correction of a Father, and at others with the love of a Spouse, saying: “My dove and creature of my hands, arise and make haste, come to Me (Cant. 2:10), who am the light and the way; *he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness* (Jn. 8:12). Come to Me, who am the secure truth and unchangeable sanctity, for I am powerful and wise, and the corrector of the wise (Wis. 7:15).”

3. These words were like arrows of sweet love which filled me with admiration, reverence, knowledge, and dread of my sins and of my vileness, so that I retired from his presence, shrunken and annihilated in the knowledge of my nothingness. And the Lord spoke to me: “Come, soul, come to Me, who am thy omnipotent God, and though thou hast been a prodigal child and a sinner, arise from the earth and come to Me, who am thy Father; receive the stole of my friendship and the ring of a spouse.”*

4. Still remaining in that secure retreat of which I have spoken, I saw on a certain day six Angels whom the Almighty had appointed to assist and guide me in this undertaking and in other dangers. Coming toward me they purified and prepared my soul, and then presented me before the Lord. His Majesty gave to my interior being a new light and as it were a participation in glory, by which I was made capable and desirous of seeing and understanding the things which are above the powers of a mere terrestrial creature. Soon after two other Angels of a still higher order appeared to me, and I felt within me the power of the Lord by which they called me. I understood they were most mysterious envoys and desired to reveal to me high and hidden sacraments. Eagerly I responded, and desirous of enjoying the blessing which they pointed out to me I declared to them how ardently I longed to see what they desired to show me and yet so mysteriously concealed from me. Then they at once answered with great serenity: “Restrain thyself, O soul.” I turned to their highnesses and said: “Princes of the Almighty and messengers of the great King, why having called me dost thou now detain me, doing violence to my will and delaying my joy and happiness? What force is thine, and what power which calls me, inflames me, entreats me and yet detains me all at the same time; which drawing me after the odor of my beloved Master and his ointments (Cant. 1:3), yet restrains me with strong fetters? Tell me the cause of this.” They answered: “Because it is necessary, O soul, to come discalced and despoiled of all thy appetites and passions in order to know these exalted mysteries, which are incompatible with tenebrous inclinations and cannot be accommodated to them. Take off thy shoes like Moses (Ex. 3:5), for such was the command given to him before he could see the miraculous bush.” I responded, “Princes of heaven and my lords, much was asked of Moses, who in earthly nature was given angelical operations; but he was a saint, and I am but a sinner full of miseries. My heart is disturbed, and I am in conflict with the servitude and the law of sin which I feel in my members and which is opposed to the law of the spirit (Rom. 7:23).” To which they rejoined: “Soul, a very difficult enterprise is asked of thee if thou had to execute it with thy powers alone; but the Most High, who desires and asks for this disposition, is powerful, and He will not deny thee his help if from thy heart thou ask his assistance and thou prepare thyself to receive it. And his power, which caused the bush to burn and yet not be consumed (Ex. 3:2), can prevent also the fire of the passions which encompass and beset the soul from consuming it if it truly desires to be liberated. His Majesty asks for that which He desires, and can execute what He asks. Reassured by Him thou canst accomplish that which He commands (Philip. 4:13). Take off thy shoes and weep bitterly; call out to Him from the bottom of thy heart so thy prayers may be heard and thy desires fulfilled.”

* cf. Lk. 15:22 [Ed.]

5. Presently I saw a most precious veil covering a treasure, and my heart burned with desire to see it raised and to look upon the sacrament which I understood was hidden beneath. My desire was answered in the following manner: “Obey, O soul, in what was enjoined and commanded thee; despoil thyself of thyself, and this sacrament shall be revealed to thee.” I resolved to amend my life and to overcome my appetites; I sighed and wept with many aspirations from my inmost soul for the manifestation of this blessing. As I was proposing my resolutions, the veil which covered my treasure began to be lifted. Presently the veil was raised entirely and my interior eyes saw what I shall not know how to describe in words. I saw a great and mysterious sign in heaven: I saw a Woman, a most beautiful Lady and Queen, crowned with stars, clothed with the sun, and the moon was at her feet (Apoc. 12:1). The holy Angels spoke to me: “This is that happy Woman whom St. John saw in the Apocalypse, and in whom are enclosed, deposited and sealed up* the wonderful mysteries of the Redemption. So much has the Most High, the almighty God, favored this creature that it causes admiration to us, his angelic spirits. Attend and look upon her prerogatives; write them down, since for this purpose they shall be manifested to thee according to the manner suitable to thee.” I was made to see such wonders that the greatness of them took away my speech, and my admiration of them suspended my other faculties; nor do I think all created beings in this mortal life will ever comprehend them, as will appear in the sequel of my discourse.

6. On another day, while my soul sweetly tarried in the aforesaid habitation, I heard a voice from the Most High saying: “My spouse, I desire thee to finish what thou hast determined with earnestness, and seek Me carefully, love Me fervently, and for thy life to be more angelic than human, forgetting entirely earthly things. I desire to raise thee from the dust as one who is poor, and as a needy one from the dunghill (Ps. 112:7), so while I raise thee thou mayest humble thyself, and thy spikenard give its sweet odor in my presence (Cant. 1:11). Knowing thy weakness and miseries, persuade thyself with all thy heart thou dost merit tribulation, and in it humiliation. Behold my grandeur and thy lowliness, that I am just and holy, and with equity use my mercy to assist thee, not chastising thee as thou dost deserve. Seek above all this foundation of humility in order to acquire the rest of the virtues so thou mayest comply with my will. And in order for thee to be taught, corrected and reprehended, I appoint as thy Teacher my Virgin Mother; She shall instruct thee and direct thy footsteps toward my pleasure and approval.”

7. While the Most High spoke to me the Queen stood nearby, and the heavenly Princess did not refuse to accept the office which His Majesty assigned to Her. She accepted it benignly and said to me: “My daughter, I desire thee to be my disciple and companion, and I shall be thy Teacher; yet be aware thou must obey me with fortitude, and from this day on no trace of a daughter of Adam must be recognized in thee. My life, the works of my pilgrimage on earth, and the wonders which the mighty arm of the Most High wrought with me, must be the mirror and the model for thy life.” I prostrated myself before the throne of the King and Queen of the universe and I offered to obey Her in all things. I gave thanks to the Most High for the favor which He, so much in excess of my merits, conferred upon me in giving me such a Guide and Protectress. Into her hands I renewed the vows of my profession; I offered myself to Her and proposed to work anew for the amendment of my life. Again the Lord spoke to me: “Behold and see.” Turning I saw a most beautiful ladder with many rungs; around it were many Angels, and a great number of them were ascending and descending upon it. His Majesty said to me: “This is the mysterious ladder of Jacob (Gen. 28:12), which is *the house of God and the gate of heaven* (Ib. 17); if thou

* cf. Cant. 4:12 [Ed.]

shalt dispose thyself and thy life such that my eyes find nothing reprehensible, thou shalt ascend upon it to Me.”

8. This promise incited my desires, set my will aflame, and enraptured my spirit, and with many tears I grieved that I have become a heavy burden to myself (Job 7:20). I sighed for the end of my captivity and longed to arrive where there would be no obstacle to my love. In this anxiety I passed some days, trying to reform my life; I again made a general Confession and corrected some of my imperfections. The vision of the ladder continued without intermission, but it was not explained to me. I made many promises to the Lord and proposed to free myself from all terrestrial things and to reserve the powers of my will entirely for his love, without allowing it to incline toward any creature, be it ever so small and without suspicion; I repudiated all visible and sensible things. Having passed some days in these affections and sentiments, I was informed by the Most High that the ladder signified the life of the most holy Virgin, her virtues and sacraments. His Majesty said to me: “I desire thee, my spouse, to ascend this ladder of Jacob and enter through this Gate of Heaven to know my attributes and contemplate my divinity. Arise then, walk, and ascend by it to Me. These Angels who assist and accompany Her are those whom I dedicated for her guard and defense, and as the garrison of this City of Sion; pay attention to Her, and meditating upon her virtues labor to imitate them.” Then it seemed to me that I ascended the ladder and recognized the greatness of the wonders and the most ineffable prodigy of the Lord in a mere creature, the greatest sanctity and perfection of virtues which the arm of the Omnipotent has ever worked. At the top of the ladder I saw the Lord of lords* and the Queen of all creation, and they commanded me that by these magnificent sacraments I glorify, praise and exalt Him, and to write what I understood of these sacraments. The sublime and eminent Lord placed me before these tablets, greater than those given to Moses (Ex. 31:18), as a law which I could meditate upon and observe (Ps. 1:2), written by his powerful finger. He moved my will so in her presence I promised to overcome my resistance, and with her assistance to set about writing her most holy Life, paying attention to three things. First, to remember the creature must ever seek to acknowledge the profound reverence due to God, and to abase itself in proportion to the condescension of His Majesty toward men, and that the effect of greater favors and benefits must be a greater fear, reverence, attention and humility; second, to be ever mindful of the obligation of all men, who are so forgetful of their own salvation, to consider and learn what they owe to their Queen and Mother of Piety for her role in the works of the Redemption, and to think of the love and the reverence which She showed to God and the honor in which we are to hold this great Lady; and third, to be willing to have my spiritual director, and if necessary the whole world, find out my littleness and vileness, and the small returns which I make for what I receive.

9. To this my desire the most holy Virgin responded to me: “My daughter, the world has great need of this doctrine, since it does not know nor does it have the reverence due to the omnipotent Lord; and due to this ignorance the audacity of mortals provokes the rectitude of his justice to afflict and oppress them. They are dominated by their forgetfulness and overshadowed by their darkness, without knowing how to seek the remedy or find the light; and this comes upon them because they lack the fear and reverence which they ought to have.” Besides this the Most High and the Queen gave me many other instructions in order to make clear to me their will in regard to this work. It seemed to me temerity and lack of charity toward myself to reject the instruction which She had promised me for narrating the course of her most holy life. It seemed equally improper to put off writing it, since the Most High had intimated this as the appropriate and

* cf. Apoc. 19:16 [Ed.]

opportune time, saying to me in this regard: “My daughter, when I sent into the world my Onlybegotten it was in a worse condition than it had ever been since its beginning, with the exception of the few souls who served Me; for human nature is so imperfect that if it does not subject itself to the interior guidance of my light and to the practice of the teachings of my ministers by subjecting its own judgment and following Me, who am the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6), and keeping my commandments in order not to lose my friendship, it will presently fall into the abyss of darkness and innumerable miseries, from abyss to abyss, until it arrives at obstinacy in sin. From the creation and sin of the first man until I gave the law to Moses men governed themselves according to their own inclinations and committed great errors and sins (Rom. 8:13). And though the law was given to them they did not obey it, (Jn. 7:19), and thus they lived on, separating themselves more from truth and light, and arriving at the state of complete forgetfulness. In fatherly love I sent them eternal salvation (Eph. 2:4-5) and the medicine for human nature in order to remedy their incurable infirmities, thus justifying my cause. And just as I then responded to the time by allowing this mercy to shine forth in greater abundance, so I now desire to give them another very great mercy, since it is the opportune time to show it; for now my hour has come in which the world will find such charges and substantial proceedings brought against it that they shall know the just cause of my indignation. In this shall be manifested my anger, justice and equity, and how well justified is my cause. To better accomplish this, and because it is the time in which the attribute of my mercy must be more abundantly manifested, and in which I desire my love to be not idle; now, at this hour, when the world has arrived at such an unfortunate age, and when, after the Word has become incarnate, mortals are more careless of their welfare and seek it less; when the day of their transitory life draws closer to its end at the setting of the sun of time, in which the night of eternity arrives for the foreknown and for the just is born the eternal day without night; when the majority of mortals are in the darkness of their ignorance and sins, oppressing the just and mocking the children of God; when my holy and divine law is despised in the iniquitous affairs of state, so odious as the enemy of my providence; when the wicked have least obliged my mercy: Looking upon the just there are in this time as acceptable, I desire to open to all a gate so through it they can enter into my mercy; I desire to give them a light by which they can illumine themselves in the darkness of their blindness; I desire to furnish them an opportune remedy if they desire to avail themselves of it for returning to my grace. Those who find it shall be very fortunate (Prov. 3:13ff.), and blessed shall they be who shall know its value; rich shall they be who shall discover this treasure;* happy and very wise shall they be who with reverence shall scrutinize it and understand its enigmas and sacraments. I desire mortals to know how valuable is her intercession, She who remedied their sins by giving in her womb mortal life to the Immortal. I desire them to have a mirror in which they can see their ingratitude, the wonderful works wrought by my powerful arm in this pure creature, and to show them much of that which according to my exalted judgments is still hidden concerning the Mother of the incarnate Word.†

10. “I have not manifested these mysteries in the primitive Church because they are so magnificent that the faithful would have been lost in the contemplation and admiration of them at a time when it was necessary for the law of grace and of the Gospel to be established. And though all these mysteries are compatible, yet human ignorance might have suffered some misgivings and doubts when it was so necessary to establish faith in the Incarnation and

* cf. Mt. 13:46 [Ed.]

† cf. Apoc. 3:12 [Ed.]

Redemption and the precepts of the new evangelical law in their beginnings. For this reason the Person of the incarnate Word said to his disciples at the Last Supper: *I have yet many things to say to you; but you are not now disposed to receive them* (Jn. 16:12). Through them He spoke to the whole world, which was unwilling to assent to the law of grace and faith in the Son, and hence was unprepared to be introduced to faith in the mysteries of the Mother. But now the necessity is greater, and this need obliges Me more than their disposition. And if men would now oblige Me by reverencing, believing and becoming familiar with the wonders which the Mother of Piety encloses within Herself, and if all of them would begin to solicit her intercession from their whole heart, the world would find some relief. I do not desire to delay placing before men this Mystical City of refuge; describe and delineate it to them as far as thy timidity can achieve. I do not desire this description and declaration of her life to be opinions or contemplations, but the certain truth. *They that have ears to hear, let them hear* (Mt. 11:15). Let those who thirst come to the living waters (Apoc. 22:17) and leave the dried-out cisterns;* let those who desire the light follow it to the end.” Thus spoke the Lord God omnipotent.

11. These are the words which the Most High spoke to me on that occasion. And of the manner in which I receive this doctrine and light, and how I know it is the Lord, I shall speak in the following chapter, fulfilling by obedience the command given to me, and in order to leave declared in totality the intelligences and mercies of this kind which I receive and to which I shall later refer.

* cf. Jer. 2:13 [Ed.]