

CHAPTER VIII

Which Continues the above Discourse by the Explanation of Chapter XII of the Apocalypse.

94. The words of that chapter of the Apocalypse are as follows (Apoc. 12:1-18):

1. And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

2. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

3. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns; and on his head seven diadems.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth; and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son.

5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod; and her son was taken up to God, and to his throne.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed her a thousand two hundred sixty days.

7. And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels.

8. And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death.

12. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein. Woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having a great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman, who brought forth the man child.

14. And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water, as it were a river; that he might cause her to be carried away by the river.

16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was angry against the woman; and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

18. And he stood upon the sand of the sea.

95. Such are the words of the Evangelist. He speaks in the past, because at that time was shown to him a vision of that which had already happened. He says: *And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of*

twelve stars. This sign truly appeared in the heavens by divine disposition and was shown to the good and the bad angels, so seeing it they could subject their will to the pleasure and the commands of God; thus they saw it before the good ones had determined upon the good and the bad ones had chosen sin. It was as it were a mirror of the wonderful perfection of the handiwork of God in creating human nature. Although He had already revealed this perfection to the angels in making known to them the mystery of the hypostatic union, yet He desired to reveal it to them also in a different manner by showing it to them in a mere creature, the most perfect and holy which, next to the humanity of our Lord, He was to create. It was also a sign for the assurance of the good angels and for the confusion of the bad, since it manifested to them that in spite of the offense which was committed God would not let the decree of creating man be unfulfilled, and that the incarnate Word and this Woman, his Mother, would please Him infinitely more than the disobedient angels could ever displease Him. This sign was also like the rainbow which appeared after the flood in the clouds of heaven (Gen. 9:13) as a guarantee that even if men would sin like the angels and become disobedient, they were not to be punished like the angels without remission, but would be furnished with salutary medicine and remedy by this wonderful sign. It was as if God said to the angels: I will not chastise in the same way the other creatures whom I shall create, because this Woman, in whom my Onlybegotten is to assume flesh, belongs to that race. My Son shall be the Restorer of my friendship and the Pacifier of my justice; He shall open the way to the happiness which sin would close.

96. In further testimony of this, after the punishment of the disobedient angels God made use of the sign in order to show that his anger, which the pride of Lucifer had occasioned, was appeased and placated, and according to our way of understanding He delighted in the presence of the Queen thus represented in that image. He gave the angels to understand that through Christ and his Mother He would now divert upon men the grace which the apostates had lost through their rebellion. There was also another effect of that great sign among the good angels, namely since they had been as it were made sorrowful and unhappy (speaking according to our way of understanding), and practically disturbed, the Most High now desired to rejoice them with the sight of that image, and along with their essential glory add this accidental joy merited by their victory over Lucifer. Seeing this Woman so full of clemency (Esther 4:11), appearing to them as a sign of peace, they understood at once that the decree of punishment was not issued against them, since they had obeyed the precepts of the Lord and his divine will. Many of the mysteries and sacraments of the Incarnation, and those of the Church Militant and its members, were made manifest to them in this sign. They understood also they were to assist and help the human race by watching over men, by defending them against their enemies, and by leading them to eternal happiness. They saw they themselves would owe their happiness to the merits of the incarnate Word, and that the Creator had preserved them also in grace through Christ preordained in the divine mind.

97. Just as all this was a great joy and happiness for the good angels, so it was a great torment for the evil spirits, and as it were the beginning and part of their punishment, for they saw at once that having failed to profit by this sign they were to be conquered and crushed by it (Gen. 3:15). All these mysteries, and many others which I cannot explain, the Evangelist desired to comprehend in this chapter and include in that great sign, although for us it will remain obscure and enigmatic until the proper time arrives.

98. The *sun* which is mentioned as clothing the Woman is the true Sun of justice. The angels were to understand by it that the Most High was to remain with this Woman by his grace in order to overshadow and defend Her by the protection of his invincible right hand. The *moon* was

beneath her feet, for as the two heavenly bodies, the sun and the moon, divide night and day, therefore the moon, being the symbol of the darkness of sin, is beneath her feet, and the sun, being the symbol of the light of grace, clothes Her for all eternity. Thus also the deficiencies of grace in all mortals must be beneath her feet and never must rise either to her soul or to her body, which on the contrary were to be ever superior to all angels and men. She alone was to be free from the darkness and the wanings of Lucifer and of Adam, treading them under foot without their being able to gain any advantage over Her. And just as She rose above all the guilt and effects of original and actual sin, God now placed these in a symbolic manner under her feet so the good angels could know and the evil ones (though they did not attain full knowledge of the mysteries) fear this Woman even before She came into actual existence.

99. The *crown of twelve stars* is evidently all the virtues with which that Queen of heaven and earth was to be adorned. But the mystery of its being composed of twelve stars has reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, by which all the elect and the predestined are designated, as is mentioned in chapter VII of the Apocalypse by the Evangelist (v. 4). And since the gifts, graces and virtues of all the elect were to crown their Queen in a most eminent and exalted degree, a crown of twelve stars was placed around her head.

100. *And being with child.* In the presence of all the angels, for the rejoicing of the good and the punishment of the evil ones, who resisted the divine will and the fulfillment of these mysteries, it became manifest that the three Persons of the blessed Trinity had selected this wonderful Woman as the Mother of the Onlybegotten of the Father. And since the dignity of the Mother of the incarnate Word was the greatest, the beginning, and the foundation of all the excellences of this great Lady and of this her symbol, therefore She was proposed to the angels as having deposited within Her the entirety of the most holy Trinity in the Divinity and Person of the Word incarnate, since by the inseparable union and coexistence of the three divine Persons by the indivisible unity all three Persons could not fail to be wherever each One was present, though only the Person of the Word assumed human flesh, and with Him alone was She pregnant.

101. *She cried travailing in birth.* Though the dignity of this Queen and of that mystery was to be hidden in the beginning so God could be born humble, poor and unknown, yet afterwards the news of that Birth was proclaimed so loudly that its first echo obliged the Magi to leave their palaces and kingdoms in order to find Him, and troubled Herod the king (Mt. 2:1-3). Some hearts were touched with fear, others moved to interior affection. The fruit of this birth, growing until He was raised on the cross (Jn. 12:32), gave such loud voices that He was heard from east to west and from north to south (Rom. 10:18). So far then was heard the voice of that Woman who gave birth to the Word of the eternal Father.

102. *And was in pain to be delivered.* He does not say this because She was to give birth in bodily pain, for that is not possible in this divine Birth, but because it was to be a great sorrow for that Mother to see the divine Infant come forth from the secrecy of her virginal womb in order to suffer and die as a victim for the satisfaction of the sins of the world and to pay for that which He did not commit (Ps. 68:5), for this Queen could know and did know all this beforehand by her knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Due to the natural love of such a Mother for such a Son, She must have been deeply afflicted thereby, though in subjection to the will of God. In this pain was also foreshadowed the sorrow of this most gentle Mother at the thought of being deprived of the presence of her Treasure after He would issue from her virginal womb; for even though regarding his divinity He would remain in her soul, yet regarding his most holy humanity She was to be a long time without Him, and He was her only Son. And though the Most High

had determined to exempt Her from guilt, He did not exempt Her from the labors and sorrows corresponding to the reward which was prepared for Her. Thus the sorrows of this birth were not the effect of sin, as they are in the descendants of Eve (Gen. 3:16), but were the effect of the intense and perfect love of this divine Mother for her divine Son. All these mysteries were motives of praise and admiration for the holy angels, and for the evil ones the beginning of their chastisement.

103. *And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns; and on his head were seven diadems; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth.* Thereupon followed the punishment of Lucifer and his allies, for after uttering his blasphemies against the Woman who had been symbolized in the heavenly sign, he found himself visibly and exteriorly transformed from a most beautiful angel into a fierce and most horrid dragon. He reared with fury his seven heads, that is, he led on the seven legions or squadrons of all those who followed and fell with him. To each principality or congregation of these followers he gave a head, commanding them to sin on their own account and undertake the leadership in the seven mortal sins, which are commonly called capital because in these are contained the other sins, and they constitute as it were the regiments which rise up against God. They are the sins called pride, envy, avarice, anger, luxury, intemperance and sloth. They are the seven diadems with which Lucifer, after being changed into a dragon, was crowned. This is the punishment with which he was visited by the Most High, and which as a return for his horrible wickedness he acquired for himself and for his confederate angels. To all of them were apportioned the punishment and the pains which corresponded to their malice and to the share which they had in originating the seven capital sins.

104. The ten horns are the triumphs of the iniquity and malice of the dragon, and the vain and arrogant glorification and exaltation which he attributed to himself in the execution of his wickedness. In his depraved desire of attaining the object of his arrogance he offered to the unhappy angels his malicious and poisonous friendship and his counterfeit principalities, commanderships and rewards. These promises, full of bestial ignorance and error, were the tail with which the dragon drew after him the third part of the stars of heaven, for these angels had been like stars, and if they would have persevered they would have shone with the rest of the angels and the just as the sun through the perpetual eternities (Dan. 12:3). But the punishment which they merited drew them down to the earth of their unhappiness into its very center, which is hell, where they will be deprived for all eternity of light and happiness (Jude 6).

105. *And the dragon stood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered; that when she should be delivered, he might devour her son.* The pride of Lucifer was so boundless that he pretended to place his throne on high (Is. 14:13-14), and with the utmost boasting he spoke in the presence of the Woman symbolized in the heavenly sign: “This Son, which that Woman is to bring forth, is of a lower nature than mine; I will devour and destroy Him, and raise up against Him the faction which follows me; I will sow my doctrines* against his intentions and the laws which He will ordain, and will wage perpetual war and contradiction† against Him.” But the answer of the most high Lord was that this Woman was to *bring forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod.* “This Man (the Lord added) shall be not only the Son of that Woman, but He shall also be my Son, true God and true man, and strong, who shall conquer thy pride and crush thy head. He shall be for thee, and for all those who hear and follow thee, a

* cf. Mt. 13:25 [Ed.]

† cf. Lk. 2:34 [Ed.]

powerful Judge who shall rule thee with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and dispel all thy haughty and vain aspirations. This Son shall be taken up to my throne where He shall be seated at my right hand as Judge, and I shall place his enemies for a footstool beneath his feet in order to triumph over them (Ps. 109:1-2). He shall be rewarded as the just Man, who being at the same time true God has done so much for his creatures. All shall know Him and give Him reverence and glory (Apoc. 5:13). And thou, as the most unhappy, shalt know what is the day of the wrath of the Omnipotent (Soph. 1:14ff.). And this Woman shall be placed in solitude, where She shall have a place prepared by Me” (Apoc. 12:6). This solitude to which the Woman fled is the position which our great Queen holds as being only and alone, unsurpassed in sanctity and exempt from all sin, for She, being of the same nature as mortals, far excelled all the angels in grace, merits and gifts attained in common with them. Thus She who is unique and without equal among mere creatures fled and was placed in a solitude exalted above all the rest. This solitude was so far removed from all sin that the dragon could not even attain sight of it, nor could he from the time of her Conception discern anything of Her. The Most High placed Her alone and as the only one in the world who never had communication with, and never was in subordination to, the serpent; on the contrary, with solemn promise and assurance He affirmed and decreed: “This Woman, from the first instant of her existence, shall be my only One,* chosen for Myself; I exempt Her even now from the jurisdiction of her enemies, and I shall assign to Her a position of grace most eminent and incomparable so there She may be nourished one thousand two hundred sixty days” (Ib.). That number of days the Queen was to remain in an interior and spiritual state of most exalted and extraordinary graces, which were to be more memorable and wonderful. This happened in the last years of her life, as with the help of God I shall relate in its place (*Cor.* 533ff.; 595ff.). In that state She was nourished in such a divine manner that our understanding will never be able to grasp it. And since these graces were in a certain measure the end toward which others of the life of the Queen of heaven were ordained, and as it were their culmination, the Evangelist makes a special mention of them.

* cf. Cant. 6:8 [Ed.]