

CHAPTER XVIII

Continuing the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Most Holy Mary by Explaining the Second Part of Chapter XXI of the Apocalypse.

264. The further wording of chapter XXI of the Apocalypse is as follows (Apoc. 21:9-18):

9. And there came one of the seven angels, who had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying: Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

10. And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain; and he showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

11. Having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal.

12. And it had a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

13. On the east, three gates; and on the north, three gates; and on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them, the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

15. And he that spoke with me had a measure of a reed of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the wall.

16. And the city lieth in a foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs, and the length and the height and the breadth thereof are equal.

17. And he measured the wall thereof a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel.

18. And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone; but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass.

265. The Angels of whom the Evangelist speaks in this place are seven of those who attend in a special manner at the throne of God, and who have received commission and power to punish some of the sins of men (Ib. 15:1). This vengeance of the wrath of the Omnipotent will happen in the last ages of the world, but it shall be such a new punishment that neither before nor after shall a greater be seen in mortal life. But since these mysteries are deeply hidden, and since not all have been revealed to me nor concern this History, I do not consider it proper to expatiate upon them, but I will pass on to what more closely concerns my task. This Angel of which St. John speaks is the one through whom God will avenge with a special and dreadful chastisement the injuries committed against his most holy Mother, for the insane daring with which they have despised Her has roused the indignation of his omnipotence. As the most holy Trinity has pledged Himself to honor and exalt this Queen of heaven above all human creatures and above the angels, placing Her in this world as a Mirror of the Divinity and the special Mediatrix of mortals, God has taken it in a particular manner upon Himself to avenge the heresies, errors, outrages, and all injuries committed against Her, since thereby men have not glorified, acknowledged and adored Him in this tabernacle and have not made use of this incomparable mercy. These punishments are prophesied to the holy Church. Although the mysterious words of the Apocalypse enshroud in obscurity the rigor of this punishment, yet woe to the unhappy ones who shall be overtaken by it! Woe to me, who have offended a God so strong and powerful to chastise! I am amazed in the knowledge of such a calamity as is here threatened.

266. The Angel spoke to the Evangelist saying: *Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb*, etc. The Angel declares in this passage that the holy city of Jerusalem which he showed to him is the espoused wife of the Lamb, referring by this metaphor to most holy Mary as I have already said (248), whom St. John saw both as a Mother or Woman and as a Spouse of the Lamb, who is Christ. The Queen held and fulfilled in a divine manner both offices, for She was the Spouse of the Divinity, the only One (Cant. 6:8) and incomparable due to the unequalled faith and love with which the espousals were entered into and accomplished; and She was the Mother of the same Lord incarnate, giving Him his mortal substance and flesh, nourishing and sustaining Him in his existence as man which He derived from Her. In order to see and understand such high mysteries the Evangelist was exalted in spirit to a great height of sanctity and light, for without going out of himself and being raised above human weakness he could not understand them, just as we, imperfect, earthly and abject creatures, cannot encompass them for the same reason. Elevated thus high, he says *he showed me the holy city of Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven*, for She was built up and formed not on earth, where She was like a pilgrim and a stranger, but in heaven where the common, earthly material was excluded; for though the material of her being was taken from the earth, it was at the same time so elevated in heavenly perfection as to be fit for the building up of that Mystical City in a celestial and angelic manner, even divine, similar to the Divinity.

267. Therefore he adds *having the glory of God*, for the most holy soul of Mary was favored with such a participation of the Divinity and his attributes and perfections that if it were possible to see Her in her own essence She would appear as if illuminated with the eternal splendor of God himself. Great and glorious things are said in the Catholic Church of this City of God (Ps. 86:3) and of the splendor which She has received from that same Lord; yet all which has been said is but little, and all human terms fall short of the truth. The created intellect, entirely overcome, can but assert that most holy Mary partakes of the Divinity more than can be comprehended, confessing thereby the substance of the reality, as well as the incapability of the mind to express in a proper manner that which it wishes to confess. She is formed in the heavens, and only the Artificer who formed Her is able to comprehend her greatness; He alone can estimate her origin and the affinity which He contracted with most holy Mary by perfecting her gifts to a semblance of the attributes of his infinite greatness and divinity.

268. *And the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal*, etc. It is not as difficult to understand how She can be similar at the same time to two such dissimilar stones as crystal and jasper as it is to understand how She can be similar to God, but from this comparison we derive a certain understanding of similarity to God. Jasper sparkles and glitters in colors of many different shades, while crystal is characterized by limpid and uniform transparency; both combined form a rare and beautiful variety. In her formation most pure Mary was endowed with the variety of virtues and perfections which the hand of God himself selected and interwove in her soul. These graces and perfections made her soul like unto a most pure crystal, without blemish or stain of guilt; in her purity and transparency it scattered the enrapturing rays of the Divinity, just as the crystal meeting the sun seems to absorb and again send forth its rays as if it were itself the sun. Nevertheless this crystal-jasper sparkles also in many-colored hues because She is a daughter of Adam and a mere creature, and all the splendors of the Divinity contained within Her are only a participation. Although it appears to be a divine light it is not a part of her nature, but communicated and conferred by grace. She is truly a creature formed and made by the hand of God himself, yet formed in order to be his Mother.

269. *And it had a great wall and high, having twelve gates.* The mysteries enclosed in this wall and these gates of this Mystical City of most holy Mary are so hidden and great that only with difficulty can I, an ignorant and obscure woman, reduce to words that which was conceded to me. I noticed that at the first instant of the Immaculate Conception of most holy Mary, when the Divinity manifested Himself to Her by that vision and manner mentioned above (228-236), the entire blessed Trinity, according to our way of understanding, as if renewing the ancient decrees of her creation and exaltation, then made an agreement and as it were a contract with this Lady, yet without giving Her to understand it at that time. It was as if the three divine Persons conferred among Themselves and spoke in the following manner:

270. “For the dignity we confer upon this pure creature as our Spouse and Mother of the incarnate Word who is to be born of Her, it is consequently due that We constitute Her as the Queen and Mistress of all creation. Besides the gifts and riches of our divinity which We give and concede to Her for her own sake, it is proper to give Her authority over the treasures of our infinite mercies so She can distribute and communicate according to her will the graces and favors necessary for mortals, especially those who invoke Her as her children and devotees, so She can enrich the needy, remedy the sinners, exalt the just, and be the universal helper of all. And so all creatures may recognize Her as their Queen and Superior, and the Depository of our infinite goods, with the faculty and power to dispense them, We deliver to Her the keys of our bosom and will; She shall be in all things the Executrix of our pleasure toward the creatures. In addition to all this We give Her dominion and power over our enemy the dragon and all his allies the demons, so they fear her presence and her Name, by which their deceits shall be crushed and dispelled, and so all mortals who have recourse to this City of refuge find in it sure and certain protection, without fear of the demons and their fallacies.”

271. Without revealing to the soul of most holy Mary all that is contained in this decree or proposal, the Lord directed Her in that first instant to pray with great love, to intercede for all souls, and to solicit and procure for them eternal life, especially for those who in the course of their lives would commend themselves to her care. The most blessed Trinity offered to Her that before his most just tribunal nothing would be denied Her, and that She could command the demon and by her imperious power turn him away from all souls, since in all this the arm of the Omnipotent would assist Her. But the reason for this favor was not made known to Her, nor the reason for all her other gifts, and this reason was none other than She was to be the Mother of the incarnate Word. In saying this holy City was surrounded by a *wall great and high* St. John refers to this blessing which God gave to his Mother, constituting Her as a sacred refuge, protection and defense of all men, wherein they would find all the security of a city of refuge and a strong fortress against their enemies. As a powerful Queen and Mistress of all creation, and the Dispensatrix of all the treasures of heaven and of grace, all the children of Adam could turn to Her. He says this wall was very high, for the power of most pure Mary to vanquish the demon and raise souls to grace is so great that it is inferior only to that of God himself. So well protected and defended is this City, and so secure for Herself and for all those who seek her protection, that not all the forces created by God could breach its walls or scale them.

272. *Having twelve gates*, for the entrance into this holy City is free and common for all nations and generations, without excluding any but inviting all beforehand, so no one who so desires, by means of the Queen and Mother of Mercy, shall be deprived of the graces, gifts and glory of the Most High. *And in the gates twelve angels.* These twelve Princes are those mentioned above (201) as being among the ones selected to guard the Mother of the incarnate Word. The service of these twelve Angels, besides attending to their Queen, was to specially

assist, inspire and defend those souls who devoutly call on Mary our Queen for their defense, and who distinguish themselves in their devotion, veneration and love for Her. Therefore the Evangelist says he saw them in the gates of that City, for they are the ministers and as it were the servants who are to help, direct and guide mortals so they enter by the gates of piety of most holy Mary into eternal happiness. Many times does She send them with inspirations and favors in order to extract from the dangers of body and soul those who invoke Her and are her devout servants.

273. He continues: *And names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*, because the holy angels receive the names of the ministry and office for which they are sent to the earth. And because these twelve Princes are especially attached to the service of the Queen of heaven so they can assist in the salvation of men, and because all the elect are included with the twelve tribes of Israel, forming the holy people of God, therefore the Evangelist says these Angels bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. To each one of the twelve tribes one of these Angels is assigned; under their charge and protection are all those who from every nation and generation enter by these gates of the intercession of most holy Mary into the celestial Jerusalem.

274. Admiring this grandeur of most pure Mary, and that She would be the Mediatrix and the gate for all the predestined, I was given to understand that this prerogative corresponds to the office of Mother of Christ, who was to labor with her most holy Son and with men, for She would furnish Him from her own purest blood and substance with a human body in which He could suffer and redeem men. Thus in a certain manner She suffered and died in Christ due to this union of flesh and blood;* and more than this She accompanied Him in his Passion and Death, voluntarily suffering with Him with heavenly humility and fortitude in the manner possible to Her. Hence as She cooperated in his Passion and offered Herself as a victim for the human race, so the same Lord made Her a participant in his dignity of Redeemer and placed Her in charge of the merits and fruits of the Redemption, so they could be distributed by Her, and only through her hand be communicated to the redeemed. O admirable Treasurer of God! How secure in thy heavenly and bountiful hands are the riches of right hand of the Omnipotent! Hence this City had *on the east, three gates; and on the north, three gates; and on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates*, etc. By this number of three is signified that all mortals may pass through them to Him who gave being to all creatures, the three divine Persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Each of the three Persons desires and ordains that most holy Mary be in possession of the gates for soliciting the divine treasures for mortals. Although there is but one God in three Persons, each One for Himself concedes free entrance and admission to this most pure Queen, so before the tribunal of the immutable and triune Being She may intercede, solicit and draw gifts and graces, and give them to her devotees and those who seek Her and oblige Her in all the world. Thus none of the mortals anywhere in the world, or from any nation or generation, shall have any excuse for not entering, since there are not one but three gates in every direction. The entrance into free and open city gates is so easy that if anyone fails to enter it is not because the gates prevent him but because he detains himself and does not desire to place himself in safety. What then shall the infidels, heretics and pagans say? And what excuse shall the bad Christians and the obstinate sinners have? If the treasures of heaven are in the hands of our Mother and Lady, if She continues to call us and solicit us through her Angels,

* Indeed, from the moment of his Incarnation in her womb until He stopped taking his Mother's milk all of the substance of the body of Christ was derived entirely from his most holy Mother. [Ed]

and if She opens not one but many gates to heaven, how is it there are so many who remain outside and so few who enter through them?

275. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* The strong and unchangeable foundations upon which God built this holy City of Mary his Mother are her virtues as specially governed by the Holy Ghost who corresponded to them. Yet St. John mentions twelve, along with the names of the Apostles, because this City was founded upon the surpassing sanctity of the Apostles, who are the superiors among the saints; for according to the saying of David, the foundations of the City of God are placed upon the holy mountains (Ps. 86:1). Inversely, the sanctity of Mary and her wisdom were as the foundation of the Apostles and their firmness after the death of Christ and his Ascension into heaven. Although She was always their Instructress and Exemplar, yet in those times She alone was the chief support of the primitive Church. And because She was destined and endowed for this office by the corresponding virtues and gifts from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, therefore they are called the twelve foundations of this City of God.

276. *And he that spoke with me had a measure of a reed of gold, and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs, etc.* By these measurements the Evangelist alludes to the great mysteries of the dignity, graces, gifts and merits contained in the Mother of God. Although the measurements of the dignity and benefits which the Almighty conferred upon Her were exceedingly great, yet they were within possibility and they were also well proportioned. *And the length thereof is as great as the breadth,* for from all sides She is equally well formed, without a sign of deficiency, inequality or disproportion. I do not expatiate thereon, but refer to what I shall say about this in the entire discourse of her life; yet I desire to mention that the measure of the dignity, merits and graces of most holy Mary was none other than the humanity of her most blessed Son, united to the divine Word.

277. The Evangelist calls the humanity of Christ a *reed* because He assumed the frailty of our weak and carnal nature, and *of gold* because of the divinity of the Person of the Word. With this dignity of Christ, true God and true man, and with the gifts of his human nature united to the Divinity, and with the merits of his works, was measured his most holy Mother by the Lord himself. He it was who measured Her with Himself, and She, being thus proportioned, seemed in her office as Mother exalted to a dignity corresponding to his. In the length of her gifts and graces, in the breadth of her merits, and in all things She was uniform, without diminution or disproportion. She could not be absolutely equal to her most holy Son with an equality which the learned call mathematical, for Christ our Lord was true God and man, whereas She was a mere creature, and thus the measure exceeded infinitely that which was measured by it; yet most pure Mary was adjusted according to a certain equality of proportion to her divine Son. Just as in Him there was nothing lacking which corresponded and belonged to his dignity as the true Son of God, so nothing was lacking in Her, nor was there any defect in that which was due to Her as the true Mother of God himself, in such a way that She as Mother, and Christ as Son, possessed similar proportions of dignity, graces, gifts and merits. There was no created grace in Christ which was not also held in its proportion by his most pure Mother.

278. The Evangelist says: *And he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs.* This measure of furlongs and the number twelve thousand with which the heavenly Queen in her Immaculate Conception was measured indicate most exalted mysteries. The Evangelist calls the perfect measure, by which are measured the high sanctity of the predestined, furlongs, thereby referring to the graces and gifts which God in his eternal foreknowledge decreed to communicate through his incarnate Son, appraising and determining them with

infinite equity and mercy. By these furlongs then are measured all the saints and the heights of their virtues and merits. Most unhappy shall he be who does not reach this measure, and who cannot be measured by it when the Lord shall measure him. The number twelve thousand is used in order to include all the rest of the elect and the predestined, reduced to the twelve heads of these thousands, who are the twelve Apostles, the princes of the Catholic Church, just as in chapter VII of the Apocalypse (v. 4ff.) they are reduced to the twelve tribes of Israel, because all the elect must submit to the teaching of the Apostles of the Lamb, as I have already said above (275).

279. From all this can be estimated the greatness of this City of God, most holy Mary; for if we assume the furlong which the Evangelist mentions measures at least 125 steps, then a city that extends 12,000 furlongs on each of its four sides and in its height must appear of immense dimensions. The measure and stadia by which God measures all the predestined He also used to measure most holy Mary, Our Lady, and the height, length and breadth of all of them together did not exceed Her, for She who was to be the Mother of God himself and the Queen and Lady of all was equal to all of them together, and She by Herself could contain more than all the rest of creation.

280. *And he measured the wall thereof a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel.* This measure of the walls of the City of God was not of their length but of their height, for if the length and the width of the city were twelve thousand furlongs, making a perfect square, it was certainly necessary for the walls to extend still farther on the outside in order to encompass the city. The measure of one hundred and forty-four cubits (of whatever length these might be) was certainly too short for a city of that extent, but that measurement would very well fit the height of the walls and would be well adapted for the security and defense of those dwelling therein. This measurement of their height indicates the security of all the gifts and graces which the Almighty conferred on most holy Mary as befitting her dignity and sanctity. In order to make this more plain, it is said that the height was one hundred, forty, and four cubits, unequal measures, referring to three walls, a high one, another medium in size, and a small one, corresponding to the activity of the Queen of heaven in great, in more ordinary, and in smaller matters; not because in Her there was anything small, but because the object matter of her actions was of different kinds, as were also her actions themselves. Some were miraculous and supernatural, others were acts of the moral virtues, and these latter again were either interior or exterior. All of them She performed with such a plenitude of perfection that She did not abandon the small matters of obligation on account of the greater ones, nor due to these did She fail in those more superior, but accomplished all in such a supreme degree of sanctity and pleasure of the Lord that She was measured with the standard of her most holy Son as well in the natural gifts as the supernatural ones. It was the measure of the Godman himself, the Angel of great counsel,* excelling all men and angels, and She as his Mother was exalted with Him above them in proportion to her dignity. The Evangelist continues and says:

281. *And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone.* The walls of a city most conspicuously strike and engage the eyes of the beholder. The variety of colors and hues which distinguish the jasper stone here mentioned as composing the walls of Mary, the City of God, denote the ineffable humility with which all the excellences and graces of the great Queen were clothed and permeated; for although She was the worthy Mother of her Creator, exempt from all

* cf. *Introit* for Jan. 1 [Ed.]

stain of sin and imperfection, She exhibits Herself to the view of mortals as dependent upon and as it were tinted with the shades of the ordinary laws to which the daughters of Adam are subject, for She subjected Herself to the penalties and necessities of our common life, as I shall describe later on. Nevertheless this wall of jasper, though apparently displaying these shades of the rest of womankind, was to serve as an invincible defense of the city. And of the interior of the City of God the Evangelist says it was of *purest gold, like to clear glass*, most pure and transparent, for neither in the formation of most holy Mary, nor afterwards during her most innocent life, did She ever admit any stain which could obscure her crystalline clearness (Cant. 4:7); for just as any stain or blemish (even if only a trace) finding its way into glass during its formation will never disappear so as to leave no visible trace, and will always interfere with its transparency and purity, so if most pure Mary had contracted in her Conception the blemish or stain of original sin it would always be discernible and forever degrade and prevent her crystalline purity and transparency. Neither would She be pure gold, since her sanctity and gifts would contain that alloy of original sin, lessening its fineness by many carats; hence, this City of God was of gold and glass because She was most pure and like unto the Divinity