

CHAPTER XXIII

The Emblems which the Holy Guardian Angels of Most Holy Mary Manifested to Her, and of Their Perfections.

360. It has already been said (204) that a thousand Angels were appointed as guardians of most holy Mary, just as there is one for each soul. Due to her great dignity we must assume that each of the thousand Guardian Angels watched over Her more solicitously than other Guardian Angels watch over other souls. Besides these thousand Angels who formed her ordinary and constant guard many others were at her service on different occasions, especially after She had conceived in her womb the divine Word incarnate. I have mentioned above (114) that the appointment of these thousand Angels was made after the creation of the angelic hosts and the justification of the good angels and the fall of the wicked, and after the objective of the Divinity was proposed and manifested to them for their probation, this being the most holy humanity the Word was to take, as well as his most pure Mother, both of whom the angels had to recognize as their superiors.

361. On this occasion, when the apostates had been chastised and the obedient ones rewarded, the Lord safeguarding due proportion in his most just equity, I said that in their accidental reward there was a certain diversity among the angels according to the difference in their dispositions regarding the mysteries of the incarnate Word and his most pure Mother which in their order they knew before and after the fall of the bad angels (106-7). This accidental reward consisted especially in being selected to assist and serve most holy Mary and the incarnate Word, and also in the manner and form in which they would visibly appear to the Queen and serve Her. This is what I want to explain in this chapter, yet at the same time I must acknowledge my inability to do so, since it is difficult to reduce to material images and words the perfections and operations of such exalted spiritual beings; nevertheless, if I would pass over this matter in silence I would fail to give a proper idea of a great portion of the most exalted operations of the Queen of heaven during her mortal life, for next to her conversation with the Lord her communication with his ministers, the angelic spirits, was the most continual, and without this illustrious part the narration of her most holy Life would remain defective.

362. I presuppose all I have until now said about the orders, hierarchies and distinctions of the thousand Angels of her guard. I desire here to describe in what corporeal forms they appeared to their Queen and Lady, reserving the intellectual and imaginary apparitions for another chapter, where I intend to describe especially the different kinds of visions with which Her Highness was favored (612ff.). The nine hundred Angels who were chosen from the nine choirs, one hundred from each, were selected from those who had distinguished themselves in their admirable esteem, love and reverence for most holy Mary. When they appeared to Her visibly they took the form of youngsters in their early years, but of the most exquisite beauty and courteousness. Their bodily forms showed but little resemblance to earthly matter, for they were transparently pure and like animated crystals bathed in glory, similar to a glorified and transfigured body. With their beauty they combined extreme gravity, composure, and amiable seriousness. Their garments were magnificent and as if entirely resplendent, resembling a most clear and brilliant gold, enameled or layered with shades of the finest color, presenting an admirable and most beautiful variety to the sight. At the same time all this ornamentation and visible presence seemed of such a kind that it could not be subject to the sense of feeling nor be touched by the hand, though it could be seen and perceived like the rays of the sun entering into the open

window and revealing the specks of dust in the air; however, the splendor of the Angels was incomparably more beautiful and pleasing than any light of the sun.

363. In addition all these Angels were crowned with wreaths woven of the most tender and exquisite flowers which sent forth the sweetest fragrance not of this earth but altogether spiritual and heavenly. In their hands they held palms of wonderful beauty and variety, which were to signify the virtues which most holy Mary was to exercise and the victories which She was to gain by her sanctity and glory. All this they as it were offered Her beforehand with great joy and jubilation. On their breasts they bore certain devices or emblems such as we are accustomed to see exhibited in the uniforms or habits of the military orders. They contained letters which stood for "Mary, Mother of God," and which contributed greatly to the splendor of their adornment and beauty. Their significance, however, was not made known to Mary the Queen until She conceived the incarnate Word.

364. This emblem or device was most wonderful to behold because of the great splendor with which it showed forth her name above all the other beauty of the angelic ornaments. Its aspects and brilliancies were changeable in order to indicate the variety of the mysteries and excellences enclosed within that City of God. It contained the most exalted name and title, and intimated the highest dignity which ever can fall to the lot of a mere creature, that of Mother of God. In this title the Angels honored in the highest degree their and our Queen. They themselves were honored in that title, since it was the outward sign of their allegiance to Her and their preferment consequent upon their devotion and veneration for Her, who deserved the veneration of all creatures. A thousand times blessed were they to merit the special love of Mary and of her most holy Son.

365. The effects of this interaction with the holy Princes and their ornamentation in Mary, our Lady, no one besides Herself could ever properly describe. They manifested to Her in a mysterious manner the greatness of the attributes of God, and the blessings which He showered upon Her in creating and choosing Her, in enriching Her and endowing Her with such heavenly gifts and treasures of the divine right hand, moving and inciting Her to such ecstasies of love and praise. All these gifts increased with her age and with the events of her life, and as the Incarnation of the Word drew near they expanded more and more, because until then the explanation of the mysterious emblem which these Angels bore across their breasts was hidden from Her Highness. It would be impossible to describe what ardors of love, what profound humility, and what tender affections filled the guileless Heart of most holy Mary when this was revealed to Her, and when it dawned upon Her what dignity and what obligation toward God this most peerless title involved, for She held Herself entirely incapable and unworthy of such an ineffable and mysterious dignity as that of Mother of God.

366. The seventy Seraphim who assisted the Queen were of the number of those nearest to the throne of God and who had most signally distinguished themselves in their devotion to and admiration of the hypostatic union of the two natures, divine and human, in the Person of the Word; for since they were most closely bound to God by their greater knowledge and love, they also desired more earnestly for this mystery to be consummated in the womb of a woman. To this particular and distinguished affection corresponded their reward of essential and accidental glory. This latter, the accidental glory which I have mentioned, consisted in their being specially privileged to attend upon most holy Mary and take part in the mysteries consummated in Her.

367. Whenever these seventy Seraphim showed themselves to Her in a visible manner the Queen saw them in the same form in which Isaias saw them in vision, that is with six wings.* With two they covered the head, desiring to signify by this humble gesture the insufficiency of their intellect for the comprehension of the sacramental mystery at which they were assisting, and also their belief and acknowledgment of these mysteries which they confessed prostrate before the majesty and grandeur of the Creator, also desiring to extol with eternal praise the incomprehensible and sacred judgments of the Most High. With the other wings they covered the feet, which are the inferior part which touch the earth, thereby signifying that the very Queen and Lady of heaven was yet of human and earthly nature, also acknowledging Her as the creature excelling all others in dignity and grandeur above all created understanding and judgment. This covering of the feet also signified that not even such exalted Seraphim could keep pace with the dignity and excellence of Mary.

368. With the wings of their breast they beat the air or seemed to fly, thereby intimating two things: On the one hand, by their incessant motion and flight, the love, praise and reverence which they gave to God; on the other, in disclosing their breasts, they desired to serve most holy Mary as a most pure mirror of the Divinity, reflecting his essence and operations to Her during the time of her earthly pilgrimage, for it was not possible nor proper for the Divinity to be manifest to Her in open vision during all that time. The blessed Trinity desired their Daughter and Spouse to see in these Seraphim, the creatures closest to the Divinity and encircling his throne, most faithfully presented in living images what She could not always see in the original.

369. By this means the heavenly Spouse enjoyed the portrait of her Beloved even in the banishment of her pilgrimage, being thus inflamed body and soul with his love by his vision and communication through these exalted and love-consumed Princes. The manner of this communication, over and above that which was sensible in it, was the same as that which they maintained among themselves, namely those of a higher order enlighten those of a lower, as I have said elsewhere (202); for though the Queen of heaven was higher and greater in dignity and merit, yet as David intimated (Ps. 8:6) because of her human nature She was lower than the angels. The ordinary manner of divine influence and enlightenment adapts itself to the conditions of nature and not of grace.

370. Twelve other Angels are the Guardian Angels of the twelve gates of which St. John speaks in chapter XXI of the Apocalypse (v. 12), as explained above (272). They distinguished themselves by the loving praise with which they celebrated the goodness of God in becoming man to teach and converse with men, and afterwards to redeem them and open the gates of heaven by his merits, having as a Coadjutrix in this sacrament his most holy Mother. These holy Angels were signally attentive to such wondrous works and the paths which God was to point out so men could attain eternal life, signified by the twelve gates which correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. The reward of their signal devotion was that God appointed them as witnesses and as it were secretaries of the mysteries of the Redemption, and were privileged to cooperate with the Queen of heaven as the Mother of Mercy and the Mediatrix of those who turn to Her for their salvation. Therefore I said above (273) that Her Majesty the Queen makes use especially of these twelve Angels to assist, enlighten and defend her clients in their necessities, and particularly in order to draw them from sin, whenever they invoke them and most holy Mary.

371. These twelve Angels appeared in the same corporeal shape as those whom I have first mentioned, except they bore palms and crowns reserved for the devotees of this Lady. Their

* cf. Is. 6:2 [Ed.]

service consisted especially in bringing to her mind the ineffable kindness of the Lord toward the human race, and in inciting Her to praise Him and petition Him for the fulfillment of his mercy. She sent them as messengers of her prayers to the throne of the eternal Father. They were sent also to those of her clients who invoked Her, or whom She wanted to help and benefit, in order to enlighten and assist them, as happened many times with the holy Apostles, for often did She aid them by the ministry of Angels in their labors for the primitive Church. Even now in our days these twelve Angels are engaged in the same ministry, helping the devout servants of their and our Queen.

372. The eighteen Angels who completed the number of a thousand were those who signaled themselves in their compassion for the sufferings of the incarnate Word, and their reward for this compassion was great. They appeared to most holy Mary in wonderful beauty, bearing many emblems of the Passion and of other mysteries of the Redemption; most notably they had a cross on the breast and another on the arm, both of singular beauty and refulgent splendor. The sight of this wonderful display excited great admiration in the Queen, a most tender and compassionate love for the sufferings of the Redeemer of the world, and most fervent gratitude and acknowledgment of the benefits which men were to receive in their Redemption and rescue from captivity. The great Princess very often sent these Angels to her divine Son with diverse messages and petitions on behalf of souls.

373. In describing the forms and the ornaments of these Angels I have at the same time mentioned some of their perfections and operations, though necessarily in a limited way if compared to the reality; for they are invisible rays of the Divinity, most alert in their movements and operations, most powerful in strength, most penetrating in their understanding, incapable of mistake, unchangeable in their condition and in their purpose, never forgetting or losing sight of that which once they have undertaken. They are full of grace and glory without any fear of ever losing them. Since they are without a body and invisible, whenever God desires to grant to man the favor of being able to see them they assume an aerial and apparent body, one that is adapted to the senses and to the object intended. All these Angels of Mary the Queen were selected from the most distinguished of their respective orders and choirs, their superiority consisting principally in that of grace and glory. They guarded their Lady without neglecting the least point of their service during her holy life, and even now in heaven they derive a special accidental joy from her vision and company. Although ordinarily only some of them are sent to execute the special mandates of her will, yet all of them together are at times engaged in her service, fulfilling the decrees of the Divinity in her regard.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

374. My daughter, on three points I desire to instruct thee in this chapter. The first is for thee to be grateful with eternal praise and acknowledgment for the benefit which God has worked for thee in giving thee Angels to assist thee, teach thee, and guide thee in thy tribulations and labors. This benefit mortals ordinarily forget by their odious ingratitude and weighty rudeness, without taking notice of the divine mercy and condescension of the Most High in having commanded these holy Princes to assist, guard and defend their fellow creatures, earthly and full of miseries and sins, being themselves of a nature so superior and spiritual, filled with such beauty, dignity and glory. By this forgetfulness ungrateful men deprive themselves of many favors of these same Angels and rouse the indignation of the Lord; but thou, my dearest, recognize thy benefit and give Him a return with all thy might.

375. The second point is for thee always and everywhere to love and reverence these heavenly spirits as if thou didst see them with thy bodily eyes, in this way living with awareness and circumspection as one who has present the courtiers of heaven, not daring to do in their presence what thou wouldst not do in public, nor ceasing to exert thyself in the service of the Lord as they do and desire of thee. Take notice they are always gazing upon the face of God (Mt. 18:10) as Blessed, and when they at the same time see thee there is no reason they should see anything indecent. Be grateful to them for guarding, defending and helping thee.

376. The third point is to live attentive to the calls, notices and inspirations by which these Angels seek to rouse thee, move thee, and enlighten thee to direct thy mind and heart to the remembrance of the Most High and the exercise of all the virtues. Consider how many times thou hast called upon them and they have responded; how thou hast sought them and found them; how often thou hast petitioned them for tokens of thy Beloved and they have given them; how they have solicited for thee the love of thy Spouse, and have kindly reprehended thee for thy carelessness and remissness; and when due to thy temptations and weakness thou didst lose the guiding star of his light they waited for thee, bore with thee, and undeceived thee, returning thee to the right path of the justifications of the Lord and his testimonies. Do not forget, soul, how much thou owest to God above many nations and generations for this benefit of the Angels. Strive to be grateful to thy Lord and to his ministers the Angels.