

## CHAPTER XIX

*The Most High Enlightens the Priests Concerning the Guiltless Innocence of Most Holy Mary, and Informs Her of the Approaching Death of Her Mother St. Anne; She is Carried by the Angels to Her Death Bed.*

710. The Lord did not sleep nor did He slumber (Ps. 120:4) during the clamors of his beloved spouse Mary, though He pretended not to hear them, delighting in the prolonged exercise of her sufferings which occasioned such glorious triumphs, and the admiration and praise of the supernal spirits. The smoldering fire of the persecution already mentioned continued unabated so the divine phoenix Mary could many times renew Herself from the ashes of her humility, and her most pure Heart be regenerated over and over again to new states and conditions of divine grace. But when the opportune time arrived for putting an end to the blind envy and jealousy of those ensnared maidens, and so their childish accusations might not succeed in discrediting Her who was to be the honor of all nature and grace, the Lord spoke to the priest in his sleep and said to him: "My servant Mary is pleasing in my eyes, is my perfect and chosen One, and is entirely innocent of anything of which She is accused." The same revelation was given to Anna, the teacher of the maidens. In the morning she and the priest conferred with each other regarding the divine light and notice both had received, and by this heavenly knowledge they were remorseful for laboring under such deceit. They called the Princess Mary, asking her pardon for having given credit to the false report of the maidens and offering Her all the reparation necessary to defend Her from the persecution and the sufferings consequent upon it.

711. Having heard this proposal She who was the Mother and origin of humility answered the priest and the teacher: "My superiors, I am the one to whom corrections are due, and I beseech thee not to hold me unworthy of undergoing them, since I ask for them and esteem them. The company of the other maidens, my sisters, is for me very agreeable, and I do not desire to lose it by my demerits, since I owe so much to everyone for what they have suffered because of me. In return for this benefit I desire to serve them more faithfully; yet if thou dost command me otherwise I am prepared to obey thy will." This answer of most holy Mary still more comforted and consoled the priest and the instructress, and they approved of her humble petition; however, from that time on they attended to Her and observed Her with new reverence and affection. The most humble Maiden begged to kiss the hand of the priest and of the teacher, asking for their blessing according to her custom, and with this they dismissed Her. Just as the parched desire of the thirsty for drink is increased at the sight of clear water withdrawn beyond their reach, so was the Heart of Mary our Lady filled with yearning regret for the exercise of suffering. Thirsting and burning for the divine love She feared lest through the watchful care of the priest and of the instructress She would from thenceforward be deprived of the treasure of affliction.

712. Seeking solitude and speaking with the Most High alone, She said: "Why, my Lord and most beloved Master, such rigor with me? Why such a long absence and such a forgetfulness of one who cannot live without Thee? And if in my prolonged solitude without thy sweet and loving sight I was consoled by the certain pledges of thy love, which were the little labors I suffered for Thee, how shall I now be able to live in my dereliction without this alleviation? Why, O Lord, dost Thou so quickly withdraw thy hand from giving me this favor? Who besides Thee could have changed the heart of my superiors the priests and the teacher? But I do not merit the benefit of their charitable reprehensions, nor am I worthy to suffer labors, since neither am I worthy of thy desired sight and the gift of thy presence. If I have not known how to please Thee,

my Father and Lord, I shall amend my negligences. If Thou shalt grant me any alleviation in my weakness, there can be none for me if the joy of thy countenance is lacking to my soul; yet in all things I hope, my Spouse, with devoted affection for the fulfillment of thy divine pleasure.”

713. By this discovery of the priests and the instructress of the temple concerning our sovereign Princess the persecution by the maidens was stopped. The Lord also restrained them and prevented the demon from inciting them thereafter. But the time during which He absented Himself and during which He hid Himself from the heavenly Spouse lasted (wonderful to relate!) ten years, although the Most High interrupted this absence a few times by allowing the veil to fall from his face for the relief of his Beloved. Yet it was not often that He dispensed this favor during that time, and He did it with less lavishness and tenderness than in the first years of her childhood. This absence of the Lord was ordained for our Queen so She could by actual exercise of all perfection be made worthy for the dignity to which She was destined by the Most High, for if She had continually enjoyed the vision of His Majesty (as we described above in chapter XIV of this Book) She could not have suffered according to the common order of a mere creature.

714. But during this retirement and absence of the Lord, although most holy Mary missed the intuitive and abstractive visions of the divine essence and of the Angels as mentioned above, her most holy soul and her faculties enjoyed more gifts of grace and more supernatural enlightenment than all the saints ever attained or received, for in regard to this the hand of God never withdrew from Her; but in comparison with the frequent visitations of the Lord in her first years I call the state of her privation of his presence for such a long time an absence and withdrawal of the Lord. It began eight days before the death of her father St. Joachim, and afterwards the persecution of hell began, followed by the persecutions on the part of creatures. They lasted until our Princess reached the age of twelve years. Having passed this age, the holy Angels on a certain day, without manifesting themselves, spoke to Her as follows: “Mary, the end of the life of thy holy mother Anne, as ordained by the Most High, has arrived, and His Majesty has resolved to free her from the prison of her mortal body and bring her labors to a happy end.”

715. At this unexpected and sorrowful message the Heart of the affectionate Daughter was filled with compassion. Prostrating Herself in the presence of the Most High, She poured forth a fervent prayer for the happy death of her mother St. Anne in the following words: “King of the invisible and eternal ages, immortal and powerful Lord, Author of the entire universe, though I am but dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27), and confess I have disoblged thy grandeur, I shall not because of this desist from speaking to my Lord and pouring forth my heart in thy presence (Ps. 61:9), hoping, O my God, Thou shalt not despise her who has always confessed thy holy Name. Dismiss, my Lord, thy servant in peace, who with invincible faith and firm hope has desired to fulfill thy divine pleasure. Let her issue victorious and triumphant over thy enemies to the secure port of thy chosen saints; let thy powerful arm confirm her;\* at the end of her mortal career let that same right hand assist her which has guided her footsteps in the way of perfection. My Father, may she rest in the peace of thy grace and friendship, since she has always sought after it with an upright heart.”

716. The Lord did not respond expressly in words to this petition of his Beloved, but his answer was a marvelous favor shown to Her and to her mother St. Anne. During that night His Majesty commanded the Guardian Angels of most holy Mary to carry Her bodily to the sickbed of her mother and one of them to remain in her stead, assuming for this purpose an aerial body as

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\* cf. I Peter 5:10 [Ed.]

a substitute for hers. The holy Angels obeyed the mandate of God and they carried their and our Queen to the house and room of her holy mother Anne. Being thus brought to the presence of her mother the heavenly Lady kissed her hand and said to her: "My mother and my lady, may the Most High be thy light and thy strength, and may He be blessed, since He has in his condescension not permitted me in my necessity to remain without the benefit of thy last blessing. May I then receive it, my mother, from thy hand." St. Anne gave her blessing, and with an overflowing heart she also thanked the Lord for the great favor thus conferred upon herself, for she knew the sacrament of her Daughter and Queen, and she also expressed her gratitude to Her for the love She manifested to her on such an occasion.

717. Then our Princess turned toward her mother and comforted her against the approach of death, and among many other words of incomparable consolation She spoke also the following: "Mother, beloved of my soul, it is necessary for us to pass through the portal of death to the eternal life for which we hope. Bitter and painful is the passage, yet fruitful, for it is accepted by divine approval, is the beginning of our security and rest, and likewise satisfies for the negligences and defects in not having so justly employed life as the creature should. Welcome death, my mother, and through it pay the common debt with joy of thy spirit, and depart in safety to the company of the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, just and friends of God, our ancestors, where with them thou shalt await the Redemption which the Most High shall send by means of his salvation and our Savior. The security of this hope shall be thy relief until we attain the possession of the good for which we all hope."

718. St. Anne answered her Daughter with a return of love and in a spirit of joy worthy of herself and of such a Daughter on such an occasion. In maternal tenderness she said: "Mary, my beloved Daughter, fulfill now thy obligation by not forgetting me in the presence of our Lord God and Creator, representing to Him the need I have of his protection in this hour. Remember what thou owest to her who has conceived Thee and bore Thee in her womb nine months, who afterwards nourished Thee at her breast and has always held Thee in her heart. Beseech the Lord, my Daughter, to extend the hand of his infinite mercies upon this useless creature who issued forth from them, and that his blessing come upon me in this hour of my death, since now and always have I placed all my confidence entirely in his holy Name. Do not leave me, my beloved, before Thou hast closed my eyes. Thou shalt be left an orphan and without the help of man, but Thou shalt live in the protection of the Most High\* and hope in his ancient mercies. Daughter of my heart, walk in the path of the justifications of the Lord, and beseech His Majesty to govern thy affections and faculties, and be the Master to teach Thee his holy law. Do not leave the temple before taking a state of life, and let this be with the sound counsel of the priests of the Lord, and having continually prayed to God to dispose it by his hand; and if it be his will to give Thee a spouse he may be of the tribe of Juda and of the line of David. Regarding the estate of thy father Joachim and of myself, which shall belong to Thee, share with the poor, with whom thou shouldst be generous and charitable. Keep thy secret hidden within thy bosom, and continually beseech the Omnipotent to show his mercy by sending his salvation and redemption through his promised Messiah. Beg and supplicate his infinite goodness to be thy help, and may his blessing come upon Thee together with mine."

719. In the midst of such exalted and heavenly colloquies the blessed mother St. Anne felt the throes of death approaching, and reclining upon the throne of grace, that is in the arms of her most holy Daughter Mary, she rendered her most pure soul to her Creator. Having closed the

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\* cf. Ps. 90:1 [Ed.]

eyes of her mother as she had requested of her Daughter, and leaving the sacred body in position for burial, the holy Angels returned Mary their Queen to her place in the temple. The Most High did not impede the force of her filial love which naturally would cause a great and tender sorrow at the death of her mother and a sense of loneliness at being deprived of her assistance. But these sorrows were most holy and perfect in our Queen, governed by the graces of her most prudent innocence and purity. In the midst of them She rendered praise to the Most High for the infinite mercies which He had shown to her mother both in life and in death, while her sweet and loving complaints because of the absence of the Lord continued unabated.

720. But this most holy Daughter could not know the full extent of the consolation given to her most happy mother in having Her present at her death, for the Daughter was not aware of her own exalted dignity and the sacrament connected with Her as was known to the mother. This she had always kept secret as the Most High had commanded her; but finding Her at her bedside, She who was the light of her eyes and of the whole world, and having the privilege of expiring in her arms, all the desires of her mortal life were fulfilled, making its end more happy than that of all mortals up to that hour. She died not so much in the fullness of years as in the fullness of merits, and her most holy soul was placed by the Angels in the bosom of Abraham, where she was recognized and revered by all the Patriarchs, Prophets and just who were in that place. This most holy matron was naturally endowed with a great and generous heart and a clear and aspiring intellect, fervent yet at the same time full of tranquility and peace. She was of medium stature, somewhat smaller than her Daughter, most holy Mary; her face was rather round and of a suffused whiteness, her countenance was always equable and composed, and finally she was the mother of Mary, who was to be the Mother of God himself, and this dignity in itself included many perfections. St. Anne lived fifty-six years, portioned off into the following periods: At the age of twenty-four she espoused St. Joachim, and she remained without issue for twenty years; then in her forty-fourth year she gave birth to most holy Mary; and of the twelve years which she lived during the lifetime of this Queen, three were passed in her company and nine during her absence in the temple, which altogether make fifty-six years.

721. Concerning St. Anne, this great and admirable woman, some grave authors assert, as I have been informed, that she was married three times, and that in each one of these marriages she was the mother of one of the three Marys; others have the contrary opinion. The Lord has vouchsafed to me, solely due to his goodness, great enlightenment concerning the life of this fortunate Saint, yet never was it intimated to me that she was ever married except to St. Joachim, or that she ever had any other daughter besides Mary, the Mother of Christ. Perhaps because it does not pertain to nor was necessary for the History which I am writing information was not given to me whether the other Marys who are called her sisters were or were not her cousins, that is, daughters of the sister of St. Anne. When her spouse St. Joachim died she was in the forty-eighth year of her age. The Most High selected and set her apart from the rest of women in order to make her the mother of She who was the Superior of all creatures, inferior only to God, being his Mother. Because she had such a Daughter, and was the grandmother of the Word made man, all nations may call the most fortunate St. Anne blessed.

#### *INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.*

722. My daughter, the greatest science of the creature is to resign himself entirely into the hands of his Creator, who knows why He has formed him and how he must be governed. It only pertains to man to live in obedience to and love of his Lord, who is most faithful in the care of

those who thus oblige Him, and takes to his account all the matters and events of this life in order to draw from them victory and strength for those who trust in his fidelity. He afflicts and corrects the just by adversities, He consoles and vivifies them (I Kg. 2:6) by his favors, encourages them by his promises, and inspires fear by his threats. He absents Himself in order to further solicit the affections of love, He manifests Himself in order to reward and preserve them, and by this variety He makes the lives of the chosen ones more beautiful and delightful. All this happened to me in that which thou hast written of me; He visited me and prepared me in his mercy by diverse kinds of favors, of labors and adversity, persecutions of creatures, and the separation from my parents and from all men.

723. In the midst of these various trials the Lord did not forget my weakness, for with the sorrow for the death of my mother St. Anne He combined the consolation and alleviation of permitting me to be present at her death. O soul, how many benefits do men lose by not attaining to this wisdom! They ignorantly deny divine Providence, which is strong, sweet and efficacious, which measures the orbs of heaven and the elements, which counts the footsteps, discerns the thoughts, and disposes everything for the benefit of the creature. Yet men submit themselves in all things to their own solitude, which is harsh, inefficient and weak, blind, uncertain and hasty. From this evil principle originates and follows irreparable damage for man, for he deprives himself of the divine protection and degrades himself from the dignity of having his Creator as his Helper and Guardian. And beyond this, if by his carnal and diabolical wisdom to which man commits himself he succeeds sometimes in obtaining what he seeks, he considers himself fortunate in his misery, and with sensible pleasure imbibes the mortal venom of eternal death amid the deceitful delectation in which God consequently forsakes and abhors him.

724. Recognize then, my daughter, this danger, and let thy whole solitude be to cast thyself securely into the providence of thy God and Lord\* who, being infinite in wisdom and power, loves thee much more than thou lovest thyself, and knows and desires for thee greater goods than thou knowest how to desire or ask for.† Trust in this goodness and in his promises, which cannot deceive; hear what He says through his Prophet to the just, *it is well* (Is. 3:10), since God takes upon Himself his desires and cares, and charges Himself with them in order to compensate them with generosity. By this most secure confidence thou shalt in mortal life arrive at a participation of blessedness in the tranquility and peace of thy conscience. And though thou findest thyself surrounded by the impetuous waves of temptations and adversities which assail thee with the sorrows of death (Ps. 17:5), and though the torments of hell surround thee, do thou suffer and hope in patience so thou dost not miss the portal of the grace and approval of the Most High.

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\* cf. Ps. 54:23 [Ed.]

† cf. *Collect* for 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost [Ed.]