

CHAPTER XV

Stating Another Kind of Vision and Communication which Most Holy Mary Had with the Holy Angels of Her Guard.

643. Such is the force and efficacy of divine grace and the love it causes in the creature that it can blot out in him the very images of sin and the earthly nature of man (I Cor. 15:49), and form in him a new being and celestial image whose conversation is in heaven (Philip. 3:20), understanding, loving and operating not any more as a creature of earth but as a being celestial and divine, for the force of love ravishes the heart and soul by which the creature lives, sacrificing and transforming them into that which he loves. This Christian truth believed by all, understood by the learned, and experienced by the saints, must be conceived as fulfilled in our great Queen and Lady in so privileged a manner that neither by the example of what was experienced by the saints, nor by the intellect of the angels, can it ever be comprehended or explained. Most holy Mary, being the Mother of the incarnate Word, was Mistress of all creation, yet being a faithful representation of her onlybegotten Son She in imitation of Him made so little use of creatures of which She was Mistress that none ever used them less than She did, for She excluded all that was not absolutely necessary for the service of the Most High and for the natural life of her most holy Son and Herself.

644. To this forgetfulness and withdrawal from all that was earthly corresponded her conversation with all that was heavenly, and this was proportionate to her dignity of Mother of God himself and the Lady of heaven, the earthly communication being thus properly transformed into heavenly communication. It followed as a natural consequence for the Queen and Mistress of the Angels to enjoy singular privileges in regard to the attention paid to Her by the heavenly courtiers, her vassals, and She treated and conferred with them in a more exalted manner than all human creatures, no matter how holy they were. In chapter XXIII of the first Book I have said something of the diverse ordinary visions by which the holy Angels and Seraphim, who were destined and selected for her guard, manifested themselves to our Queen and Mistress, and in the preceding chapter I explained in general the manner and form of the divine visions conceded to Her, having been careful to keep in mind that in all their wide range and sphere they were supremely exalted and divine in their nature, their manner, and their effects upon her most holy soul.

645. In this chapter I will treat of another kind of vision, still more singular and privileged, which the Most High granted to most holy Mary and by which She communicated and visibly treated with the holy Angels of her guard and with the rest who in behalf of the Lord visited Her on diverse occasions. This mode of vision and communication was of the same kind as that by which each one of the supernal spirits knows the others as they are in themselves, without any other image to move the intellect than the very substance and nature of the angel thus known. The superior angels illumine the inferior, making known to them the hidden mysteries which the Most High reveals and manifests immediately to the higher angels for transmission to the lower, for this manner of communicating with them is befitting the greatness and infinite majesty of the highest King and Governor of all creation. From this it can easily be seen this most orderly illumination and revelation is a favor which is superadded to the essential glory of the holy angels, for the essential glory they obtain immediately from the Divinity, each one receiving the vision and fruition of God according to the measure of his merits. One angel cannot create essential happiness in another by illuminating him or revealing to him a mystery, for the one who

is illuminated would not thereby see God face to face, without which he cannot be in beatitude or attain to his last end.

646. But since the Object is infinite and like a voluntary mirror, there are infinite secrets and mysteries besides those which pertain to the beatific knowledge of the saints which God can reveal to the saints, and which He reveals to them especially in the government of his Church in the world, and in these revelations He follows the course which I am explaining. Since these revelations are outside of the essential glory, the lack of these revelations cannot be called ignorance in the angels or a privation of knowledge, but rather it is called nescience or negation, while revelation is called illumination, or a purgation or purification* of that nescience. According to our mode of understanding it could be compared to the process which takes place when the rays of the sun pass through many crystals in succession, making all partake of the same light from the first to the last, touching first those that are closest. Only one difference must be noted in this comparison: The prisms or crystals are entirely passive in this process in respect to the rays, without having any more activity than that given by the sun which illumines all by one operation; but the holy angels are passive in receiving the enlightenment and active in communicating it to their inferiors, and moreover they communicate their light with praise, admiration and love, all derived from the supreme Sun of justice, the eternal and immutable God.

647. Into this admirable and divine order of revelation the Most High introduced most holy Mary so She could enjoy these privileges which the courtiers of heaven possessed as proper to their nature. For this purpose He appointed the Seraphim whom I have mentioned in chapter XIV of the first Book, because they were supreme and nearest to the Divinity; also other Angels of her guard performed the same office when and how it was necessary and appropriate according to the divine will. All of these Angels and others their Queen and ours knew in themselves, without dependence upon the senses and the phantasy, and without any hindrance from her mortal and earthly body. Through this vision and knowledge the Seraphim and other Angels of the Lord illumined and purified† Her, revealing to their Queen many mysteries which for that very purpose they had learned from the Most High. And though this kind of illumination and intellectual vision was not continual in most holy Mary it was very frequent, especially when in order to give Her opportunity for more merits and divine movements of love the Lord hid or absented Himself from Her, as shall be described afterwards (*Con.* 725-6; *Tran.* 8-9). On such occasions He made use of this office of the Angels, allowing their enlightenment to proceed in its order until it was communicated to their Queen.

648. This mode of illumination did not derogate from the dignity of the Mother of God and Lady of the Angels, for in the conferring of these benefits the mode of their participation was not to be determined by the dignity and sanctity of our sovereign Queen, since in that She was superior to all the angelic orders, but rather by the present state and condition of her nature in which She was inferior,△ for She was yet a wayfarer and of a human, bodily and mortal nature. By these illuminations She was to be raised to the angelic operation and estate though yet living in mortal flesh and subject to the natural use of the senses, and though it was a great privilege yet it was entirely proper to her sanctity and dignity. I believe the hand of the Most High has extended this favor to other souls in mortal life, though not so frequently as to his most holy Mother, nor with such a plenitude and under such exalted conditions as in Her. If many doctors

* cf. *Incarnation* par. 110 [Ed.]

† From that nescience spoken of in the previous paragraph [Ed.]

△ cf. Gal. 4:1-2 [Ed.]

(not without great foundation) conceded that St. Paul, Moses, and other saints have enjoyed the beatific vision, it is credible that other earthly wayfarers have shared this kind of knowledge of the angelic nature, for this favor is no more than to see intuitively the angelic substance. Regarding clearness this vision corresponds to the first one I have mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and in regard to the intellectual qualities it corresponds to the third mentioned in the same place, though it does not proceed by means of imprinted images.

649. The truth is this privilege is not ordinary or common, but very rare and extraordinary, and hence demands in the soul a great preparation and purity of conscience. It is incompatible with earthly affections, voluntary imperfections, or any inclination toward sin, for in order for the soul to enter into the angelic order it must lead a life more angelic than human, since if this similarity and agreement is lacking the union of such extremes would imply a monstrous disproportion. With divine grace, however, the creature (though yet in an earthly and corruptible body) can deny itself all that is demanded by its passions and inclinations, die to all visible things, eject from its memory all images of them, and live more in the spirit than in the flesh. And when it arrives at the enjoyment of true peace, tranquility, and quiet of spirit, which cause in it a sweet and loving serenity in the possession of the highest Good, then it is less incapable of being raised to the vision of the angelic spirits by intuitive clearness, receiving the divine revelations which they communicate to each other, and experiencing the admirable effects of this kind of vision.

650. If the revelations which our sovereign Queen received corresponded to her purity and love, their value cannot be estimated by men. The light communicated to Her in the vision of the Seraphim is beyond human comparison, for to a certain extent the image of the Divinity is flashed from them as from most pure spiritual mirrors in which most holy Mary perceived Him in all his infinite attributes and perfections. By some of the effects of this vision were also manifested to Her in an admirable manner the glory of these same Seraphim, because much of this is perceived in seeing intuitively the angelic essence. By the insight into these things She was entirely inflamed and enkindled with divine love and many times rapt in wonderful ecstasy; there, in union with the Seraphim and the Angels, She broke forth in canticles of praise, celebrating the incomparable glory of the Divinity in such a manner that She excited the admiration of the heavenly spirits themselves, for though She was enlightened by them regarding the intellect, yet by her own acts of the will She left them far behind, and with a much greater force of love did She quickly ascend and arrive at union with the ultimate and highest Good, from whom She immediately received new influences of the torrent of the Divinity (Ps. 35:9) by which She was inundated. And if the Seraphim had not been enjoying the presence of the infinite Object which was the beginning and the terminus of their beatific love, they could well have been the pupils of their most holy Queen in divine love, just as She was theirs in regard to the illumination of the mind derived from them.

651. Next to the immediate vision of the spiritual and angelic substance, the more inferior intellectual vision of the same by infused species is more common, as we said also of the abstractive vision of the Divinity. This kind of vision the Queen of heaven sometimes enjoyed, but it was not so common with Her as the one mentioned, for though in other just souls the privilege of seeing the angels and saints by means of intellectual images is very rare and precious, yet in the Queen of the Angels it was not necessary because She had a more exalted communication and knowledge of them. She therefore enjoyed this inferior kind of vision only when the Lord ordained that the Angels would hide themselves, and when the more exalted communion with them was to be interrupted for her greater merit and practice of virtue. At such times She saw them by intellectual or imaginary species as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Divine effects are produced in other souls by these visions of angels through intellectual images, for these celestial beings become known to the mind in their quality as executors and ambassadors of the supreme King, and with them the soul holds sweet colloquy concerning the Lord himself and all that is celestial and earthly, being entirely illumined, taught, corrected, governed, guided and induced to raise itself to the perfect union of divine love, and to work what is most pure, perfect, holy and unblemished in the spiritual life.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

652. My daughter, admirable is the love, fidelity and care with which the angelic spirits assist mortals in their necessities; and most abhorrent is the forgetfulness, ingratitude and rudeness on the part of these same men regarding the acknowledgement of this debt. In the secrecy of the bosom of the Most High, whose face they see in beatific clarity (Mt. 18:10), these celestial spirits know the infinite and paternal love of the Father in heaven for earthly men, and there they give worthy appreciation and esteem for the blood of the Lamb by which men were bought and rescued, and they know the value of the souls thus purchased with the treasure of the Divinity. From this is engendered in the holy angels the watchfulness and attention they give in guarding and benefiting souls, who because the Most High so highly values them He has entrusted them to their custody. I desire thee to understand how by this most exalted ministry of the angels mortals would receive great influences of light, and incomparable favors from the Lord, if they did not hinder them by the obstacle of their sins and abominations, and by their forgetfulness of such a significant benefit. But since they block up the way which God with ineffable providence has chosen for guiding them to eternal happiness, there are many more who condemn themselves by wasting this benefit and remedy than save themselves by the protection of the angels.

653. O my dearest daughter, since many men are so indifferent in attending to the paternal works of my Son and Lord, I desire of thee a singular gratitude for this benefit, since He has favored thee with such a generous hand in appointing Angels to guard thee. Be attentive in their company and listen to their testimonies with reverence; allow thyself to be guided by their light; respect them as ambassadors of the Most High; and beseech their favor in order to be purified from thy sins, freed from imperfections, and inflamed with divine love so thou mayest be transformed to a state so spiritualized thou canst converse with them and be their companion, participating in their divine illuminations, which the Most High shall not deny thee if on thy part thou dost dispose thyself in the manner I desire.

654. Since thou hast desired to know (with the approbation of obedience) the reason why the holy Angels communicated with me by so many kinds of visions, I shall respond to thy desires, declaring to thee more of what by the divine light thou hast understood and written. The cause of this was, on the part of the Most High, his generous love toward me in favoring me, and on my part the state of a viator in which I then was in the world, for this life neither could nor should be uniform regarding the acts of virtue by which the divine Wisdom determined to raise me above all creation. Necessarily proceeding as a human wayfarer, subject to the use of the senses in a variety of experiences and virtuous works, I sometimes acted in an entirely spiritual manner without the hindrance of the senses, and then the Angels communicated with me as they do among themselves, and worked with me as they work; at other times it was necessary to suffer and be afflicted in the inferior part of the soul, and at others in the bodily senses; at other times I suffered want, loneliness, and interior dereliction. According to the vicissitudes of these different effects and states I received the favors and visits of the holy Angels: Many times I spoke to them

intellectually, at other times by imaginary vision, and at other times by corporeal and sensible vision, according to the requirement of my state and necessity, and the ordainment of the Most High.

655. By all these modes my faculties and senses were illumined and sanctified by the operation of divine influences and favors, so I could know all the works of this type by experience, and through all of them receive the influx of supernatural grace. Yet regarding these favors, my daughter, be aware that while the Most High was so magnificent and merciful with me, He so favored me not only due to the dignity of Mother, but also because He considered my works and disposition by which I cooperated on my part with the assistance of his divine grace. Since I withdrew my faculties and senses from all commerce with creatures, and denying all that was sensible and created turned myself toward the highest Good, centering all my powers and will on his holy love alone, by this disposition which I maintained in my soul He sanctified all my faculties by the recompense of so many benefits, visions, and enlightenments, who for his love had deprived myself of all human and earthly delight. I received so much as a reward for my works in mortal flesh that thou canst neither understand nor describe it while thou dost live in it. So great is the liberality and goodness of the Most High that He makes this advance recompense in this life as a pledge of those He holds in reserve for eternal life.

656. Notwithstanding that by these means the powerful arm of God prepared me worthily from my conception for the Incarnation of the Word in my womb, and so my faculties and senses would be sanctified and proportioned for the treatment and communication which I was to have with the Incarnate Word, yet if other souls would dispose themselves to imitate me, living not according to the flesh but living the spiritual life, unspotted and free from earthly contagion, the Most High is so faithful with those who thus oblige Him that He would not deny them his benefits and favors according to the equity of his Divine Providence.