

CHAPTER XIX

Some Conferences which Most Holy Mary Held with Her Angels in the House of St. Elizabeth, and Others which She Held with the Saint.

243. The plenitude of the wisdom and grace of most holy Mary with her immense capacity could not remain idle at any time, place or occasion, always producing the fullness of the highest perfection, working at all times and seasons that which was asked and was possible, without ever falling short of the most holy and excellent in virtue. And since in all places She was both a wayfarer on earth and as it were an inhabitant of heaven, and since She herself was the intellectual and most glorious heaven, and the living temple of the habitation of God himself, She thus carried her own oratory and sanctuary within Her; in this respect there was for Her no difference between her own house and that of her cousin Elizabeth, nor could any other place, time or occupation be a hindrance to Her, for She was superior to all this, and without restraint incessantly devoted Herself to the vision and force of her love. Yet at the same time She conversed with creatures at opportune times and treated with them as the occasion required, giving as much attention to them as the most prudent Lady could appropriately spare for each in particular. And since her most frequent conversation during the three months in which She remained in the house of Zacharias was with St. Elizabeth and her holy Guardian Angels, I shall relate in this chapter something of that which formed the subject of her conferences with them, and also mention other things which happened in her interaction with the Saint.

244. When She was left alone and free to Herself, our heavenly Princess passed many hours ravished and elevated in divine contemplations and visions. Sometimes during them and sometimes outside of them She was accustomed to converse with her Angels about the sacraments and mysteries of her interior love. One day, soon after She had arrived at the house of Zacharias, She spoke to them in the following manner: “Celestial spirits, my guardians and companions, ambassadors of the Most High and luminaries of his divinity, come and strengthen my captive heart, wounded by his divine love and afflicted by its own limitations, since it cannot properly correspond with the works it owes and the debt it recognizes, and where its desires extend. Come, ye sovereign Princes, and praise with me the admirable Name of the Lord, and let us magnify Him for his most holy thoughts and works. Help this poor little worm to bless her Maker, who condescends kindly to look upon her lowliness. Let us speak of the wonders of my Spouse; let us discuss the beauty of my Lord, of my most beloved Son. Let my heart be relieved in manifesting its inmost aspirations to thee, my friends and companions, who knowest my secret and my Treasure whom the Most High has deposited in the narrowness of this fragile and limited vase. Great are these heavenly sacraments, and admirable these mysteries; and though I contemplate them with sweet affections, yet their sovereign grandeur annihilates me, their profundity overwhelms me, and the same efficacy of my love both enfeebles and renews me. Never is my burning heart satisfied, nor do I reach entire repose, since my desire surpasses my works, and my obligation is greater than my desires. I am dissatisfied with myself because I do not accomplish what I desire, nor do my desires encompass all that I owe, and I always find myself vanquished and limited in the return I give. Sovereign Seraphim, listen to my loving anxieties, *because I languish with love* (Cant 2:5). Open to me thy bosoms where the beauty of my Master is reflected, so the resplendence of his light and the tokens of his beauty may recreate the life which faints for his love.”

245. “Mother of our Creator and our Lady,” responded the holy Angels, “Thou dost truly possess the Almighty and our highest Good, and since Thou hast Him so closely bound to Thee, and art his true Spouse and Mother, rejoice in Him and possess Him eternally. Thou art the Spouse and the Mother of the God of love, and since in Thee is the unique cause and fountain of life, no one shall live with Him as Thee, our Queen and Lady. Yet do not desire to find rest in thy love so inflamed, since the condition and state of a viator do not now permit thy affections to attain their ultimate end, nor shall they hinder Thee from acquiring new increases of merit and a greater crown. Thy obligations surpass without compare those of all the nations, yet always shall they grow and become greater. Never shall thy so inflamed love feel adequate to its Object, since He is eternal, and in perfections infinite and without measure. Thou shalt always remain happily vanquished by his greatness, for no one can comprehend Him; only He himself comprehends Himself and loves Himself in the measure in which He deserves to be loved. Eternally, O Lady, Thou shalt find in Him more to desire and more to love, since this corresponds to his grandeur and our glory.”

246. In these colloquies and conferences the fire of divine love was more and more enkindled in the Heart of most holy Mary. In Her was exactly fulfilled the command of the Lord (Lv. 6:12) that in his tabernacle and upon his altar must burn continually the fire of the holocaust, and that the priest of the ancient law must see to its perpetual nourishment and maintenance. This precept was executed to the letter in most holy Mary, for in Her were contained both the altar and the new High Priest, Christ our Lord, who nourished and augmented its flame day by day by administering new material in favors, benefits, and influences of his divinity, while the exalted Lady on her part contributed her ceaseless exertions, which were ineffably enhanced in value by the continual flow of the graces and sanctity of the Lord. From the moment in which this Lady entered into the world this conflagration of his divine love took its rise in order never to be extinguished on this altar through all the eternities of God himself, for as lasting as this eternity and as continuous was and will be the fire of this living sanctuary.

247. At other times She spoke and conversed with the holy Angels when they appeared to Her in human forms, as I have said in several places (*Con.* 328, 420, 758; *Inc.* 181, 202, etc.). Most frequently this conversation revolved around the mystery of the incarnate Word, and in this She manifested so profound a knowledge in citing Holy Scriptures and the Prophets that She caused wonder even in the Angels. On one occasion, in speaking to them of these venerable sacraments, She said: “My masters, servants of the Most High and his friends, my heart is wounded and penetrated by arrows of sorrow when I ponder what Holy Scriptures say of my most holy Son (Gen. 22:2ff.; Num. 21:8; Ps. 21; Dan. 9:26), and what Isaias and Jeremias wrote regarding the most bitter pains and torments which await Him (Is. 53:2ff.; Jer. 11:18ff.). Solomon says they shall condemn Him to a most shameful kind of death (Wis. 2:20), and the Prophets always speak in weighty and superlative terms of his Passion and Death, and all that must come to be fulfilled in Him. O if it could be the will of His Highness that I live at that time in order to submit myself to death for the Author of my life! My spirit is afflicted in considering these infallible truths, and that from my womb my Lord and my Good shall come forth in order to suffer. O who shall guard and defend Him against his enemies! Tell me, sovereign Princes, by what works or by what means can I oblige the eternal Father to turn against me the rigor of his justice, so the Innocent, who cannot incur guilt, can remain free? Well do I know that in order to satisfy the infinite God, offended by men, the works of God incarnate are required; yet by the first work accomplished by my most holy Son He has merited more than the human race can demerit or lose. Since this is sufficient, tell me, is it possible for me to die in order to relieve Him from his death and

torments? My humble desires shall not displease Him, and my anguish shall not disgust Him. Yet what am I saying, and where does my pain and affection carry me? For in all things I desire the fulfillment of the divine will to which I submit.”

248. These and other similar colloquies did most holy Mary hold with her Angels, especially during the time of her pregnancy. The heavenly spirits responded to all her concerns and comforted Her with great reverence, consoling Her by renewing the memory of the very sacraments which She already knew, and by reminding Her of the reasonableness and propriety of the death of Christ for the rescue of the human race, for the conquest of the demons and the spoliation of their power, and for the glory of the eternal Father and the exaltation of the most holy and highest Lord his Son (Titus 2:14; Jn. 12:31, 14:13; Lk. 24:26). So great and exalted were the mysteries touched upon in these discourses of the Queen with the holy Angels that neither can the human tongue describe them nor our capacity comprehend them in this life. When we shall enjoy the Lord we shall see what we cannot at present conceive. From this little which I have said our piety can help us to draw conclusions in regard to others much greater.

249. St. Elizabeth was likewise well versed and enlightened in the divine Scriptures, and much more so since the Visitation, and hence our Queen conversed with her concerning these heavenly mysteries which were known and understood by the matron, instructing and enlightening her by heavenly teachings, for through her intercession the Saint was enriched with many blessings and gifts of heaven. Many times was she in admiration at what she saw and heard regarding the profound wisdom of the Mother of God, and returned to bless Her, saying to Her: “Blessed art Thou, my Lady and Mother of my Lord, among all women (Lk. 1:42), and may all nations know and magnify thy dignity. Most happy art Thou due to the rich Treasure whom Thou bearest in thy virginal womb. I tender Thee my humble and affectionate congratulations for the joy which thy spirit shall have when Thou shalt hold the Sun of justice in thy arms and nourish Him at thy virginal breast. My Lady, in that hour remember me thy servant, and offer me to thy most holy Son and my true God in human flesh, so He may receive my heart in sacrifice. O who shall merit to serve Thee and attend upon thee from this day forth! Yet if I do not merit to attain this happiness, may I enjoy that of having my heart carried in thine, for not without cause do I fear my heart will be torn asunder when I must part from Thee.” Other sweetest affections of most tender love St. Elizabeth uttered in her personal conversation with most holy Mary, and the most prudent Lady consoled, strengthened and enlivened her by her heavenly and efficacious reasonings. Among such excellent works as these, and many other supreme acts of humility and self-abasement, She served not only her cousin Elizabeth but also the servants of her house. Whenever She could find an occasion She swept the house of her relative, and always her oratory at regular times; with the servants She washed the dishes, and She performed other acts of profound humility. Let no one think it strange that I particularize in these small matters, for the greatness of our Queen has made them of importance for our instruction, and thus by knowing them our pride might vanish and our vileness come to shame. When St. Elizabeth learned of the humble services performed by the Mother of piety she was deeply moved and tried to prevent them, and therefore the heavenly Lady concealed them from her cousin wherever it was possible.

250. O Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth, my Protectress and Advocate, since Thou art the Teacher of all sanctity and perfection, with admiration of thy humility I dare, my Mother, to ask Thee: Knowing the Onlybegotten of the Father was within thy virginal womb, and desiring in all things to conduct Thyself as his Mother, how could thy greatness abase itself to such lowliness as sweeping the floor and similar occupations, since according to our notions Thou,

because of the reverence due to thy most holy Son, couldst easily have excused Thyself without failing in the duties of thy most perfect Motherhood? My desire, O Lady, is to understand how Thy Majesty governed Thyself in this matter.

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251. My daughter, in order to respond to thy doubt more (more than what thou hast just written in the preceding chapter), thou must be aware that no occupation or exterior act pertaining to virtue, no matter how humble it may be, if it is well-ordered, can be an impediment to giving worship, reverence and praise to the Creator of all things; for these acts of virtue do not exclude one another, but are all compatible in the creature, and more so in me, who by one means or another always kept present the highest Good without losing Him from sight. Thus I adored and respected Him in all my actions, referring them always to his greater glory; and the Lord himself, who created and ordered all things, despises none of them, nor does it offend Him when they involve small matters. The soul who truly loves Him does not omit any of these humble services in his divine presence, for it seeks and finds Him as the beginning and the end of every creature. And because earthly creatures cannot live without these humble actions, and others which are inseparable from their fragile condition and the preservation of their nature, it is necessary to understand this doctrine well in order to govern themselves in them; for if while engaging in these actions and concerns they do not pay attention to their Creator,* there will be many and large interruptions in their exterior virtues and merits, and in the interior exercise of virtue. All this is a reprehensible diminution and defect, little noticed by earthly creatures.

252. By this doctrine thou must regulate thy terrestrial actions, whatever they may be, in order not to lose time, which can never be recovered. Whether eating, working, resting, sleeping or watching, in whatever time, place and occupation, always adore, reverence, and look upon thy great and powerful Lord (I Cor. 10:31) who fills and preserves all things. I now desire thee to understand what most moved and incited me to perform all the acts of humility, which was the consideration that my most holy Son came in humility in order to teach by doctrine and example this virtue in the world (Mt. 11:29), to banish vanity and pride in men, and to root out this seed sown by Lucifer among mortals with the first sin. His Majesty gave me such an exalted knowledge of what pleases Him regarding this virtue that in order to be allowed to perform only one of the acts mentioned by thee, such as sweeping the floor or kissing the feet of the poor, I would suffer the greatest torments of the world. Thou shalt not find words with which to consider the love I had for humility, nor its excellence and nobility. In the Lord thou shalt know and understand what thou cannot manifest with reasonings.

253. Thus write this doctrine in thy heart, and keep it as the anchor of thy life; exert thyself always in everything that which spurns human vanity, despising it as odious and execrable in the eyes of the Most High. By this humble conduct may thy thoughts be always most noble, and thy conversation in heaven and with the angelic spirits (Philip. 3:20); engage and converse with them so they may give thee new light regarding the Divinity and the mysteries of Christ my most holy Son. With creatures let thy conversations be such that from them thou always become more fervent, while thou dost awaken and move them to humility and divine love. In thy interior take the last place among all creatures, so when the occasion and time arrives for exercising acts of humility thou findest thyself prompt in performing them. Thus thou shalt be the mistress of thy

* cf. Lk. 10:41 [Ed.]

passions if first in thy opinion of self thou hast acknowledged thyself as the least, the weakest, and the most useless of creatures.