

CHAPTER XI

Most Holy Mary Listens to the Message of the Holy Angel; the Mystery of the Incarnation is Executed, and the Incarnate Word is Conceived in Her Womb.

123. I wish to confess before heaven and earth and its inhabitants, and in the presence of the universal Creator of all, the eternal God, that in coming to take up the pen in order to write of the profound mystery of the Incarnation my feeble strength deserts me, my tongue is struck mute, my discourse is silenced, my faculties are astonished, and my understanding is eclipsed and overwhelmed by the divine light which guides and instructs me. In it all is known without error and understood without tediousness; I see my insufficiency, and I know the emptiness of words and the deficiency of terms in order to fully describe the conceptions of a sacrament which is a summary comprising both God himself and the greatest and most wonderful work of his omnipotence. I see in this mystery the divine and admirable harmony of his infinite providence and wisdom by which from his eternity He ordained and prepared it, and has been directing the world from its creation for it, so from all his works and creatures could be brought forth the adapted remedy and the most high end of the descent of God to the world in order to be made man.

124. I saw that the eternal Word had awaited and chosen as the most opportune time and hour for his descent from the bosom of the Father the midnight of mortal perversion (Wis. 18:14-15), when the whole posterity of Adam was buried and absorbed in the sleep of forgetfulness and ignorance of their true God, and when there was no one to open his mouth to confess and bless Him except some chosen souls among his people. All the rest of the world was lost in silent darkness, having passed a protracted night of five thousand and nearly two hundred years. Ages had succeeded ages, and generations followed upon generations, each one in the time predestined and decreed by eternal Wisdom, so all souls could know their Creator and encounter Him, since all had Him so near that in Himself He gave them life, movement and being (Acts 17:27-8). The clear day of his inaccessible light had not arrived, and though some mortals came nigh to Him as it were blindly and touched Him in his creatures, yet they did not attain to the Divinity, and in failing to recognize Him they cast themselves upon the sensible and most vile things of the earth (Rom. 1:23).

125. The happy day, then, had arrived in which the Most High, setting aside the long ages of this dark ignorance (Acts 17:30), resolved to manifest Himself to men and begin the Redemption of the human race by taking their nature in the womb of most holy Mary, now prepared for this event as already stated (5ff.). In order to be able to describe what was revealed to me concerning this event it is necessary to make mention of some hidden sacraments connected with the descent of the Onlybegotten from the bosom of the Father. I presuppose that among the three divine Persons, as faith teaches, though there is a personal distinction, yet there is no inequality in wisdom, omnipotence, or other attributes, as also must be said of the divine nature; and just as They are equal in dignity and infinite perfection, so They are also equal in the operations which are called *ad extra*, which proceed from God himself for the production of some creature or temporal object. These operations are indivisibly wrought by the three divine Persons, for not one Person alone produces them but all Three insofar as They are one and the same God, having one wisdom, one understanding, and one will. Hence what the Son knows, wills and works, that also the Father knows, wills and works; and so also the Holy Ghost knows, wills and works whatever is known, willed and worked by the Father and the Son.

126. In this indivisibility of action the three Persons wrought and executed, by one and the same act, the mystery of the Incarnation, though only the Person of the Son accepted for Himself the nature of man, uniting it to Himself hypostatically. Therefore we say the Son was sent by the eternal Father, from whose intelligence He proceeds, and the Father sent Him by the work of the Holy Ghost, who intervened in this mission. And since the Person of the Son was to be made man, before descending from the heavens and the bosom of the Father, in that divine consistory, and in the name of that same humanity which He was to receive in his Person, He made a proposition and petition, representing to the Father his foreseen merits, so by them could be conceded to the entire human race his Redemption and the pardon of the sinners for whom He was to satisfy the divine justice.* He desired the *fiat* or ratification of the most blessed will of the Father (who sent Him) for the acceptance of this Redemption by means of his most holy works and his passion, and through the mysteries which He was to enact in the new Church and the law of grace.

127. The eternal Father accepted this petition and the foreseen merits of the Word, and He conceded all that was proposed and asked for mortals, and He himself confirmed the elect and predestined souls as the inheritance and possession of Christ forever. Thus Christ our Lord himself, as St. John wrote, says He has neither lost nor allowed to perish those whom the Father had given him (Jn. 18:9), but kept all, except the son of perdition, which was Judas (Jn. 17:12). In another place it is said that no one shall snatch his sheep from his hands, nor from those of his Father (Jn. 10:28-9). It would be the same for all mortals if they would avail themselves of the Redemption, which being sufficient should also be efficacious for all and in all, since his divine mercy desired to exclude no one, if only all would make themselves capable of receiving its benefits through the Redeemer.

128. All this, according to our way of understanding, happened in heaven at the throne of the most blessed Trinity as a prelude to the *fiat* of most holy Mary of which I shall presently speak. At the moment in which the Onlybegotten of the Father descended to her virginal womb all the heavens and creatures were moved. Due to the inseparable union of the divine Persons all of Them descended with the Word, though the Word alone was to become incarnate; and with the Lord their God all the hosts of the celestial army issued from heaven, full of invincible strength and splendor. Though it was not necessary to prepare the way, since the Divinity fills the universe, is present in all places, and cannot be impeded by anything, nevertheless all the eleven material heavens showed deference to their Creator, and together with the inferior elements opened up and as it were parted for his passage. The stars shone with greater brilliancy, and the moon and sun with the planets hastened the course of the service of their Maker in order to be present at the greatest of his works and wonders.

129. Mortals did not perceive this commotion and renewal of all the creatures, not only because it happened during the night but also because the Lord desired it to be known only to the angels. These with new wonder praised Him, knowing these profound and venerable mysteries were hidden from men, for they knew men were far removed from understanding these wonderful benefits, so admirable even in the eyes of the angelic spirits; to them alone was at that time assigned the duty of giving glory, praise and reverence for these benefits to their Maker. However, into the hearts of some of the just the Most High infused at that hour a new movement and influx of extraordinary joy of which they became conscious. They conceived new and grand ideas concerning the Lord, and some of them were inspired and began to confer within

* cf. Is. 53:11-12 [Ed.]

themselves whether this new sensation which they felt was the effect of the coming of the Messiah in order to redeem the world. Yet all of this remained concealed, for each one thought that he alone had experienced this renewal of his interior.

130. In the other creatures there was a similar renovation and change. The birds moved about with new songs and extraordinary merriment; the plants and trees gave forth more fruit and fragrance; and all the rest of creatures respectively felt or received a certain hidden vivifying change. But among those who received the greatest share were the Fathers and Saints in limbo, where the archangel St. Michael was sent with the glad message in order to console them and leave them full of joy and new praises. Only for hell was it a cause of new regret and pain, for at the descent of the eternal Word from on high the demons felt an impetuous force of the divine power which came upon them like the waves of the sea and buried all of them in the deepest caverns of their darkness without leaving them any strength of resistance or recovery. When by divine permission they were again able to rise they poured forth upon the world and wandered throughout it, inquiring whether there was some new event to which they could attribute what they had felt within themselves; however, though they held several conferences among themselves they were unable to find the cause. The divine power concealed from them the sacrament of the Incarnation and the manner in which most holy Mary conceived the incarnate Word (326). Not until the death of Christ on the cross did they arrive at the certainty that He was true God and true man, as we shall there relate (*Tran.* 705).

131. So the mystery of the Most High could be fulfilled, the archangel St. Gabriel, in the shape described in the preceding chapter (113), accompanied by innumerable Angels visible in human forms and resplendent with incomparable beauty, entered into the chamber where most holy Mary was praying. It was on a Thursday at six o'clock in the evening and at the approach of night. The great modesty and restraint of the Princess of heaven did not permit Her to look at him more than was necessary to recognize him as an Angel of the Lord. Recognizing him as such She in her accustomed humility wished to do him reverence. The holy Prince would not allow it; on the contrary, he himself bowed profoundly as before his Queen and Lady, in whom he adored the heavenly mysteries of his Creator. At the same time he recognized that from that day on the custom of ancient times whereby men adored the angels, as Abraham had done (Gen. 18:2), was changed; for since human nature was raised to the dignity of God himself in the Person of the Word, men now held the position of adopted children, of companions and brethren of the angels, as the Angel said to the Evangelist St. John when he refused to be adored (Apoc. 19:10).

132. The holy Archangel saluted our and his Queen and said: *Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus* (Lk. 1:28). Hearing this new salutation of the Angel this most humble of all creatures was troubled but not confused in mind (Ib. 29). This disturbance arose from two causes: First, her profound humility by which She reputed Herself as the least of all mortals, and the novelty of hearing Herself saluted and called blessed among all women, while at the same time judging herself so lowly; and second, when She heard this salutation and began to consider within Herself how She should receive it, She was interiorly made to understand by the Lord that He chose Her for his Mother, and this caused a still greater disturbance, having such a humble opinion of Herself. Due to this disturbance the Angel proceeded to explain to Her the decree of the Lord, saying (Ib. 30-2): *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the rest as recorded of the holy Archangel.*

133. Among all creatures our most prudent and humble Queen alone was sufficiently intelligent and magnanimous to estimate at its true value such a new and unheard-of sacrament; and in proportion as She realized its greatness, so was She also moved with admiration. Yet She turned her humble Heart to the Lord, who could not refuse Her any petition, and in the secret of her spirit She asked for new light and assistance by which to govern Herself in such an arduous transaction; for, as we have said in the preceding chapter (119), the Most High, in order to permit Her to act in this mystery solely by faith, hope and charity, left Her in the common state and suspended all other kinds of favors and interior elevations which She so frequently or continually enjoyed. In this disposition She replied and said to St. Gabriel what is written in St. Luke (1:34): “*How shall this be done that I conceive and bear a Son, because I know not man, nor can know him?*” At the same time She interiorly represented to the Lord the vow of chastity which She had made and the espousal which His Majesty had celebrated with Her.

134. The holy prince Gabriel replied (Ib. 35-7): “Lady, it is easy for the divine power to make Thee a Mother without knowing man. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon Thee* by his presence and shall remain with Thee anew, *and the power of the Most High shall overshadow Thee*, so of Thee can be born the Holy of Holies *who shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who is called barren; because no word shall be impossible with God.* He who can make her conceive and give birth who was sterile can make Thee, Lady, to become his Mother while remaining always a Virgin and consecrating still more thy great purity. To the Son whom Thou shalt bear *God shall give the throne of David his father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever* (Ib. 32). Thou art not ignorant, O Lady, of the prophecy of Isaias (Is. 7:14), that *a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel*, God with us. This prophecy is infallible and it must be fulfilled in thy person. Thou also knowest of the great mystery of the bush which Moses saw burning without its being consumed by the fire (Ex. 3:2); this signified the union of the two natures, divine and human, without the human nature being consumed by the divine, and that the Mother of the Messiah shall conceive and give birth without violation of her virginal purity. Remember also, Lady, the promise of the eternal God to the patriarch Abraham that after the captivity of his posterity in Egypt, *in the fourth generation* (Gen. 15:16) they would return to this land, the mysterious signification of which was that in this, the fourth generation,* the incarnate God is to rescue the whole race of Adam through thy cooperation from the oppression of the devil. And the ladder which Jacob saw in his sleep (Ib. 28:12) was an express figure of the royal way which the eternal Word in human flesh would open so mortals could ascend to heaven and the angels descend to earth, where the Onlybegotten of the Father shall lower Himself in order to converse upon it with men and communicate to them the treasures of his divinity by participation in the virtues and perfections which shall be in Him immutable and eternal.”

135. With these and many other words the Ambassador of heaven instructed most holy Mary in order to relieve the disturbance of his message by the remembrance of the ancient promises and prophecies of Scriptures by faith in and knowledge of them and of the infinite power of the Most High. But since the Lady herself exceeded the angels in wisdom, prudence, and in all sanctity,

* In the original autographed manuscript Mary of Agreda explains this fourth generation as follows: “The mystery of this fourth generation is that there are four generations: First, that of Adam without a father or mother; second, that of Eve without a mother; third, of our own, from a father and mother; fourth, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, from a Mother without a father.” [Rev. Blatter]

She withheld her answer in order to be able to give it in accordance with the divine will, and so it would be worthy of the greatest of all the mysteries and sacraments of the divine power. She reflected that upon her answer depended the pledge of the most blessed Trinity, the fulfillment of his promises and prophecies, the most pleasing and acceptable of all sacrifices, the opening of the gates of paradise, the victory and triumph over hell, the Redemption of the entire human race, the satisfaction of divine justice, the foundation of the new law of grace, the glorification of men, the rejoicing of the angels, and whatever was connected with the Incarnation of the Onlybegotten of the Father and his assuming the form of a servant in her virginal womb (Philip. 2:7).

136. A great wonder indeed, and worthy of our admiration, that all these mysteries and whatever others they included were entrusted by the Most High to a humble Maiden and made dependent upon her *fiat*. But appropriately and securely He left them to the wise and strong decision of this valiant Woman (Prov. 31:10-11), since She would consider them with such magnanimity and nobility that She would not leave Him frustrated in his confidence in Her. The operations which proceed within God himself do not depend on the cooperation of creatures, for they have no part in them, and God could not expect such cooperation in order to work *ad intra*. But in the works *ad extra* and such as were contingent, among which that of becoming man was the most exalted, He could not proceed without the cooperation of most holy Mary and without her free consent, for He desired to reach this pinnacle of all the works outside Himself in Her and through Her, and He desired that we owe this benefit to this Mother of Wisdom and our Reparatrix.

137. Therefore this great Lady considered and inspected profoundly this spacious field of the dignity of Mother of God (Ib. 16) in order to purchase it by her *fiat*; She clothed Herself in fortitude more than human, and She tasted and saw how profitable was this enterprise and commerce with the Divinity (Ib. 17-18). She comprehended the ways of his hidden benevolence and adorned Herself with fortitude and beauty. Having conferred within Herself and with the celestial messenger Gabriel about the grandeur of these high and divine sacraments, and finding Herself in excellent condition to receive the message sent to Her, her purest soul was absorbed and elevated in admiration, reverence, and the highest intensity of divine love. By the intensity of these movements and supernal affections her most pure Heart, as it were by natural consequence, was contracted and compressed with such force that it distilled three drops of her most pure blood,* and these being placed in the natural place for conception were formed by the power of the divine and Holy Ghost into the body of Christ our Lord. Thus the matter from which the most holy humanity of the Word for our Redemption is composed was furnished and administered by the most pure Heart of Mary and through the sheer force of her true love. At the same moment, with humility never sufficiently to be extolled, inclining slightly her head and joining her hands, She pronounced those words which were the beginning of our reparation: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Lk. 1:38).

138. At the pronouncing of this *fiat*, so sweet to the hearing of God and so fortunate for us, in one instant four things happened: First, the most holy body of Christ our Lord was formed from the three drops of blood furnished by the Heart of most holy Mary; second, the most holy soul of the same Lord was created, just as other souls; third, the soul and the body united in order to compose his perfect humanity; and fourth, the Divinity united Himself in the Person of the Word with the humanity, which by uniting hypostatically to the humanity formed one incarnate individual; and thus was formed Christ, true God and true man, our Lord and Redeemer. This

* cf. *Coronation* 124 [Ed.]

happened in springtime on the twenty-fifth of March, at break or dawning of the day, in the same hour in which our first father Adam was created, and in the year of the creation of the world 5199,* which agrees also with the count of the Roman Church in her Martyrology under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This reckoning is the true and certain one, as was told to me when I inquired by the command of my superiors. Conformable to this the world was created in the month of March, which corresponds to the beginning of creation; and since the works of the Most High are perfect and complete (Dt. 32:4), the plants and trees came forth from the hands of His Majesty bearing fruit, and they would have borne them continually without intermission if sin had not changed the whole of nature, as I will expressly relate in another treatise if it is the will of the Lord. Now however I will not detain myself with this since it does not pertain to our subject.

139. In the same instant in which the Almighty celebrated the nuptials of the hypostatic union in the womb of most holy Mary, the heavenly Lady was elevated to the beatific vision, the Divinity manifesting Himself to Her intuitively and clearly; in it She knew most exalted sacraments, of which I shall speak in the next chapter. The mysteries of the inscriptions with which She was adorned and which the Angels exhibited, as related in chapter VII (*Inc.* 82; also *Con.* 207, 363-4), were each in particular made clear to Her. The divine Child began to grow naturally in her womb by the nourishment, sustenance and blood of the most holy Mother as the rest of men, though He was more free and exempt from the imperfections to which other children of Adam are subject in that place and state, because from certain accidentals unnecessary to the substance of generation, which are the effects of sin, the Empress of heaven was free. She was also free from the tainted superfluities which in other women are natural and common, and from which the other children are formed, sustained and grow; for in order to administer the material which is lacking in the infected nature of the descendants of Eve She exercised heroic acts of virtue, especially charity. And since the most fervent operations and most loving affections of her soul naturally altered her humors and blood, divine Providence thus directed the sustenance of the divine Child by which the humanity of our Redeemer was naturally nourished, while the Divinity was recreated by the pleasure of her heroic virtues. Most holy Mary furnished to the Holy Ghost for the formation of this body pure and limpid blood, free from sin and all its tendencies; and whatever impure and imperfect matter is supplied by other mothers for the growth of their children was administered by the Queen of heaven most pure, substantial and delicate, since She communicated it by the power of her loving affections and her other virtues. In like manner was purified the substance of the food of the heavenly Queen, for since She knew her nourishment was at the same time to sustain and nourish the Son of God, She partook of it with such heroic acts of virtue that the angelic spirits wondered how such common human actions could be connected with such supernal heights of merit and perfection in the sight of God.

140. The heavenly Lady was thus established in such high privileges in her position as Mother of God that those which I have already mentioned, and which I shall yet mention, convey not even the smallest idea of her excellence, and my tongue cannot describe it, for neither is it possible to conceive it by the understanding, nor can the most learned nor the most wise of men find adequate terms to express it. The humble, who are proficient in the art of divine love, become aware of it by infused light and by the interior taste and feeling by which such sacraments are perceived. Not only was most holy Mary made a heaven, a temple, and a

* cf. *Transfixion* 648 [Ed.]

habitation of the most holy Trinity, transformed thereto, elevated and deified by the special and unheard-of operation of the Divinity in her most pure womb, but her humble cottage and her poor little oratory were consecrated by the Divinity as a new sanctuary of God. The heavenly spirits, who as witnesses of this marvel assisted at it and contemplated it, with new canticles of praise and indescribable rejoicing magnified the Omnipotent, and in company with the most happy Mother blessed Him in their name and in the name of the human race, which was yet ignorant of this, the greatest of his benefits and mercies.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

141. My daughter, I see thee in admiration, and rightly so, in having perceived with new light the mystery of the Divinity humbling Himself in uniting Himself with the human nature in the womb of a poor maiden such as I was. I desire then, my dearest, that thou turn thy attention toward thyself and ponder how God humbled Himself in coming into my womb not for me alone, but also for thee as for me. The Lord is infinite in mercies, and his love has no limit, and thus He attends to and assists any soul who receives Him, and He rejoices in it as if He had created it alone, and been made man for it alone. For this reason thou must consider thyself as alone in the world in order to thank the Lord with all thy powers of affection for his coming, and then give thanks because at the same time He came for all. And if with living faith thou dost understand and confess that the same God, infinite in attributes and eternal in majesty, who came down to assume human flesh in my womb, seeks also thee, calls thee, rejoices thee, caresses thee, and turns entirely toward thee as if thou wert his only creature (Gal. 2:20), ponder well and consider to what such admirable condescension obliges thee. Convert this admiration into living acts of faith and love, since thou owest all to such a King and Lord, who condescended to come to thee when thou couldst neither seek nor attain Him.

142. All this Lord can give thee outside of Himself shall seem to thee much, even when looking upon it by human light and affection without attending to any superior enlightenment. It is true that from the hand of such an eminent and supreme King any gift is worthy of esteem. Yet if thou dost attend to God himself, and know Him by divine light, and realize He made thee capable of his divinity, then thou shalt see that if He did not merely communicate such a gift to thee, but rather God himself came to thee, all He created outside of Himself would be nothing and worthless for thee; thou wouldst rejoice and find rest only in knowing thou hast such a God, so loving, so amiable, so powerful, sweet and rich; who, being such a great and infinite God, deigns to humble Himself to thy lowliness in order to raise thee from the dust and enrich thy poverty, performing toward thee the duties of a Shepherd, a Father, a Spouse, and a most faithful Friend.

143. Therefore, my daughter, attend in the secret of thy heart to the effects of this truth. Ponder well and consider the most sweet love of this great King for thee in his punctuality; in his gifts and caresses; in the favors thou dost receive; in the works confided to thee; in the lamp which has radiated his divine science in thy interior for the exalted knowledge of the infinite greatness of his own Being; in his admirable works and most hidden mysteries; in all truth; and in the nothingness of visible existence. This science is the first beginning and principle, the basis and foundation of the doctrine which I have given thee so thou mayest come to know the decorum and magnanimity with which thou art to treat the favors and benefits of this Lord and God, thy true Good, treasure, light and guide. Look upon Him as upon the infinite God, loving and

awesome. Hear, my dearest, my words, my teaching and discipline, for in them are *the light of the eyes and peace*.*

* cf. Baruch 3:14 [Ed.]