

CHAPTER XIII

Mary Most Holy is Informed of the Will of the Lord that His Onlybegotten Son be Circumcised; She Confers about This with St. Joseph; the Most Holy Name of JESUS is Brought from Heaven.

513. When the most prudent Virgin found Herself Mother by the Incarnation of the divine Word in her womb, She began to confer with Herself concerning the labors and hardships which her most sweet Son had come upon earth to suffer. And since the knowledge She had of the Scriptures was so profound She understood all the mysteries contained therein, and began to foresee and prepare with incomparable compassion for all He was to suffer for the Redemption of man. This sorrow, foreseen and expected with such a full knowledge of details, was a prolonged martyrdom for the most meek Mother of the sacrificial Lamb of God (Jer. 11:19). Yet in regard to the Circumcision, which was to take place after the birth of the Child, the heavenly Lady had received no command or intimation of the will of the eternal Father. This uncertainty excited the loving solicitude and sweet complaints of the tender and affectionate Mother. Her prudent foresight enabled Her to conjecture that since her most holy Son had come to honor and confirm his law by fulfilling it (Mt. 5:17), and had moreover come in order to suffer for men (Mt. 20:28), He would be constrained by his burning love and by other motives to undergo the pains of circumcision.

514. On the other hand, her maternal love and compassion inclined Her to exempt her most sweet Child from this suffering if it was possible. She also knew circumcision was a rite instituted for cleansing the newborn children from original sin, whereas the infant God was entirely free from this guilt, not having contracted it in Adam. In this hesitation between the love of her divine Son and obedience to the eternal Father the most prudent Virgin practiced many heroic acts of virtue, unspeakably pleasing to His Majesty. Although She could have easily escaped this uncertainty by directly asking the Lord what was to be done, yet being as humble as She was prudent She refrained. Neither would She ask her Angels, for with admirable wisdom She awaited the opportune and proper time and season assigned by divine Providence for all things,* and would never seek with anxiety and curiosity to know beforehand anything by extraordinary and supernatural means, much less when it was a matter of alleviating any personal suffering. When any grave and doubtful affair arose in which there was danger of offending the Lord, or some urgent undertaking for the good of creatures in which it was necessary to know the divine will, She first asked permission to submit her petition for the declaration of his pleasure and consent.

515. This does not conflict with what I said in Book Two, chapter X, namely that most holy Mary undertook nothing without asking permission and counsel of God, for this consultation and understanding of the divine pleasure was not accompanied by the desire of special revelation, for in this, as I have said, She was most reticent and prudent, only in rare cases making such a petition. Without aspiring to new revelation She was in the habit of consulting the habitual and supernatural aid of the Holy Ghost, who governed and guided Her in all her actions. In directing her faculties by this interior light She perceived the greater perfection and sanctity open to Her in the affairs and transactions of everyday life. Although it is true the Queen of heaven possessed special claims and rights to be informed of the will of God in different ways, yet as the great

* cf. Eccles. 3:1-8 [Ed.]

Lady was the model of all sanctity and discretion She would not avail Herself of this supernatural order and direction except in appropriate cases. In all the rest She guided Herself by fulfilling to the letter the words of David: *As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us* (Ps. 122:2). Yet this ordinary light in the Mistress of the world was greater than that of all mortals together, and in it She sought the *fiat* by which She would know the divine will.

516. The mystery of the Circumcision was particular and unique, and called for special enlightenment from the Lord, and this the prudent Mother hoped would come in opportune time. In the meanwhile, addressing the law which ordained it, among other things She said: “O common law, thou art just and holy, yet very harsh for my heart if thou art to wound Him who is thy life and true Master! That thou art rigorous to cleanse guilt from those stained by it is just; but to execute thy severity upon the Innocent, who is undefiled (Heb. 7:26-7), seems the excess of rigor unless his own love permits thee! O if it would please my Beloved to exempt Himself from this punishment! Yet how shall He refuse it, He who came to seek suffering and embrace the cross, in order to fulfill and perfect the law (Mt. 5:17)? O cruel knife, if only thou couldst direct thy rigor upon my own life, and not upon the Lord who gave it to me! O my Son, sweet Love and Light of my soul, is it possible for Thee so soon to shed thy blood, which is more precious than heaven and earth? My loving pity inclines me to hold Thee exempt from the common law, which as its Author does not include Thee; yet the desire to comply with it urges me to subject Thee to its rigor, unless Thou, my sweet Life, dost change the decree and allow me to suffer it. The human existence which Thou hast from Adam, my Lord, I have given Thee, yet without its stain of guilt, and for this purpose thy omnipotence dispensed me from the common law of contracting it. Since Thou art the Son of the eternal Father and *the figure of his substance* (Heb. 1:3) by eternal generation, Thou art infinitely removed from sin; hence why, my Master, wouldst Thou subject Thyself to the law which is its remedy? Yet I see, my Son, that Thou art the Teacher and Redeemer of men, and shalt confirm thy doctrine by example, not yielding the least point in this matter. O eternal Father, if it is possible let the knife now lose its severity and the flesh its sensitivity! May this pain be inflicted upon me, a vile worm; may thy onlybegotten Son fulfill the law, yet I alone feel its painful punishment. O cruel, O inhuman sin, which so soon dost proffer the gall to Him who cannot commit thee! O sons of Adam, abhor and fear sin, which for its remedy demands the blood of the Lord God himself be shed amid such pains!”

517. Such grief the pious Mother mixed with the joy of seeing the Onlybegotten of the Father born of Her and resting in her arms, and thus She passed the days which remained before the Circumcision, being faithfully attended by St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse. To him alone She spoke of the Circumcision, yet only in few words and mixed with their tears of compassion. Before eight days after the birth were completed, the most prudent Queen knelt in the presence of the Lord and spoke with Him concerning Her doubt, saying: “Highest King, Father of my Lord, behold here thy slave with the true sacrifice and Victim in her hands (Eph. 5:2). My lamentation and its cause are not unknown to thy wisdom (Ps. 37:10). I know, my Lord, thy divine consent in what must be done with thy and my Son in order to fulfill the law. If by suffering the pains of its rigor and much more I could rescue my sweetest Son and true God, my heart is prepared (Ps. 56:8); yet I am likewise ready not to exempt Him if by thy will He must be circumcised.”

518. The Most High answered Her, saying: “My Daughter and my Dove, let not thy Heart be afflicted by delivering thy Son to the knife and the pain of circumcision, since I have sent Him into the world in order to give an example, and to put an end to the law of Moses by entirely

fulfilling it (Mt. 5:17). If the habitation of his humanity, which Thou hast given Him as his natural Mother, must be torn by the wound of his flesh, together with thy soul, He shall also suffer in his honor, since He is my natural Son by eternal generation (Ps. 2:7), the image of my substance (Heb. 1:3), equal to Me in nature, majesty and glory (Jn. 10:30), yet delivers Himself to the law and sacrament freeing from sin without manifesting to men He cannot be guilty of it (II Cor. 5:21). Thou knowest, my Daughter, that for this and other greater sufferings Thou must submit thy Onlybegotten and mine. Thus allow Him to shed his blood and yield to Me the first fruits of the eternal salvation of men.”

519. To this decree of the eternal Father the heavenly Lady, as the Cooperatrix of our salvation, conformed Herself with such plenitude of all sanctity as is far beyond human understanding. With complete and most loving obedience She offered up her Onlybegotten, saying: “Lord and God most high, I offer Thee the Victim and Host of acceptable sacrifice with all my heart, though I am full of compassion and sorrow that men have offended thy immense goodness in such a manner that the necessary satisfaction must be made by a Person who is God. Eternally shall I praise Thee, since Thou dost look with infinite love upon the creature, not pardoning thy own Son for their remedy (Eph. 5:2). I, who by thy condescension am his Mother, must above all mortals and the rest of creatures subject myself to thy pleasure, and therefore I deliver to Thee the most meek Lamb (Rom. 8:32) who is to take away the sins of the world by his innocence (Jn. 1:29). Yet if it is possible to moderate the pains caused by this knife in my sweet Child, while augmenting them in my bosom, thy arm is mighty to effect this exchange.”

520. Most holy Mary issued from her prayer, and without manifesting to St. Joseph what She had understood therein, with rare prudence and most sweet reasoning advised him to arrange for the Circumcision of the infant God (Lk. 2:21). She spoke to him as one consulting him and asking his opinion, for the time pointed out by the law for the Circumcision of the divine Infant had already arrived (Gen. 17:12), and since they had not received any orders to the contrary it seemed necessary to comply with it. They themselves, She said, were more bound to please the Most High, to obey more punctually his precepts, and to be more zealous in the love and care of his most holy Son than all the rest of creatures, seeking to fulfill in all things the divine pleasure in return for his incomparable favors. To these words St. Joseph answered with the greatest modesty and discretion, saying that since no command to the contrary had been given concerning the Child, he desired in all things to conform himself to the divine will manifested in the common law; that although the incarnate Word as God was not subject to the law, yet He was now clothed with our humanity, and as a most perfect Teacher and Savior no doubt desired to conform with other men in its fulfillment. Then he asked his heavenly Spouse how the Circumcision was to be executed.

521. Most holy Mary answered that the law must be substantially fulfilled in a similar manner as other infants who are circumcised, but that She need not leave Him or hand Him over to any other person, but would hold Him in her arms. And because the delicacy and tenderness of the Infant would make this ceremony more painful to Him than to other children, they should have at hand the soothing medicine which was ordinarily applied at circumcision. Moreover, She requested St. Joseph to procure a crystal or glass vessel for preserving the sacred relic of the Circumcision of the divine Infant. In the meanwhile the careful Mother prepared some linen cloths to catch the sacred blood which was now for the first time to be shed for our rescue, so not one drop of it would be lost or fall upon the ground. After these preparations the heavenly Lady asked St. Joseph to inform the priest and request him to come to the cave, where without the

necessity of bringing the Child to any other place he could, as a fit and worthy minister of such a hidden and great sacrament, with his priestly hands perform the rite of Circumcision.

522. Then most holy Mary and St. Joseph conversed regarding the name to be given to the divine Infant in Circumcision, and the holy spouse said: "My Lady, when the Angel of the Most High declared to me this great sacrament, he also commanded me that we call thy sacred Son JESUS." The Virgin Mother answered: "The same Name was declared to me when He assumed flesh in my womb; and knowing the Name by the mouth of the Most High through his ministers the Angels, it is just for us to venerate with humble reverence the hidden and inscrutable judgments of his infinite wisdom regarding this Holy Name, that my Son and Lord be called JESUS. Thus we shall manifest it to the priest so he can write this divine Name in the register of the other circumcised children."

523. While the great Lady of heaven and St. Joseph were in this conference, innumerable Angels descended in human form from on high, clothed in white and refulgent garments displaying red embroideries of wonderful beauty. They had palms in their hands and crowns upon their heads, and emitted a greater splendor than many suns. In comparison with the beauty of these holy Princes all the visible beauty in this world seems ugliness. But preeminent in splendor were the devices or escutcheons on their breasts, upon each of which the sweet Name of JESUS was engraved or embossed. The effulgence which each of these escutcheons emitted exceeded that of all the Angels together, and the variety of the beauty thus exhibited in this great multitude was so rare and exquisite that neither can it be explained in words nor perceived by our imagination. The holy Angels divided into two choirs in the cave, keeping their gaze fixed upon their King and Lord in the virginal arms of his most happy Mother. The chiefs of these heavenly cohorts were the two Princes, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, shining in greater splendor than the rest and bearing in their hands, as a special distinction, the most holy Name of JESUS, written in larger letters on something like cards of incomparable beauty and splendor.

524. The two Princes presented themselves apart from the rest before their Queen and said: "Lady, this is the Name of thy Son (Mt. 1:21), which was written in the mind of God *ab aeterno* and which the most blessed Trinity has given to thy Onlybegotten and our Lord, with power to save the human race; and seating Him upon the chair and throne of the holy king David (Is. 9:7), he shall reign upon it, chastise his enemies and triumph over them (Col. 2:15; Ps. 54:20), humbling them until they are made his footstool (Ps. 109:1); and judging his friends with equity (Ps. 9:9), He shall raise them above his enemies and place them in the glory of his right hand (Mt. 25:33). But all this must happen at the cost of labors and blood, and even now He is to shed it in receiving this Name, since it is that of the Savior and Redeemer; it shall be the beginning of his sufferings in obedience to the will of the eternal Father. All the ministering spirits of the Most High who have come here are appointed and sent by the Holy Trinity in order to serve the Onlybegotten of the Father and thy own, and assist in all the mysteries and sacraments of the law of grace. We are to accompany Him and minister to Him until He shall ascend triumphant to the celestial Jerusalem, opening its gates to the human race, and afterwards we shall enjoy a special extra glory above the other Blessed, to whom this most happy commission was not given." All this was witnessed by the most fortunate spouse St. Joseph conjointly with the Queen of heaven, but his understanding of these happenings was not so deep as hers, for the Mother of Wisdom understood and comprehended the highest mysteries of the Redemption. Although St. Joseph understood many more mysteries than other mortals, yet he did not penetrate them in the same way as his heavenly Spouse. Both of them, however, were full of heavenly joy and admiration, and with new canticles glorified the Lord. It is not possible to reduce to words all they

experienced in these various and wonderful events, nor can I find adequate terms to manifest even my concept of them.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY MARY MOST HOLY, OUR LADY.

525. My daughter, I desire to renew in thee the light and doctrine which thou hast received for treating with highest reverence thy Lord and Spouse, since humility and reverential fear must grow in souls in the same measure in which they receive more particular and extraordinary favors. Because many souls do not possess this science, some make themselves unworthy or incapable of great benefits; others, who do receive them, come to incur a dangerous and dull rudeness which greatly offends the Lord, since the sweet and loving gentleness with which his divine condescension often regales and caresses them is usually met with a certain boldness and presumptuous puerility in treating the infinite Majesty without due reverence, and with vain curiosity probing and inquiring into supernatural ways which are above their understanding, and are not even proper for them to know. This boldness regarding the familiar communication with the Most High originates from judging and acting with earthly ignorance, for it seems to them it must be in the manner in which one human creature is accustomed to converse with his equal.

526. However, in this way of judging the soul is much deceived, measuring the reverence and respect due to the infinite Majesty by the familiarity and equal treatment which human love produces among mortals. The rational creatures are by nature equal to each other, though the conditions and circumstances be diverse; and by love and familiar friendship the difference between unequals may be forgotten, and the friendly treatment governed by human sentiments. But with divine love one must never forget the inestimable excellence of the infinite Being; for just as he looks upon the immense goodness of God, and thus has no way of limiting Him, and likewise for reverence in gazing upon the majesty of the infinite Being, and since in God goodness and majesty are inseparable, reverence must not be separated from the love of God in the creature, and the light of divine faith must always go before, manifesting to the one who loves the Essence of the object loved, awakening and fomenting reverential fear, giving weight and measure to the unbalanced affections which blind love and inadvertence usually engender when acting without remembrance of the excellence and inequality of the Beloved.

527. When the creature is of a large heart, and is experienced in and accustomed to holy and reverential fear, it does not incur this danger of forgetting the reverence owed to the Most High due to the frequency and greatness of the favors it receives, since it does not deliver itself inadvertently to spiritual pleasures, nor by them lose the prudent attention to the supreme Majesty; rather, it has more respect and reverence for Him the more it knows and loves Him. With these souls the Lord converses as one friend with another (Ex. 33:11). Therefore, my daughter, let it be for thee an inviolable rule that when thou dost enjoy the most intimate embraces and gifts of the Most High, so much the more attentive shalt thou be to respect the grandeur of his infinite and immutable Being, magnifying and loving Him at the same time. By this science thou shalt best know and ponder the benefit thou receivest, and not incur the danger and audacity of those who lightly desire to inquire and ask about the secret of the Lord* in any event, whether trivial or important, imagining his most prudent providence should incline itself or attend to the vain curiosity which moves them by some passion and disorder, which originates not from zeal or holy love, but from human and reprehensible affections.

* cf. Jn. 21:21 [Ed.]

528. Pay attention in this to the deliberation with which I acted and which detained me in my doubts; for in finding grace in the eyes of the Lord no creature could be equal with me, there being an immense distance between us. This being so, though holding in my arms God himself, and being his true Mother, yet I never dared to ask Him to declare to me anything whatsoever by an extraordinary mode, neither to merely know it or to alleviate myself of any suffering, nor for any other human purpose; for all this would have been natural weakness, vain curiosity, or reprehensible vice, none of which could find room in me. Yet when necessity obliged me for the glory of the Lord, or the occasion made it unavoidable, I asked permission of His Majesty to propose my desire. And though I always found Him most propitious, and with endearment responsive to me, asking me what I desired from his mercy, I nevertheless humbled and annihilated myself to the dust, and only asked Him to inform me of what was most pleasing and acceptable in his eyes.

529. Write this instruction in thy heart, my daughter, and be warned never with disorderly desire and curiosity to wish to inquire into or know anything above human reason; for besides the fact that the Lord does not respond to such foolish inquiry, since it displeases Him very much, the demon is very attentive to this vice in persons who pursue the spiritual life. Since he is ordinarily the author of these infatuations of depraved curiosity, inciting them by his cunning, he usually responds to them himself, transforming himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14), by which he deceives the imperfect and incautious. When these inquiries are moved only by nature or inclination, one must neither follow them nor pay attention to them; for in such an exalted matter as familiar treatment with the Lord the soul must not follow the judgment or reasonings of its appetites and passions. Nature infected and depraved by sin is very disordered, and produces inharmonious and excessive impulses, so it is not just to listen to them or be governed by them. Neither must one have recourse to divine revelations in order to free itself from suffering and labor; for the spouse of Christ and his true servant must not make use of his favors in order to escape the cross, but rather to seek and carry it with the Lord (Mt. 16:24), abandoning oneself to the cross He gives according to his divine disposition. All this I desire thee to practice with fear and trembling, tending toward this extreme in order to avoid the opposite. From today I desire thee to have the best intention, working by love in all things (Philip. 1:9) as being most perfect in its ends, which have no measure or limit. Thus I desire thee to love with excess and fear with moderation sufficient to avoid breaking the law of the Most High, ordering all thy interior operations and exterior works with rectitude. In this be careful and diligent, even if it costs thee much exertion and pain, since I thus suffered in submitting my most holy Son to circumcision. I did this because in the holy laws are declared and intimated to us the will of the Lord (Gen. 17:12), whom we must obey in and for all things.