

CHAPTER III

The Humility of Most Holy Mary Regarding the Miracles Worked by Christ our Savior; the Instruction on Humility which She Gave to the Apostles for that which They were to Work by the Divine Power, and Other Admonitions.

342. The principal lesson to be learned from the History of most holy Mary (if it is studied attentively) is a clear demonstration of the profound humility of the Queen and Lady of the humble. This virtue in Her is so ineffable that it can never be sufficiently extolled or duly appreciated, for it shall never be understood in all its perfection either by angels or men. Just as the sweetness of sugar is added to confections and medicines in order to relieve the bitterness of taste, likewise humility was mingled in all the virtues and doings of most holy Mary, perfecting them and rendering them agreeable to the desires of the Most High and pleasing to men, and thus because of her humility the Almighty looked upon Her with pleasure, and all the nations call Her blessed (Lk. 1:48). The most prudent Lady lost not a single chance, occasion, time or place during her whole life for performing all the acts of virtue possible to Her; yet it is a greater marvel that none of her actions or virtues was ever found lacking in the least point of humility. This virtue raised Her above all that was not God,* and just as by humility most holy Mary conquered all creatures, so in a certain sense by the same virtue She also overcame God himself, causing Her to find such grace in his eyes (Ecclus. 3:20) that no grace which She chose to ask either for Herself or for others was ever denied Her. The most humble Lady surpassed all creatures in humility, for in the house of her parents, as I have related in the first Part, She won over her mother St. Anne and the servants to permit Her to practice humility (*Con.* 399); in the temple, the maidens and her companions at last yielded to her self-abasement (*Con.* 471); in matrimony, St. Joseph allowed Her to perform the humblest services (*Inc.* 419); the Angels gave way to her desire for lowly occupations (*Tran.* 189); and the Apostles and Evangelists obeyed Her in not proclaiming her praises to the world (*Cor.* 560ff.). By her humility She moved the Father and the Holy Ghost, and even her most holy Son, to ordain that her dignity remain concealed to the world, and that She be treated in such a way as not to cause men to praise Her for being the Mother of Him who wrought such great miracles and holy doctrines.

343. Such profound and exquisite humility could be practiced only by the most Humble among the humble, for neither the other children of Adam nor the angels themselves could ever be placed in similar circumstances for practicing it, even if for other reasons we were not so weak in this virtue. We shall understand this better when we consider how the poison has so deeply entered the rest of mortals by the first bite of the ancient serpent that in order to counteract it the divine Wisdom has appointed the bad effects of sin itself as a remedy; for our own and proper defects, brought home to each one's consciousness, are intended to make sensible the inherent degradation of our present state of existence which we would otherwise continue to ignore. It is manifest that we have a spiritual soul, but it belongs to the lowest order of spiritual beings, while God occupies the highest and the angels an intermediate degree; and regarding the body we are made not only of the lowest elements, that is of earth, but also of its most unclean constituents, that is of its slime (Gen. 2:7). All this was not arranged in vain by the divine Wisdom and power but with a great purpose, intending the slime of the earth to always take its proper place and be

* cf. Lk. 14:11 [Ed.]

satisfied with the lowest position, no matter how much it might find itself embellished and adorned with grace, for it must bear all these graces in a fragile vase of clay and dust (II Cor. 4:7). Yet we all lose sight of common sense and act foolishly regarding this virtue of humility, so appropriate for the being of man; and to restore us to this sense it is necessary for us to experience, in the foment of sin and its passions in our disordered actions, that we are vile and contemptible. Even this daily experience is not enough to bring us to our senses and confess it is iniquitous perversity to crave human honor and superiority, we who by nature are but dust and the slime of the earth, and by our actions prove ourselves unworthy even of such a lowly and earthly existence.

344. Most holy Mary alone, not having on Her the touch of Adam's guilt nor experiencing any of its foul and dangerous consequences, was proficient in the art of true humility and carried it to its highest perfection; and because She understood to its fullest extent the position occupied by a mere creature, She humiliated Herself more than all the children of Adam, though they are burdened not only with terrestrial origin but with their own sins. Other men, if they become humble, were first humiliated, and must confess with David: *Before I was humbled, I offended, and it is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications* (Ps. 118:67, 71). But the Mother of Humility did not enter into her humility by being humbled; She was humble without ever being humiliated. She was never humiliated by guilt or passions, but always generously humble of her own accord. Though the angels cannot be properly compared with men, being of a superior hierarchy and nature, and free from passions or the guilt of sin, yet these sovereign spirits could not attain the humility of most holy Mary, though they did humble themselves before their Creator as his creatures. That most holy Mary was of terrestrial and human origin was for Her a motive and a means for excelling the angels in self-abasement, since they could not make their higher spiritual nature serve as a reason for abasing themselves as much as the blessed Queen. And above this must be added the dignity of being the Mother of God and the Mistress of all creatures and of the angels themselves, and none of them could ever claim such a dignity and excellence which so elevated any act of the virtue of humility such as was found in our heavenly Mistress.

345. In this excellence of humility in the Blessed Mother there was a quality singular and unique, for being the Mother of God himself and Queen of all creation, and neither ignoring this truth nor the gifts of grace She received in order to make Her his worthy Mother, nor the marvels which She worked, nor all the treasures of heaven which the Lord deposited into her hands and at her disposal, despite all this, neither her status as Mother, nor her innocence, nor being powerful and favored, nor her miracles, nor those of her most holy Son, ever lifted her Heart in the slightest from the most lowly place among all creatures which She had chosen for Herself. O rare humility! O fidelity never experienced among mortals! O wisdom to which even the angels themselves cannot aspire! Who is there who being recognized by all as the greatest, yet ignores this and considers himself as the most insignificant? Who could hide from himself the praises which all publish regarding him? Who could consider himself so contemptible while being so admired by all? Who among the most excellent and exalted does not lose sight of lowliness, and being invited to the highest place selects rather the most lowly (Lk. 14:8), and this not out of necessity or with sadness, nor with impatience or having been forced, but with all his heart and in all truth and fidelity! O children of Adam, how slow and dull we all are in this divine science! How necessary it is for the Lord to conceal from us our own blessings, or accompany them with

some burden or counterweight,* lest we frustrate all his goodness towards us, and secretly ponder some robbery of the glory due to Him as the Author of all good in us! Let us then understand how illegitimate our humility is, and how precarious it is if we ever have it at all, since the Lord (let us so express it) must use much circumspection and care in entrusting us with any advantage or virtue because of the weakness of our humility, and seldom does our ignorance fail to indulge itself in some petty theft on such occasions, or at least vain complacency or frivolous joy.

346. It was the admiration of the Angels of Mary most holy to see the conduct and humility of the great Lady regarding the miracles of Christ our Lord, for they were not accustomed to behold in the children of Adam (and not even among themselves) such self-abasement united to such great perfection and magnificence of activity. Nor did the miracles of the Savior, in whom the holy Angels expected and had already experienced proofs of his omnipotence, excite their admiration so much as the peerless fidelity with which the most blessed Lady referred all miraculous works to the glory of God, and by which She esteemed Herself so unworthy of them that She deemed his not omitting them because of her demerits a special favor of her divine Son. She practiced such humility in spite of the fact that She, by her constant prayer, was precisely the instrumental cause of nearly all the miracles wrought by the Lord; moreover, as has been said in another place (77), if most holy Mary had not intervened between Christ and the human race, the world would not have come to possess the doctrine of the Gospel, nor would it ever merit to receive it.

347. The miracles and doings of Christ our Lord and Savior were so new and unheard of in the world that great admiration and honor would naturally have to accrue to his most holy Mother, for She was not only known to the Apostles and disciples who acknowledged Her as the true Mother of the Redeemer, but also to the new faithful who all came to acknowledge Her as the true Mother of the Messiah, and they many times congratulated Her due to the wonders wrought by her Son. All this, however, was for Her a new occasion of humility, for She always humbled Herself to the dust and debased Herself in her own mind beyond all conception of created intellect. Yet with all her humility She did not show Herself slow and ungrateful in the acknowledgment of all the favors lavished upon Her, for in humbling Herself at the sight of all the great works of Christ She rendered worthy gratitude to the eternal Father for each one of them, and thus filled the great void of gratitude in the human race. And by means of the secret communication of her purest soul with that of the Savior, She sought to divert toward God her Son the honor attributed to Her by his hearers. This happened on some occasions which even the Evangelists mention, for instance when the Jews attributed the healing of the deaf-mute to the demon and the Lord incited a woman to exclaim (Lk. 11:27): *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck.* The humble and attentive Mother, hearing these words of praise, begged her divine Son to divert this praise from Her, and the Lord acceded to her request in such a way that He turned these words into a still greater praise, though hidden at that time, for He responded (Ib. 28): *Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* By these words He neutralized the praise given to Her as Mother, but enhanced it in application to Her as a Saint, directing the attention of his hearers to the essence of all virtue, in which his Mother was distinguished above all others and most wonderful, though at the same time none of his hearers recognized this hidden signification.

348. Another instance of this kind is mentioned by St. Luke when he says someone interrupted the preaching of the Lord by the message that his Mother and his brethren had arrived and could

* cf. II Cor. 12:9 [Ed.]

not come near Him due to the press of the multitude. The most prudent Virgin, fearing lest those within hearing would break out in applause at seeing the Mother of the Savior, asked her Son to prevent such an event. The Lord again yielded and said: *My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God, and do it* (Lk. 8:21). Again by these words He did not deny to his Mother the honor which She merited by her sanctity, but rather paid it to Her above all others, yet in such a way that the attention of the bystanders was diverted from Her, and She on her part obtained her desire of seeing the Lord alone praised and acknowledged for his works. I desire to mention that these events, as I have been made to understand, happened on different occasions and at different places, as recorded by St. Luke in chapters VIII and XI. And because St. Matthew in chapter XII, after referring to the wonderful cure of the possessed mute, immediately adds the Savior was notified of the presence of his Mother and his brethren who wished to speak to Him (Mt. 12: 46-50), for this reason and what else is said there some commentators have thought both of these incidents took place at one and the same time. But having inquired anew regarding this under obedience, I was told they were different events related by St. Luke and on different occasions, as may be deduced from what St. Luke relates immediately before these two incidents; for after the miracle of the possessed referred to by St. Luke (XI) he relates the incident of the woman who exclaimed *blessed is the womb that bore thee*, etc. (Lk. 11:27), whereas the other incident referred to in chapter VIII (v. 21) followed immediately after the Lord had preached the parable of the seed, and thus the one as well as the other incident followed immediately after that to which the Evangelist has just referred.

349. In order to understand more fully that the Evangelists did not disagree in their Gospels, and to give the reason why the most holy Queen came to her Son on those occasions, I wish to state that the heavenly Mother frequented the sermons of Christ our Savior and Master for two reasons. Sometimes She desired to hear Him, as I have stated above (335), while at other times She sought Him in order to ask some favor for souls, either regarding their conversion or the cure of the sick or afflicted, for the most kind Lady took these cases and their remedy into her own hands just as She had done at the wedding feast of Cana. Being made aware of these and other pressing necessities either by the Angels or by her interior light She was accustomed to approach the Lord, and such was also the object of seeking the Master on the occasions mentioned by the Evangelists. Since this happened not only once but many times, and since the crowds attending the sermons of the Lord were often very great, He was notified on these and many other occasions not mentioned that his Mother and his brethren were seeking Him, and on these two occasions He spoke the words recorded by St. Luke and St. Matthew. There is nothing strange in his having repeated the same words on two different occasions, for He also repeated on several occasions this other saying of his, *because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, which the Lord used in the parable of the publican and the pharisee, as also in that of the guests invited to the marriage, as can be seen in St. Luke chapters XIV (v. 11) and XVIII (v. 14), and St. Matthew records this on yet another occasion in chapter XXIII (v. 12).

350. Most holy Mary practiced humility not only for Herself, but She was the great Teacher of humility for the Apostles and disciples, for it was necessary for them to be firmly grounded and rooted in this virtue in order to receive the gifts and work the wonders not only later on in the foundation of the Church, but also from that time in their preaching (Mk. 3:14). The sacred Evangelists tell us the Lord sent before Him the Apostles (Lk. 9:2), and afterwards the seventy-two disciples, and that He gave them power to expel the demons from the possessed and to cure the sick. The great Mistress of the humble counseled and exhorted them with words of eternal

life how they were to govern themselves in performing these miracles. By her teaching and intercession the spirit of wisdom and humility was deeply planted into their hearts so they understood well how these miracles are wrought entirely by divine power, and hence all the glory of these works belonged to the Lord alone. They understood that they themselves were merely the instruments; that just as the brush does not deserve the glory attached to a work of art, nor the sword that of victory, but all belongs to the artist or to the wielder of the sword, so all the honor and praise due to their miracles belonged to the Lord and Master from whom all good comes. It is worthy of notice that none of these lessons given to the Apostles before being sent to preach are mentioned in the holy Gospels; however, this was intentional because all these instructions were given to them by the heavenly Teacher. Yet when the disciples returned to their Master and full of exultation told Him they had subjected to themselves the demons in his name (Lk. 10:17), He reminded them He had given them this power, and they should not be elated except in having their names written in heaven (Ib. 20). So feeble is our humility that the Savior was obliged to apply such corrections and antidotes in order to preserve it in his own disciples.

351. But afterwards, so they could be worthy founders of the holy Church, the science of humility taught to them by Christ the Lord and his holy Mother was still more necessary, for then they were to perform still greater miracles by the virtue of this same Lord and in confirmation of the faith and of their evangelical preaching. The heathens, being accustomed blindly to give divine honors to anything great or strange, and seeing the miracles wrought by the Apostles, were only too ready to adore them as gods. Thus when they saw St. Paul and St. Barnaby in Lycaonia cure the man crippled from his birth (Acts 14:9), they proclaimed one as Mercury and the other as Jupiter. Later on when St. Paul survived the bite of a viper while all the others bitten had died thereof he was called a god (Ib. 28:6). All these miraculous events and occasions most holy Mary foresaw in the fullness of her knowledge and as the Coadjutrix of her divine Son in the establishment of the law of grace. During the time of his preaching, which lasted three years, Christ went to celebrate the Pasch three times, and his Blessed Mother accompanied Him each time, being present when in the first year He used the whip to drive the sellers of sheep, pigeons and cattle from the house of God (Jn. 2:15). In all the doings of the Savior in the city and in his sufferings the great Lady accompanied Him with admirable affection and heroic acts of virtue according to her condition and circumstances, and She conducted Herself with sublime perfection, especially in regard to the practice of her most ardent charity, which She derived from the Lord himself (I Jn. 4:16). Since She lived only in God, and God in Her, the charity of Christ burned in her bosom and left Her to seek the good of her fellowmen with all the powers of her body and soul.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE VERY QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

352. My daughter, the ancient serpent strains all his malice and astuteness to destroy in the human heart the science of humility sowed by the Redeemer as a seed of sanctity in the human heart, and in its place he seeks to sow the cockle of pride (Mt. 13:25). In order to root this cockle out and allow free growth to the blessing of humility, it is necessary for the soul to consent and seek to be humbled by his fellow creatures, and that he ask the Lord incessantly and in all sincerity of heart for this virtue and the means to attain it. Very scarce are the souls who apply themselves to this science and reach the perfection of this virtue, for it requires the entire conquest of one's whole self to which few attain, even among those who profess to be virtuous. This contagion of pride has so deeply penetrated into the human faculties that it is communicated

to nearly all of the doings of men, and there is scarcely one among men who is without pride, just as the rose never grows without thorns or the grain without husks. Because of this the Most High has so much esteem for the truly humble, and those who entirely triumph over pride He exalts and places with the princes of his people (Ps. 112:8), esteeming them as his favored children and exempting them in a certain manner from the jurisdiction of the demon, who scarcely dares to approach them because he fears the humble, and their victories over him torment him more than the flames of fire he suffers.

353. I desire thee, my dearest, to attain the inestimable treasure of humility in all its fullness, and offer to the Most High a docile and yielding heart so He can impress upon it as on soft wax the image of my own most humble activity. Such hidden secrets of this sacrament having been manifested to thee, great is the obligation thou hast to correspond to my will, losing neither place nor occasion in which thou canst humble thyself and advance in this virtue. Neglect none of them, since thou knowest how much I, the Mother of God himself, most pure and full of grace, sought after them. The greater my prerogatives, so much the greater was my humility, because in my estimation they far exceeded my merits and only increased my obligations. All the other children of Adam are conceived in sin (Ps. 50:7), and there is no one who has not sinned on his own account. If none can deny this infection of his nature, why would not all humble themselves before God and before men? Lowering themselves to the very dust and placing themselves in the last place is not such a great humiliation for those who have sinned, for even then they will always be more honored than they deserve, since the truly humble must lower themselves beneath that which they have deserved. If all creatures would despise and abhor them, or offend them, and if they would consider themselves worthy of hellfire, all this would merely be justice since what is thus meted out is what has been merited; yet humility is more than this. Profound humility goes to the length of desiring greater humiliation than that which corresponds to the humiliation due in justice. Because of this there is no mortal who can attain to the kind of humility which I practiced and such as thou hast understood and described; yet the Most High shall be satisfied with and ready to reward the efforts of those who humble themselves as far as they can and as they deserve in justice.

354. Let proud sinners now see their ugliness, and understand how they make of themselves monsters of hell by imitating Lucifer in his pride. Though this vice found him beautiful and endowed with great gifts of grace and nature, and though he vitiated these blessings, he nevertheless had possessed them as his own; whereas man, who is mere slime, and moreover has sinned and is full of ugliness and baseness, is a monster if he bloats himself up in vain pride. By such absurdity he surpasses even the demon, since man possesses a nature neither so noble, nor was ever gifted with such grace and beauty as Lucifer. He and his hellish followers despise and laugh at men, who in such inferiority swell up in pride, for they can well understand this vain and contemptible insanity and delirium. Therefore mind this lesson well, my daughter, and humble thyself lower than the earth, showing just as little sense of injury as the dust whenever the Lord, either Himself or through others, sends thee humiliation. Never judge thyself injured by anyone, nor consider thyself offended. If thou dost abhor pretense and lying, remember it is a greater offense to crave honor or high position when by any sin, however slight, one should desire to be beneath all that is visible and lowliest in the world. Do not attribute to creatures that which God causes in order to humble thee or others by affliction and tribulations, for this is protesting against mere instruments, while it is divine mercy which inflicts punishment on men for their humiliation; and this is what His Majesty is doing by the labors which Catholic kingdoms are suffering in our day, if they would only recognize it. Humble thyself in the divine presence for

thyself and for all thy fellowmen in order to placate his wrath just as if thou alone wert guilty and hadst never made any satisfaction, since during mortal life no one can ever know whether he has satisfied for his transgressions. Seek to appease Him as if thou alone hadst offended Him. And regarding the gifts and favors which thou hast received and dost receive, show thyself grateful as one who deserves much less and owes much more. By these considerations humble thyself more than all others, and labor without ceasing to correspond to the divine clemency which has shown itself so generous toward thee.