

CHAPTER XIII

How the Conception of Mary Most Holy was Announced by the Archangel St. Gabriel, and how God Prepared St. Anne for This by a Special Favor.

177. The petitions of Sts. Joachim and Anne reached the throne of the most blessed Trinity where they were accepted, and the will of God was made known to the holy angels. The three divine Persons, according to our way of expressing such things, spoke to them as follows: “We have in our condescension resolved that the Person of the Word shall take human flesh, and in it He shall remedy the entire race of mortals. We have manifested and promised this to our servants the Prophets so they could prophesy it to the world. The sins of the living and their malice are such that We are obliged to execute the rigor of our justice; yet our goodness and mercy exceed all their evil works, and they cannot extinguish our charity. We shall look upon the works of our hands, whom We have created according to our image and likeness to be inheritors and participators of our eternal glory (I Peter 3:22). We shall respond to the services and pleasure which our servants and friends have given us, and to the many who shall raise themselves and become great in our praises and approbation. And singularly do We have Her before our eyes who is to be chosen among thousands, and above all creatures is to be acceptable and designated for our delights and acceptance, and who is to receive the Person of the Word in her womb and vest Him in the mortality of human flesh. Since there must be a beginning of this work by which We shall manifest to the world the treasures of our Divinity, now is the acceptable and opportune time for the execution of this sacrament. Joachim and Anne have found grace in our eyes; therefore We look upon them kindly and prepare them with the power of our gifts and graces. In the tests of their truthfulness they have been faithful, and by their sincere simplicity their souls have become acceptable and pleasing in our presence. Let Gabriel our ambassador go with new tidings of joy for them and for the whole human race, and announce to them how our condescension has looked upon them and chosen them.”

178. The celestial spirits recognized this will and decree of the Most High. The holy archangel Gabriel, adoring and reverencing His Highness in the manner which befits those most pure and spiritual beings, humbled himself before the throne of the most blessed Trinity, from whom an intellectual voice proceeded, saying to him: “Gabriel, enlighten, vivify and console Joachim and Anne, our servants, and tell them their prayers have come into our presence, and their pleas are heard by our clemency. Promise them they shall receive the fruit of benediction by the favor of our right hand, and Anne shall conceive and give birth to a Daughter, to whom We give the name of MARY.”

179. Together with this mandate of the Most High many mysteries and sacraments pertaining to this message were revealed to St. Gabriel. With it he descended from the vault of the empyrean heaven and appeared to St. Joachim while he was in prayer, saying to him: “Just and upright man, the Most High from his royal throne has seen thy desires and heard thy sighs and prayers, and makes thee happy on earth. Thy spouse Anne shall conceive and give birth to a Daughter who shall be blessed among women (Lk. 1:42, 48), and the nations shall know Her as the Blessed. He who is the eternal God, uncreated and the Creator of all, and in his judgments most righteous, powerful and strong, sends me to thee because He has accepted thy works and alms. Charity has softened the bosom of the Almighty and hastened his mercies, and in his liberality He desires to enrich thy house and thy family with a Daughter whom Anne shall conceive. The Lord himself has chosen for Her the name of MARY. From her childhood let Her

be consecrated to the temple, and in it to God, as thou hast promised. She shall be great, chosen, powerful, and full of the Holy Ghost. Due to the sterility of Anne her conception shall be miraculous. She shall be a Daughter entirely prodigious in her life and works. Praise the Lord, Joachim, for this benefit, and magnify Him, for in no other nation has He wrought such a work. Go to give thanks in the temple of Jerusalem, and in testimony that what I announce to thee is the truth and new joy thou shalt meet in the Golden Gate thy sister Anne, who shall go to the temple for the same purpose. I give thee notice that most marvelous is this message, for the conception of this Child shall rejoice heaven and earth.”

180. All this happened to St. Joachim in sleep into which he fell in his prolonged prayer so in it he could receive this message, in the manner which afterward happened to St. Joseph, spouse of most holy Mary, when it was made known to him that her pregnancy was the work of the Holy Ghost (Mt. 1:20). The most happy St. Joachim awoke with special rejoicing of his soul, and with candid and sagacious prudence he concealed within his heart the sacrament of the King (Tob. 12:7). With living faith and hope he poured forth his spirit in the presence of the Most High, and transformed in tenderness and gratitude he rendered Him thanks and praise for his inscrutable judgments. In order to do this in greater fashion he went to the temple as he had been ordered.

181. While this was happening with St. Joachim, the most happy St. Anne was in most exalted prayer and contemplation, entirely elevated in the Lord and in the mystery of the Incarnation in which she expected the eternal Word, and regarding which the Lord himself had given most high understanding and special infused light. With profound humility and living faith she was pleading with His Majesty to hasten the coming of the Repairer of the human race in the following prayer: “Most high King and Lord of all creation, I, a vile and despicable creature (yet made by thy hands), desire at the price of my life (which from Thee, Lord, I have received) to urge Thee by thy condescension to hasten the time of our salvation. O if thy infinite kindness would incline to our necessity! O if our eyes already gazed upon the Repairer and Redeemer of men! Remember, O Lord, the ancient mercies which Thou hast worked with our people, promising thy Onlybegotten, and obliging Thyself by this determination of infinite kindness. Come now, O come, this day so desired. Is it possible that the Most High shall descend from his holy heaven! Is it possible that He is to have an earthly Mother! What woman shall She be so happy and blessed! O who shall be allowed to see Her! Who shall be worthy to be the servant of her servants! Blessed be the generations which shall see Her, and be able to prostrate themselves at her feet to reverence Her. How sweet shall be the sight of Her and her conversation! Happy the eyes which shall see Her, and the ears which shall hear her words, and the family which the Most High shall select to have his Mother in it. Execute now, O Lord, this decree; fulfill thy divine pleasure.”

182. In this prayer and colloquy St. Anne occupied herself after having received enlightenment regarding this ineffable mystery, and she compared all of her reasonings with those things said to her by her Guardian Angel, for her Angel had many times manifested himself to her, and on this occasion with greater clearness. The Most High ordained that the message of the conception of his holy Mother would be somewhat similar to the one which would afterward be given at his ineffable Incarnation; for St. Anne was meditating in humble fervor upon her, who was to bear the Mother of the incarnate Word, and the most holy Virgin was making the same reflections upon Her, who was to be the Mother of God, as I will relate in its place (*Inc.* 117). It was also the same Angel who brought both messages, and in human form, though he showed himself in a more beautiful and mysterious appearance to the Virgin Mary.

183. The holy archangel Gabriel appeared to St. Anne in human form more beautiful and resplendent than the sun, and said to her: "Anne, servant of the Most High, I am an Angel of the council of His Highness, sent from the heights by his divine condescension, He who looks upon the humble of the earth (Ps. 137:6). Good is incessant prayer and humble confidence. The Lord has heard thy petitions, since He is nigh to those who call upon Him with living faith and hope (Ps. 144:18), and who wait for Him with submission. If He defers the fulfillment of their prayers, and delays the recognition of the petitions of the just, it is to further dispose them and more highly oblige Himself to give much more than they ask and desire.* Prayer and almsgiving open the treasures of the omnipotent King, and incline Him to be rich in mercies toward those who implore Him (Tob. 12:8-9). Thou and Joachim have prayed for the fruit of benediction, and the Most High has resolved to give thee wonderful and holy fruit, and by to enrich thee with celestial gifts, granting thee much more than thou hast requested. Because thou hast humbled thyself in prayer the Lord desires to magnify Himself in conceding to thee thy petitions, for those who pray with humility and confidence, without restricting his infinite power, are very pleasing to Him. Persevere in prayer, and ask without ceasing for the remedy of the human race in order to oblige the Most High. Moses by unceasing prayer brought victory to the people (Ex. 17:11). Esther by prayer and confidence obtained for herself and the people liberation from death (Esther 4:11ff.). Judith by the same type of prayer became valiant in such an arduous task she attempted in order to defend Israel; and she accomplished it, being a weak and frail woman (Judith 9:1ff.; 13:6ff.). David came out victorious against Goliath because he prayed, invoking the name of the Lord (I Kg. 17:45). Elias drew fire from heaven for his sacrifice (III Kg. 18:36-38), and by prayer opened and closed the heavens. The humility, faith and alms of Joachim and of thyself have come before the throne of the Most High, and now He sends me, his Angel, to announce news of joy for thy spirit, because His Majesty desires thee to be happy and blessed. He chooses thee as mother of She who is to conceive and give birth to the Onlybegotten of the Father. Thou shalt bring forth a Daughter, who by divine disposition shall be called MARY. She shall be blessed among women and full of the Holy Ghost. She shall be the cloud which shall drop the dew of heaven for the refreshment of mortals (Ib. 44), and in Her shall be fulfilled the prophecies of thy ancestors. She shall be the gate of life and salvation for the children of Adam. Know also I have revealed to Joachim that he shall have a Daughter who shall be happy and blessed, yet the Lord has reserved the sacrament from him, not manifesting to him She is to be the Mother of the Messiah; hence thou must guard this secret. Go therefore to the temple to give thanks to the Most High, because He has so generously favored thee by his powerful right hand. In the Golden Gate thou shalt meet Joachim, where thou shalt confer with him about this news. Yet to thee, blessed of the Lord, his grandeur desires to visit and enrich with more singular blessings. In solitude He shall speak to thy heart (Osee 2:14) and give a beginning to the law of grace, giving being in thy womb to Her who is to vest in mortal flesh the immortal Lord, giving Him human form. And in this humanity united to the Word He shall write with his blood the true law of mercy" (Heb. 9:11ff.).

184. So the humble heart of St. Anne might not faint away with admiration and joy at these tidings of the holy Angel she was strengthened by the Holy Ghost, and thus she heard it and received it with magnanimity and incomparable joy. She then arose and went to the temple of Jerusalem and met St. Joachim as the Angel had foretold to them both. Together they gave thanks to the Author of this wonder and offered special gifts and sacrifices. They were

* cf. *Collect* for the 11th Sunday after Pentecost [Ed.]

enlightened anew by the grace of the divine Spirit, and full of divine consolation they returned to their home conferring about the favors they had received from the Most High, and how the holy archangel Gabriel had spoken to each one individually, promising on behalf of the Lord they would be given a Daughter who would be very happy and blessed. On this occasion they also told each other how the same Angel, before their espousal, had commanded each to accept the other so together they could serve God according to his divine will. This secret they had kept from each other for twenty years without communicating it until the same Angel promised them the issue of such a Daughter. Anew they made the vow to offer Her to the temple, and that each year on this day they would come to the temple to offer special gifts, spend the day in praise and thanksgiving, and give many alms. This vow they fulfilled to the end of their lives, spending this day in great praise and exaltation of the Most High.

185. The prudent matron Anne never disclosed the secret that her Daughter was to be the Mother of the Messiah, either to St. Joachim or to any other creature, nor did that holy father in the course of his life know any more than She was to be a grand and mysterious woman. However, in the last moments of his life the Almighty made the secret known to him, as I shall relate in its place (*Con.* 666). Although great revelations have been made to me concerning the virtues and the holiness of the two parents of the Queen of heaven, I shall not dilate upon that which all the faithful must presuppose, but rather come to my principal intention.

186. After the first conception of the body which was to be that of the Mother of Grace, and before creating her most holy soul, God granted a singular favor to St. Anne. He gave her a vision or apparition of His Majesty intellectually and in a most exalted manner, communicating in it great understanding and gifts of grace which disposed and prepared her with blessings of sweetness (*Ps.* 20:4). Entirely purifying her, He spiritualized the inferior part of her body and elevated her soul and spirit in such a way that from that day on she never attended to any human affair which could impede her from placing in God all the affection of her mind and will, without ever losing sight of Him. In this vision the Lord said to her: “Anne, my servant, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. My blessing and eternal light is with thee. I formed man in order to raise him from the dust and make him the inheritor of my glory and participator of my Divinity. And although I deposited in him many gifts, and established him in a place and state of high perfection, yet he listened to the serpent and lost all. In my benevolence, forgetting his ingratitude, I desire to repair the damages incurred by him and fulfill that which I have promised to my servants and Prophets by sending my Onlybegotten, their Redeemer. The heavens are closed and the ancient Fathers are detained, without the sight of my face; I desire to give them the gift of eternal life I have promised them. The inclination of my infinite goodness is as it were violated in not communicating itself to the human race; but now I desire to exercise by it my generous mercy and give them the Person of the eternal Word so He can be made man, being born of a Woman who shall be Mother, Virgin, immaculate, pure, blessed and holy above all creatures; and of Her, my chosen and only One (*Cant.* 6:8), I make thee mother.”

187. I cannot easily explain the effects these words had on the candid heart of St. Anne, she being the first of those born of men to whom was revealed the mystery of her most holy Daughter, who was to be the Mother of God and chosen for the greatest sacrament of the divine power. It was appropriate for her to know of this mystery and properly estimate the Treasure which she was to possess and to whom she was to give birth and existence. She heard with profound humility the voice of the Most High, and with a submissive heart she answered: “Lord, eternal God, it is the nature of thy immense goodness and the work of thy powerful arm to raise from the dust those who are poor and despised (*Ps.* 112:7). I acknowledge myself, Lord most

high, a creature unworthy of such mercies and benefits. What shall this vile worm do in thy presence? I can only offer Thee in thanksgiving thy own Being and grandeur, and my soul and faculties in sacrifice. Work in me, my Lord, according to thy will, since to it I resign myself entirely. I would like to be as worthy of this favor as Thou dost ask of me; yet what shall I do, since I do not merit to be the slave of She who is to be the Mother of thy Onlybegotten and my Daughter? This I know, and shall confess always, that by myself I am poor; yet at the feet of thy greatness I am awaiting Thee to make use of me according to thy mercy, since Thou art a kind Father and omnipotent God. Make me, O Lord, what thou dost desire me to be according to the dignity Thou dost bestow upon me.”

188. In this vision St. Anne was rapt in a most wonderful ecstasy in which she was granted most exalted understanding of the natural, written and evangelical laws. She recognized how the divine nature of the eternal Word would become united to our own, how the most holy humanity would be raised to the being of God, and many other mysteries which would be accomplished in the Incarnation of the divine Word. By these enlightenments and other gifts of divine grace the Most High disposed her for the conception of the body and creation of the soul of her most holy Daughter, the Mother of God.