

CHAPTER XIV

How the Most High Manifested to the Holy Angels the Determined and Opportune Time of the Conception of Mary Most Holy, and which of Them He Selected for Her Guardian Angels.

189. In the tribunal of the divine will, as the inevitable source and universal cause of all creation, all things with their conditions and circumstances are decreed and determined so nothing is forgotten, and no created power can in the least impede the fulfillment of the decree. All the spheres and the inhabitants contained in them are dependent on this ineffable government which rules them and cooperates with the natural causes without failing or even having the possibility of failing in a single point which is necessary. God made all things and sustains them by his will alone; upon Him depends the preservation of all things or their annihilation, for without Him they would return to the nonexistence from which they were drawn. But since He has created the universe for his glory and the glory of the incarnate Word, therefore He has from the beginning opened the paths and prearranged the ways by which the same Word would lower Himself to assume human flesh and live among men, and by which they could ascend toward God, know Him, fear Him, seek Him, serve Him, love Him, praise Him, and enjoy Him eternally.

190. Admirable has been his Name in all the lands of the earth (Ps. 8:10), and magnified in the plenitude and congregation of the saints whom He ordained and constituted as a people pleasing to Him (Titus 2:14), and over whom He placed the incarnate Word as their Head. When all was in the ultimate and proper disposition desired by his providence, and the determined time had come for the creation of that marvelous Woman clothed with the sun, whose sign had appeared in the heavens (Apoc. 12:1), and who was to rejoice and enrich the earth, in order to form Her the most holy Trinity decreed that which I will now declare according to my curtailed reasonings and concept of what I understand.

191. I have already said above (34) that for God there is no past or future, since He holds all things present to his divine and infinite mind and knows all by one simple act. But reducing this to our way of speaking and to our limited mode of understanding, we conceive that His Majesty remembered the decrees of the creation of a Mother befitting and worthy of the Incarnation of the Word, since the fulfillment of his decree is inevitable. Since the opportune and preordained time had arrived, the three divine Persons conferred with each other, saying: "Now is the time to give a beginning to the work of our pleasure and create that pure creature and that soul who is to find grace in our eyes above all the rest. Let Us endow Her with rich gifts, and let Us deposit in Her alone the greatest treasures of our grace. Since all the rest of those to whom we have given existence have turned out ungrateful and rebellious to our will, opposing our intention that they preserve themselves in the first and happy state in which We created the first man and woman, and since it is not proper for our will to be entirely frustrated, let Us create this creature in entire sanctity and perfection, in whom the disorder of the first sin shall have no part. Let Us create a soul according to our desires, a fruit of our attributes, a prodigy of our infinite power, without the offense or touch of the stain of the sin of Adam. Let Us perform a work which is the object of our omnipotence and a pattern of the perfection we have determined for our children, and the end We had in mind in the creation of all things. Since all have prevaricated in the free will and determination of the first man (Rom. 5:12), let Her be the sole creature in whom We restore and execute that which they have lost in deviating from our desire. Let Her be the unique image and likeness of our Divinity, and let Her be in our presence for all eternity the culmination of our

approbation and pleasure. In Her We shall deposit all the prerogatives and graces which in our first and conditional will We had destined for the angels and men if they had preserved themselves in this first state. What they have lost We renew in this creature, and We shall add to these gifts many others; thus our decree shall not remain completely frustrated, but rather fulfilled in a higher manner in this our chosen and only One (Cant. 6:8). And since We determined to prepare the most holy, perfect and laudable gifts for creatures, and they have lost them, We shall direct the stream of our goodness to our Beloved.* We shall withdraw Her from the ordinary law of the formation of all mortals, so in Her the seed of the serpent shall have no part. I desire to descend from heaven into her womb, and in it to vest Myself with human nature from her own substance.

192. “It is just and due to the infinite goodness of the Divinity to be deposited and enclosed in most pure matter, clean, and never stained by guilt. Neither is it appropriate for our equity and providence to omit what is most proper, perfect and holy, and choose what is inferior, since nothing can resist our will (Esther 13:9). The Word, who is to become man, being the Redeemer and Teacher of men, must establish the most perfect law of grace, and teach men by it to obey and honor their father and mother (Mt. 15:4) as the secondary causes of their natural existence. This law must be fulfilled primarily by the divine Word in honoring Her whom He chooses for his Mother, honoring and dignifying Her by his powerful arm, and preparing Her with the most admirable, most holy, and most excellent of all graces and gifts. Among them shall be the most singular honor and blessing of not subjecting Her to our enemies, nor to their malice; thus She shall be free from the death of sin.

193. “On earth the Word shall have a Mother without a father, as in heaven He has a Father without a mother. And so there shall be due correspondence, proportion and consonance in calling God his Father and this Woman his Mother, We desire to establish such correspondence and similarity as is possible between God and a creature, so at no time could the dragon boast of being superior to the Woman whom God shall obey as his true Mother. This dignity of being free from sin is due and corresponds to that of being Mother of the incarnate Word, and for Her is in itself more estimable and beneficial, since it is a greater good to be holy than to be only mother; yet to the being of the Mother of God all sanctity and perfection is proper. The human flesh of Her from whom He is to take human form must be separated from sin; since He is to redeem sinners in it, He must not be under the necessity of redeeming his own flesh as the rest. With his humanity united to the Divinity He is to be the Redeemer; for this reason his humanity must be preserved from sin beforehand, since We have already foreseen and accepted the infinite merits of the Word in this very flesh and human nature. We desire for all the eternities the incarnate Word be glorified through his tabernacle and glorious habitation of the humanity which He shall receive.

194. “The Mother of the incarnate Word must be a daughter of the first man, yet singular in grace, free and exempt from sin. Regarding her nature She must be most perfect, and formed with special providence. And because the Word made man must be the Teacher of humility and sanctity, and the labors He must suffer are the proper means for this end, confounding the vanity and fallacious error of men, and choose this inheritance for Himself as the treasure most estimable in our eyes, We desire Her, who is to be his Mother, to also take part in these sufferings, and be unique and singular in patience, admirable in suffering, and with her Onlybegotten offer a sacrifice of sorrow acceptable to Us for her greater glory.”

* cf. Ps. 45:5 [Ed.]

195. This was the decree which the three divine Persons manifested to the holy angels, exalting the glory and veneration of his high and inscrutable judgments. And as his Divinity is a voluntary mirror by which in the beatific vision itself He manifests (when it serves his purpose) new mysteries to the Blessed, He gave this new demonstration of his grandeur in which they could see the admirable order so harmonious in his works. All this is consequent upon what we have said in the preceding chapters (VII, VIII) concerning the works of the Almighty in the creation of the angels, commanding them to reverence as their superiors the incarnate Word and his most holy Mother; moreover, since the time for the formation of that great Queen had arrived it was proper for the Lord to not conceal that He had disposed all this in weight and measure (Wis. 11:21). Because the force of human terms, such as those within my reach, are so limited, they shall tend to obscure the intelligence of such hidden mysteries given me by the Most High; yet within these limits I shall say what I can concerning their manifestation by the Almighty to the angels on this occasion.

196. "Now the time has arrived (added His Majesty) which was determined by our providence for bringing to light the creature most pleasing and acceptable in our eyes, the restorer of the first sin of the human race, She who is to crush the head of the dragon (Gen. 3:15), that singular Woman who was signified by the great sign which appeared in our presence (Apoc. 12:1), and who is to vest with human flesh the eternal Word. The hour is now near, so happy for mortals, for opening the treasures of our Divinity and unlocking the gates of heaven. Now let the rigor of our justice be withheld by the chastisements which We have until now executed upon mortals; let the attribute of our mercy be recognized, enriching the creatures, the Word made man meriting for them the treasures of grace and eternal glory.

197. "Now let the human race have a Repairer, Teacher, Mediator, Brother and Friend, to be life for mortals, health for the sick, consolation for the sorrowful, relief for the afflicted, rest and a companion for the troubled. Let now the prophecies of our servants be fulfilled, and the promises made to them that We would send a Savior to redeem them. And so all may be executed according to our good pleasure, and to give a beginning to the sacrament hidden since the constitution of the world, We choose for the formation of our beloved Mary the womb of our servant Anne, so within it be conceived and created her most blissful soul. Although her generation and formation shall proceed according to the common order of natural propagation, yet it shall be different in the order of grace according to the ordainment of our immense power.

198. "Ye already know how the ancient serpent, after he saw the sign of this most wonderful Woman, prowls around all women, and from the first woman We created he persecutes with astuteness and snares those whom he knows are more perfect in their life and works, aspiring to come across among them the One who is to crush his head (Gen. 3:15). When he attacks this most pure and sinless creature he shall recognize Her as so holy he shall exert all his force in persecuting Her according to the of the concept which he forms of Her. The arrogance of this dragon shall be greater than his strength (Is. 16:6); yet it is our will for ye angels to exercise special care and protection of this our holy City and tabernacle of the incarnate Word in order to guard Her, assist Her, and defend Her from our enemies, and in order to enlighten, comfort and console Her with worthy solicitude and reverence while She is a wayfarer among mortals."

199. At this proposition made by the Most High the holy angels, all with profound humility, prostrate before the royal throne of the most holy Trinity, demonstrated their submission and ready obedience to his divine mandate. Each one desired in holy emulation to be appointed, and offered himself for such a happy service. All of them gave to the Almighty praise and thanksgiving in new songs, because the hour had arrived for the fulfillment of that for which they

had with the most ardent desires prayed through many ages. I perceived on this occasion that from the time of that great battle of St. Michael with the dragon and his allies (Apoc. 12:7ff.), in which they were hurled into everlasting darkness while the hosts of St. Michael remained victorious and confirmed in grace and glory, these holy spirits began immediately to pray for the fulfillment of the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, of which they became cognizant at that time, and they persevered in these repeated petitions up to the hour in which God manifested to them the fulfillment of their desires and petitions.

200. For this reason the celestial spirits had additional joy at this new revelation and obtained new accidental glory, and they spoke to the Lord: "Most High and incomprehensible God and our Lord, Thou art worthy of all reverence, praise, and eternal glory, and we are thy creatures and made according to thy divine will. Send us, most powerful Lord, for the execution of thy most wonderful works and mysteries, so in all things thy most just pleasure may be fulfilled." In such terms of affection the heavenly princes acknowledged themselves as subjects, and if it had been possible they desired to increase in purity and perfection in order to be more worthy guardians and servants of Mary.

201. Then the Most High chose and appointed those who were to be occupied in this exalted service, and from each of the nine choirs of angels He selected one hundred, totaling nine hundred in all. He then designated twelve others who would in a special manner assist Her in corporeal and visible forms, and they were to bear the emblems or escutcheons of the Redemption. These are the twelve who are mentioned in chapter XXI of the Apocalypse (v. 12) as guarding the gates of the city; of them I will speak in the explanation of that chapter later on (273). Besides these the Lord assigned eighteen other Angels, selected from the highest ranks, who were to ascend and descend by the mystical stairs of Jacob with the messages of the Queen to His Highness and those of the Lord to Her, for many times did She send them to the eternal Father in order to be governed in all her actions by the Holy Ghost. She did nothing except what pleased the Almighty, and his pleasure She sought even in the most insignificant matters. Whenever She was not instructed by a special enlightenment She sent these holy Angels to the Lord in order to present her question and her desire to do what was most pleasing to the divine will and to be informed of his pleasure, as we shall relate in the course of this History.

202. In addition to all these holy Angels the Almighty assigned and appointed seventy Seraphim, choosing them from the highest ranks and from those nearest to the Divinity, so they could communicate and converse with this Princess of heaven in the same way as they themselves communicate with each other, and as the higher communicate with the lower ones. This benefit was conceded to the Mother of God because She would be a wayfarer and in nature inferior to the angels (though She was superior in dignity and grace to all the Seraphim). When at one time the Lord withdrew and hid Himself from Her, as we shall see later on (675, 725), these seventy Seraphim enlightened Her and consoled Her; to them She poured out the longings of her most ardent love and her anxieties in regard to her hidden Treasure. That there were seventy of these spirits had reference to the number of years of her life, which was seventy and not sixty, as I will explain in its place (*Cor.* 742). Among this number are included the sixty strong ones which in chapter III of the Canticles (v. 7) are mentioned as guarding the chamber or couch of Solomon, their loins girded with swords against the terrors of the night.

203. These seventy valiant princes and captains were assigned as a guard of the Queen of heaven from among the highest order of the angelic hierarchy, because in that ancient battle fought in heaven between the humble spirits and the proud dragon they were as chosen and armed champions of the supreme King of all creation, battling and overcoming Lucifer and all

his apostates with the sword of their virtue and heavenly words. And because in that great battle and victory these supreme Seraphim distinguished themselves in zeal for the honor of the Almighty as valiant and skilled captains in divine love, using the arms of grace given to them by virtue of the incarnate Word, whose honor, as of their Captain and Lord, they had defended, and with it the honor of his most holy Mother, therefore it is said they guard the couch of Solomon, form his bodyguard, and had their swords girt on that part which signifies human generation (Cant. 3:7-8), and by this the humanity of Christ our Lord conceived in the virginal chamber of Mary of her most pure blood and substance.

204. The other ten Seraphim remaining to complete the number of seventy were likewise chosen from the more distinguished leaders of those who in their opposition to the dragon had manifested a greater reverence for the divinity and humanity of the Word and for his most holy Mother, for all this was determined during that brief conflict of the holy angels. It was one of the principal distinctions merited by them at the time that they were to be selected as guardians of their Queen and Lady. All these together made a thousand Angels chosen among the Seraphim and the lower orders, and thus that City of God was superabundantly fortified against the infernal hosts.

205. And in order to better arrange this invincible squadron St. Michael, the Prince of the celestial militia, was designated as their head; and while he did not always attend upon Her, yet many times he accompanied Her and manifested himself to Her. The Almighty destined him as a special ambassador of Christ our Lord, and to act in some of the mysteries as the defender of his most holy Mother. In like manner the prince St. Gabriel was appointed to act as legate and minister of the eternal Father in the affairs of the Princess of heaven. Thus did the most holy Trinity provide for the custody and the defense of the Mother of God.

206. All the appointments of the Angels were a grace of the Most High, yet I was given to understand that He observed, according to a certain measure, the laws of distributive justice. In his equity and providence He gave attention to works and will by which the holy angels confessed the mysteries which in the beginning were revealed to them regarding the Incarnation of the Word and regarding his most holy Mother, for in the service of the divine will each was moved by different affections and inclinations regarding the sacraments proposed to them. There was not in all the same grace, nor will with its affections. Some of them yielded with a special devotion when they recognized the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the Person of the Word enclosed within the limits of a human body and raised to be the Head of all creation. Others in their affection were moved to admire the love of the Onlybegotten of the Father which caused Him to become mortal and offer Himself as a sacrifice for men. Others again signalized themselves in praising God for creating a soul and body of such supreme excellence that it would be superior to all the celestial spirits, and that from it the Creator would take human flesh. According to these sentiments and in proportion to them, and as it were as an accidental reward, these holy Angels were selected to serve in the mysteries of Christ and his most holy Mother. In the same way those who during this life have signalized themselves in the practice of certain virtues are rewarded with the special crowns of doctors, virgins, etc., with their laurels.

207. Corresponding to this, when these holy Princes appeared in bodily form to the Mother of God (as I shall relate farther on [363-4]) they revealed certain emblems and insignias representing the different mysteries. Some of them showed the emblems of the Incarnation, others those of the Passion, and others those of the Queen herself and of her grandeur and dignity; however, She did not immediately recognize these emblems when they began to be shown to Her, for the Most High had commanded all these holy Angels not to make known to

Her that She was to be the Mother of his Onlybegotten until the hour appointed by his divine wisdom, yet at the same time always to converse with Her about the sacraments and mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption in order to excite her fervor and her prayers. Tardy is human language and curtailed my terms and words in order to manifest such exalted light and intelligence.