

## CHAPTER XXI

*The Happy Birth of Mary Most Holy, Our Lady; the Favors which She then Received from the Hand of the Most High, and how a Name was Given Her in Heaven and on Earth.*

325. The day of the parturition of St. Anne and the birth of most holy Mary, who was consecrated and sanctified to be the Mother of God, had arrived, a joyous day for the world. This birth happened on the eighth day of September, completing nine months since the Immaculate Conception of our most holy Queen and Lady. St. Anne was prepared by an interior voice of the Lord which informed her that the hour of her parturition had come. Full of the joy of the Holy Ghost and attentive to his voice, she prostrated herself before the Lord and begged the assistance of his grace and his protection for a happy delivery. Presently she felt a movement in her womb similar to that which is proper to creatures being born to the light. The most blessed child Mary was at the same time by divine Providence and power ravished into a most exalted ecstasy; hence She was born into the world without perceiving it by her senses, for their operations and faculties had been suspended. Since She had the use of her reason She would have perceived it by her senses if they would have been left to operate in their natural manner at that time; however, the Almighty disposed otherwise so the Princess of heaven would be spared the sensible experience otherwise connected with birth.

326. She was born pure, clean, beautiful, and full of grace, thereby disclosing that She was free from the law and tribute of sin. Although She was born substantially like the other children of Adam, yet this birth was accompanied by such conditions and circumstances of grace as made it miraculous and admirable among all of nature and to the eternal praise of its Author. At twelve o'clock in the night this divine Luminary issued forth, dividing the night of the ancient law and its initial darkness from the new day of grace which was now dawning. She was clothed, handled and dressed like other infants, though her soul dwelt in the Divinity, and She was treated as an infant, though She excelled all mortals and even all the angels in wisdom. Her mother did not allow Her to be touched by other hands than her own, but she herself wrapped Her in swaddling clothes, and in this St. Anne was not hindered by her present state of childbirth, for she was free from the toils and labors which other mothers usually endure in such circumstances.

327. Then St. Anne received Her into her arms, She who being her Daughter was at the same time the most exquisite Treasure of all the universe, inferior only to God and superior to all other creatures. With fervent tears of joy she offered this Treasure to His Majesty, saying interiorly: "Lord of infinite wisdom and power, Creator of all that exists, the fruit of my womb, which I have received from thy bounty, I offer to Thee with eternal gratitude for having given Her to me without any merit of mine. Work thy most holy will with the Child and her mother, and look upon our lowliness from the height of thy throne and grandeur. Be Thou eternally blessed because Thou hast enriched the world with a creature so agreeable to thy pleasure, and because in Her Thou hast prepared the dwelling place and tabernacle in which the eternal Word shall live (Wis. 9:8). I give my congratulations to my holy forefathers and to the holy Prophets, and in them to the entire human race, for this secure pledge of their Redemption which Thou hast given them. Yet how shall I treat Her whom Thou hast given me as a Daughter, I who do not merit to be her servant? How shall I handle the true Ark of the Testament? Give me, my Lord and King, the necessary light to know thy will, and to execute it according to thy pleasure in the service of my Daughter."

328. The Lord answered the holy matron interiorly that she was to treat the heavenly Child outwardly as mothers treat their daughters, without any demonstration of reverence, but to retain this reverence inwardly, fulfilling the laws of a true mother toward Her, and raising Her with all motherly love and solicitude. With all this the happy mother complied; making use of this permission and her rights as mother without losing her reverence, she regaled herself with her most holy Daughter, embracing and caressing Her in the same way as other mothers do with their daughters, yet with the worthy appreciation and attention for such a hidden and divine sacrament enclosed between the mother and Daughter. The Guardian Angels of the sweet Child with others in great multitudes showed their veneration and reverence to Mary as She rested in the arms of her mother; they joined in heavenly music, some of which was audible also to St. Anne. The thousand Angels appointed as guardians of the great Queen offered themselves and dedicated themselves to her service. This was also the first time in which the heavenly Lady saw them in corporeal form with their devices and emblems, as I shall describe in another chapter (*Con.* 360ff.), and the Child asked them to join with Her in the praise of the Most High and exalt Him in her name.

329. At the moment of the birth of our Princess Mary the Most High sent the archangel Gabriel as an envoy to bring this joyful news to the holy Fathers in limbo. Immediately the heavenly ambassador descended, illumining that deep cavern and rejoicing the just who were detained therein. He announced to them how the day of eternal happiness had now dawned and begun, and the reparation of man, which was so earnestly desired and expected by the holy Patriarchs and foretold by the Prophets, had begun, since She, who was to be the Mother of the Messiah, had now been born, and soon they would see the salvation\* and glory of the Most High. The holy Prince gave them an understanding of the excellence of most holy Mary and what the Omnipotent had begun to work in Her so they could better comprehend the happy beginning of the mystery which was to end their prolonged imprisonment. Then all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets and the rest of the just in limbo rejoiced in spirit, and in new canticles praised the Lord for this benefit.

330. All these happenings at the birth of our Queen succeeded each other in a short space of time. The first exercise of her senses in the light of the material sun was to recognize her parents and other creatures. The powerful arm of the Most High began to work new wonders in Her far above all the conceptions of men, and the first and most stupendous one was to send innumerable Angels to bring Her, chosen to be Mother of the incarnate Word, body and soul to the empyrean heaven for the fulfillment of his further intentions regarding Her. The holy Princes obeyed the divine mandate, and receiving the child Mary from the arms of her holy mother Anne they arranged a new and solemn procession, bearing heavenward with incomparable songs of joy the true Ark of the Covenant, so for a short time She would rest not in the house of Obededom† but in the temple of the King of kings and Lord of lords, where later on She was to be placed for all eternity. This was the second step which most holy Mary made in her life, namely from this earth to the highest heaven.

331. Who can worthily extol this wonderful prodigy of the right hand of the Almighty? Who can describe the joy and admiration of the celestial spirits when they beheld this new and wonderful work of the Most High, and with new canticles celebrated it? There they acknowledged and revered Her as their Queen and Lady, She who was to be the Mother of

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\* cf. Lk. 3:6; *Communion*, Vigil of Christmas [Ed.]

† cf. II Kg. 6:10 [Ed.]

their Lord and the cause of the grace and glory which they possessed, since it was through his foreseen merits they had been made the recipients of the divine bounty. But above all what human tongue or what mortal could ever describe or comprehend the secrets of the Heart of that tender Child during these events? I leave this to Catholic piety, and much more to those who in the Lord shall come to know it, and to us when by his infinite mercy we arrive in heaven to rejoice in it face to face.

332. Borne by the hands of the Angels the child Mary entered the empyrean heaven, where She prostrated Herself full of love before the royal throne in the presence of the Most High. Then (according to our way of understanding) was verified what long before had happened in figure, when Bethsabee entered into the presence of her son Solomon (III Kg. 2:19), who while presiding over his people of Israel arose from his throne, received her with honor and reverence, and seated her at his side as queen. Similarly, but in a more glorious and admirable manner, the Person of the divine Word now received the child Mary, whom He had chosen for his Mother and Queen of all creation, though She remained ignorant of her own dignity and the purpose of such ineffable mysteries and favors; yet in order to receive them her weak faculties were invigorated by divine power. New graces and gifts were bestowed upon Her by which her faculties were correspondingly elevated. Her powers of mind, besides being illumined and prepared by new grace and light, were raised and proportioned for that which He was to manifest, and the Divinity was displayed in the new light vouchsafed, revealing Himself to Her intuitively and clearly in a most exalted manner. This was the first time in which the most holy soul of Mary saw the blessed Trinity in unveiled beatific vision.

333. Of the glory which the child Mary had in this vision, of the sacraments which were revealed to Her anew, and of the effects which redounded in her most pure soul, the only witness was the Author of such an unheard-of miracle, along with the admiring angels who in God himself knew something of this mystery. The Queen, seated at the side of the Lord, who was to be her Son, and seeing Him face to face, was more successful in her prayer than Bethsabee (Ib. 21), for She prayed that He bestow the untouched Sunamitess Abisag, his inaccessible divinity, upon his own brother, human nature, fulfilling the promise by descending from heaven to earth and celebrating the marriage by the hypostatic union in the Person of the Word, since He had many times pledged this to men by means of the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets. She begged Him to accelerate the remedy of the human race, expected for so many ages amid the multiplied iniquities and perdition of souls. The Most High heard this most pleasing petition of his Mother, and acting more graciously than Solomon of old toward his mother He assured Her that soon his promises would be fulfilled and He would descend to the world in order to assume and redeem human nature.

334. In this divine consistory and tribunal of the most holy Trinity it was determined to give a name to the Child Queen. Since there is no proper and legitimate name except it be founded in the immutable being of God himself (for from Him are dispensed and ordered according to their right weight and measure all things in infinite wisdom), His Majesty himself desired to give and impose this name in heaven. He therefore made known to the angelic spirits that the three divine Persons had formed and decreed the sweet names of Jesus and Mary for the Son and Mother from the beginning before the ages, and had been delighted with them and engraved them in their eternal memory, being present to Them when They had given being to all created things, because for the service of Jesus and Mary they were created. Having been informed of these and many other mysteries the holy angels heard a voice from the throne speaking in the Person of the Father: "Our chosen One shall be called Mary, and this name is to be wonderful and magnificent.

Those who shall invoke it with devout affection shall receive most copious graces; those who shall esteem it and pronounce it with reverence shall be consoled and vivified, and all shall find in it the remedy of their infirmities, the treasures for their enrichment, and the light which shall guide them to eternal life. It shall be terrible against hell, shall crush the head of the serpent, and it shall achieve distinguished victories over the princes of darkness.” The Lord commanded the angelic spirits to announce this glorious Name to St. Anne so what was decreed in heaven could be executed on earth. The heavenly Child, lovingly prostrate before the throne, rendered most acceptable and humble gratitude to the eternal Being, and She received the name with most admirable and sweet jubilation. If the prerogatives and graces with which She was then favored were to be described it would necessitate an extra book of many volumes. The holy angels honored and acknowledged most holy Mary as the future Mother of the incarnate Word and as their Queen and Lady enthroned at the right hand of her Son. They showed their veneration of her holy Name, prostrating themselves as it proceeded from the throne in the voice of the eternal Father, especially those who had it written on the devices in their bosom. All of them gave forth canticles of praise for such great and hidden mysteries. In the meanwhile the infant Queen remained ignorant of the real cause of all that She thus experienced, for her dignity of Mother of the incarnate Word was not revealed to Her until the time of the Incarnation. With the same reverential jubilation the Angels returned in order to replace Her into the arms of St. Anne, from whom this event was also hidden, as was the absence of her Daughter, since a Guardian Angel, assuming an aerial body, supplied her place for this purpose. More than that, during a great part of the time in which the heavenly Child remained in the empyrean heaven her mother was rapt in an ecstasy of highest contemplation, and in it, although she did not know what was happening to the Child, exalted mysteries concerning the dignity of the Mother of God, to which She was to be chosen, were revealed to her. The prudent matron kept them enshrined within her bosom, conferring them in her thoughts with the duties she owed to her Child.

335. On the eighth day after the birth of the great Queen multitudes of most beautiful Angels in splendid array descended from on high carrying an escutcheon upon which was engraved brilliant and resplendent the name of MARY. Appearing to the blessed mother Anne they told her the name of her daughter was to be MARY, which name they had brought from heaven, and which divine Providence had selected and now ordained to be given to their Child by Joachim and herself. The Saint called for her husband and they conferred with each other about this disposition of God in regard to the name of their Daughter. The more than happy father accepted the name with joy and devout affection. They decided to call their relatives and a priest. and then with much solemnity and festivity they imposed the name of Mary on their Child. The Angels also celebrated this event with most sweet and ravishing music which, however, was heard only by the mother and her most holy Daughter. Thus was the divine Princess named by the holy Trinity: In heaven on the day of her nativity, and on earth after eight days. This name was written on the list of other names when her mother presented herself in the temple according to the law, as I shall relate farther on. This was the birth like to which none had been before, and the like of which cannot happen again among mere creatures. This was the most blessed birth of which nature was capable, for by it an Infant came into existence whose entrance into the world was not only free from all the impurities of sin, but who was more pure and holy than the highest Seraphim. The birth of Moses was celebrated because of the beauty and handsomeness of the infant (Ex. 2:2), but all his beauty was only corruptible and apparent. But O how beautiful is our great Child (Cant. 7:6)! O how beautiful! She is entirely beautiful and most sweet in her delights, since She possesses all grace and beauty without lacking any. The laughter and joy of the house

of Abraham was the birth of the promised Isaac (Gen. 21:6), conceived by a sterile mother; yet this birth did not have greater grandeur than the participation and prefiguration of the birth of our infant Queen, toward whom all that joy of Abraham was heading. If that birth was admirable and of such joy for the family of the Patriarch because it was as it were a foreshadowing of the birth of sweetest Mary, then heaven and earth must rejoice at her birth, since through her Son She was to bring the restoration of the ruins\* of heaven and sanctification to the world. When Noah was born his father Lamech was consoled (Gen. 5:29), because in that son God had provided a progenitor of the human race in the ark and assured a restoration of the blessings which the sins of men had forfeited. But all this happened merely as a type to foreshadow the birth of this Child, who was to be the true Reparatrix, being the mystical Ark which contained the new and true Noah and which drew Him down from heaven who was to fill with benediction all the inhabitants of the earth. O blessed birth! O joyful nativity, the most pleasing to the blessed Trinity in all the ages of the past, the joy of the angels, the relief of sinners, the delight of the just, and the singular consolation of all the holy souls in limbo!

336. O precious and rich pearl, who didst come forth to the light of the sun still enclosed within the rough shell of this world! O sublime Infant, who though scarcely noticed by terrestrial eyes in the material light, yet in the eyes of the highest King and his courtiers dost exceed all that is not God in dignity and grandeur! Let all generations bless Thee, and let all nations recognize and praise thy grace and beauty! Let the earth be made illustrious by thy birth; let mortals be rejoiced because their Reparatrix is born who shall fill the void which originated with the first sin, and in which men were left thereby. Let thy gracious condescension toward me be blessed and extolled, who am the most abject dust and ashes. If Thou shalt give me permission, O my Lady, to speak in thy presence, I will propose a doubt which occurred to me in describing the mystery of thy most admirable and holy birth, namely regarding an act of the Almighty at the hour of thy coming forth into the material light of the sun.

337. And this is the doubt: How are we to understand thy being raised in thy body by the hands of the holy Angels into the empyrean heaven and to the vision of the Divinity? For according to the teaching of the holy Church and her doctors, heaven was closed and as it were interdicted to man until thy most holy Son would open it through his life and death, and until He himself, as Redeemer and Head, would enter it on the day of his admirable Ascension, He being the first one for whom these eternal gates were to be opened after their being closed up by sin.

#### *ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.*

338. My dearest daughter, it is true divine justice closed heaven against mortals due to the first sin until my most holy Son would open it by satisfying most abundantly for men through his earthly life and death. It was appropriate and just that this same Redeemer, who had united to Himself the redeemed members and opened heaven, would as their Head enter before any of the children of Adam. If Adam had not sinned it would not have been necessary to follow this course, for men would have ascended of themselves in order to enjoy the Divinity in the empyrean heaven. However, having foreseen the fall of man, the most blessed Trinity provided for the course followed at present. This great mystery was referred to by David in Psalm XXIII when, speaking of the spirits of heaven, he repeats twice *lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in* (Ps. 23:7). They are here called

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\* cf. Ps. 109:6 [Ed.]

the gates of the angels, because only for them were they open, but for mortal men they were closed. Although these heavenly courtiers were aware of the fact that the incarnate Word had already thrown back the bars and bolts of guilt, and that He was now ascending rich and glorious with the spoils of death and sin, bringing with Him the fruits of his Passion in the accompanying hosts of the glorious saints released from limbo, nevertheless the holy angels give vent to their admiration and breathless suspense at this wonderful novelty, asking: *Who is this King of Glory* (Ib. 8), being man and of the same nature as the one who had lost for himself and for his entire race the right to enter into heaven?

339. They themselves give answer to the question, saying: *The Lord who is strong and mighty in battle*, the Lord of virtues, *the King of Glory* (Ib. 8, 10). This was as if they confessed their conviction that this Man who was now coming up from the world in order to open the eternal gates was not a mere man and is not included under the law of sin, but was true God and true man who, strong and powerful in battle, had overcome the strong-armed one (Lk. 11:21-22) who reigned in the world, had taken away his reign, and despoiled him of his weapons. And He was the Lord of virtues (Ps. 23:10) who had exercised them as a Master, with sovereignty over them, and without any contradiction of sin and its effects. As the Lord of virtues and as the King of Glory He now came in triumph, distributing virtues and glory to his redeemed, for whom as man He had suffered and died, and whom as God He was now raising up to the eternal and beatific vision, having broken the bars and shackles imposed by sin.

340. Since this, O soul, was the work of my dear Son, the true God and man, He as the Lord of virtues and graces exalted and adorned me with them from the first moment of my Immaculate Conception. Moreover, since the hindrance of sin did not touch me I was free from the impediments which prevented other mortals from entering into the eternal gates of heaven; on the contrary, the powerful arm of my Son acted with me as being the Mistress of all virtues and as the Queen of heaven. Since He was to vest Himself and assume unto Himself human nature from my flesh and blood, He was beforehand in preparing me and making me like unto Himself in purity and exemption from fault, and in other divine gifts and privileges. Since I was not a slave of sin I exercised the virtues not as a subject but as a Mistress; without contradiction, but with sovereignty; not like the children of Adam, but like the Son of God, who was also my Son.

341. For these reasons the celestial spirits, who had possession of the eternal gates as their own, opened them up for me, perceiving that the Lord had created me more pure than all the most exalted spirits in heaven and made me their Queen and the Mistress of all creation. Remember also, my dearest, that he who makes the law can also dispense with it freely, and this the supreme Lord and Legislator did with me, extending the scepter of his clemency toward me more readily than Assuerus did to Esther (Esther 4:11; 15:14-15), for the common laws regarding others and consequent upon their guilt did not apply to me (Ib. 13), who was to be the Mother of the Author of grace. Though I could not as a mere creature merit such blessed privileges, yet the divine clemency and goodness generously inclined toward me, and He looked upon me as his humble servant, so He could be praised as the Author of such works. And I desire thee, my daughter, to give thanksgiving and blessing to Him for these benefits bestowed upon me.

342. My admonition to thee, whom in spite of thy weakness and poverty I have chosen with such generous kindness as my disciple and companion, is this, for thee to strive with all thy powers to imitate me in an exercise in which I persevered during my whole life from the very first moment of my birth, omitting it on not a single day, however full of cares and labors it might have been. This exercise was the following: Every day at the beginning of dawn I

prostrated myself in the presence of the Most High and gave Him thanks and praise for his immutable Being, his infinite perfections, and for having created me out of nothing. Acknowledging myself as his creature and the work of his hands, I blessed Him and adored Him, giving Him honor, magnificence and divinity, as the supreme Lord and Creator of myself and of all that exists. I raised up my spirit to place it into his hands, offering myself with profound humility and resignation to Him, and asking Him to dispose of me according to his will during that day and during all the days of my life, and to teach me to fulfill whatever would be to his greater pleasure. This I repeated many times during the external works of the day, and in the internal ones I first consulted His Majesty, asking his advice, permission and benediction for all my actions.

343. Be very devout toward my most sweet name. I desire thee to be convinced of the great prerogatives and privileges which the Almighty concedes to it, so that I myself when I saw them in the Divinity felt most deeply obliged and solicitous to make a proper return; and whenever the name MARY occurred to my mind (which happened often), and whenever I heard myself called by that name, I was roused to gratitude and urged to new fervor in the service of the Lord who gave it to me. Thou hast the same name, and I desire that in proportion it cause the same effects in thee, and that thou imitate me punctually in the teaching of this chapter without failing in the least point from this day forward. And if in thy weakness thou dost fail, rouse thyself immediately, and in the presence of thy Lord and mine acknowledge thy fault, confessing it in sorrow. By this care, and by repeating this holy exercise in many of thy actions, thou shalt find forgiveness for thy imperfections and grow accustomed to strive after what is highest in all virtues and to the pleasure of the Most High. Neglect not his divine grace\* given to thee for this purpose, but attend to his light and to what is most agreeable to thy affections and mine, surrendering all in order to hear, attend to, and obey thy Spouse and Lord, who desires in thee what is most pure, holy and perfect, and a will prompt and eager to execute it.

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\* cf. I Tim. 4:14 [Ed.]