

CITY OF GOD

The Incarnation

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE
OF THE
VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

Translated from the Original Spanish

BY

FISCAR MARISON

(Rev. Geo. J. Blatter)



AMI PRESS
WASHINGTON, NEW JERSEY

Publisher's Note

The Mystical City of God by Maria of Agreda is one of several well-known narrations of the life of Christ based on private revelation. It can offer the reader good food for meditation. However, since Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium provide the essentials of our Catholic Faith, revelations in this volume that go beyond these two foundations should be accepted only with human faith.

1996 Edition

Printed in the United States of America

The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima

P.O. Box 976

Washington, N.J. 07882

ISBN 0-911988-26-2

MYSTICAL
CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE
AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE
THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY
EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE
AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town
of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under
obedience to the regular observance
of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing
of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

Translation from the Original Authorized Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

IMPRIMATUR

Santa Fe, New Mexico, February 9, 1949.

I gladly give my "Imprimatur" as of today, to the new edition of the work, "The City of God" by Sister Mary of Jesus, to be reprinted from the original authorized Spanish Edition of the year 1902 without change, and already bearing the Imprimatur of His Excellency, Most Reverend H. J. Alerding, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

✠ EDWIN V. BYRNE, D.D.,
Archbishop of Santa Fe.

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What the Universities of Europe, the Religious Orders and Learned Men Say of the "Ciudad de Dios."

FORTY years after the first appearance of the "Ciudad de Dios" the great universities of Europe were called upon to give their opinion about this great work. All the faculties, except the Jansenistic members of the Sorbonne at Paris, published highest recommendations. At the same time the learned men and teachers of each religious order that maintained institutions of learning in Europe, were asked to contribute their opinions. The following religious orders complied: The Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, Cistercians, Basilians, Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstratensians, Reformed Augustinians, Theatines, Minors of the Regular Clergy, all unanimously endorsing the favorable decision previously published by the University of Salamanca. To the approbation of nearly all the Universities and Religious Orders, were then added the high eulogiums of other learned men, great divines, bishops and princes of the Church and of the Popes and the Roman Congregations. As a sample of what these witnesses said concerning the wonderful "Ciudad de Dios," we here select the official approbation of the University of Louvain, one of the great Universities of Europe.

After pointing out that God's power of giving private revelations to whom He chooses, must not be circumscribed, and after referring to some general rules in regard to private revelations, the document proceeds to say:

"Now, while abiding the decision of the Church concerning the revelations, which are given us under the title of The City of God, we, having read the whole work, say and are of the opinion, that the faithful can read it without danger to their faith and without damage to the purity of morals; for there is not found anything within it, which could lead to relaxation or to indiscreet rigor; but on the contrary, we have come to the conclusion that it will be most useful for enlivening and augmenting the piety of the faithful, the veneration of the most holy Virgin, and the respect for the sacred mysteries."

"The strong and the weak, the wise and the ignorant, and in fine, all the world will gather richest fruit from the reading of these books: for they contain what is most sublime in theology and in a style so simple, easy and perspicuous that, in order to enter deeply into an understanding of the holy mysteries, no more is necessary than to read them with sound judgment."

"Combined with this simplicity are found many doctrines and valid proofs, free from contradictions and not easily found in other writings. This History explains more than a thousand difficulties in holy Scripture, in a manner equally natural and wonderful. At every step are encountered exquisite interpretations, until now unknown, and which had been hidden beneath the mere

letter, but are laid open in these writings and brought to the light. In short, the whole work is a beautiful web of scripture passages which, though spun from its different books, are directly and specially woven into a whole for the purpose intended by the Venerable Mother."

"In addition thereto the instructions given by the most holy Virgin at the end of each chapter contain the purest morality, instruct, entertain, and at the same time sweetly inculcate the love of virtue and abhorrence of vice, painting them in the most vivid and natural colours. They do not only convince the intellect, but they contain such a special unction, that they enkindle a sacred ardor in the soul. In meditating upon them one certainly will experience a delight not met with in ordinary writings; and the more they are read the greater is the delight experienced. Finally, the whole work contains something so unwonted and attractive that, once begun, the reading of it can scarcely be relinquished."

"The novelty and variety found in these writings delight and recreate the reader beyond all that is pleasant in the world, at the same time instructing him and inspiring him with new fervor. All can easily persuade themselves that, if the interior life of Christ our Lord and of the most holy Virgin was not just as described in these books, it could certainly have been like it; and that it would have been well worthy of Them, if it was as it is there depicted. All that is there said is befitting the majesty and humility of Christ, and in correspondence with the holiness of the Virgin and the dignity of the Mother; since there is found nothing in the whole work which was not worthy of both one and the other.

"Notwithstanding all this, we should not at all won-

der if the book met with men who are disposed to be critical; for what book is there which can hope to escape the opposition of the people of our times? God has not even provided that the sacred Scriptures should be free from such attack among the greater part of the learned of this world. The whole philosophy of the pagans causes them to join the number of those who are opposed to the cross of Christ crucified; and among that number are also the libertines of our day."

"Of course there are certain points in this work which might give rise to apparent difficulties, and some of them occurred, and do occur, to us. But, in accordance with what we have said of the excellence and usefulness of this work, we have come to the conclusion that these few passages must not hinder us from giving it the commendation already given; besides, we must confess that we might possibly be ourselves mistaken in making these objections."

"This seemed to us the most reasonable course, since in this book there is something more than human. Anything so excellent and sublime cannot be ascribed to an over-excited imagination, since the whole work is consistent throughout. Nor can it be believed to be the work of a perverted mind, for, with a constant equanimity, it treats of the most deeply hidden and abstruse matters without involving itself in any contradictions; though often also it descends to innumerable minute and particular circumstances."

"There are contained in this work such noble, such devout circumstantial and pertinent discourses, as cannot be the result of mere discursive thought. Nor can it be attributed to the demon; for, from beginning to end, it

suggests and breathes nothing but humility, patience and endurance of hardships."

"Therefore, just as 'Ciudad' must without a doubt be attributed to the venerable Mother of Agreda, who is claimed as its author, so she cannot have composed it without particular help from on high. Our conclusive opinion is, that the City of God, for the good of the public, and for the advantages to be derived therefrom, should be brought forth to the light. This is our judgment, which we submit entirely to the supreme decision of the Holy See, to whom alone belongs the right of finally judging such writings."

Louvain, 20th of July 1715.

(Signed) HERMANN DAMEN,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary and
Regent of the Theological
Faculty, Don of Saint Peter,
President of the College of
Arras, Censor of Books, etc.

ANTON PARMENTIER,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary,
Regent of the Theological
Faculty, President of the Great
College of Theologians, etc.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3, 1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne, known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII, Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites, approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and written by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII, when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revelations as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy, objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his objections as interfering with the decree of pope Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has resulted so far in securing her the title of Venerabilis, thus clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German translation in 1885, which was approved and highly recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the following terms:

“We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation to the annotated translation of the Spanish original “Ciudad de Dios” of Mary of Jesus and recommend this book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occasion of great spiritual blessings.”

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

✠IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Germany, etc.

“According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and Clement XI the book known as ‘Ciudad de Dios’ written by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may be read by all the faithful.”

“A number of episcopal approbations, the recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent members of different orders, coincide in extolling the above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal D’Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty years of his previous life as of small consequence in comparison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Venerable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbé Emery, adds: “Only since I read the revelations of Mary of Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother.”

"We therefore do not hesitate—in granting our episcopal approbation to—"Ciudad de Dios"—and wish to recommend it to the faithful and especially to our clergy."

✠FRANZ ALBERT,
Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios" is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for the printing of the new edition of the "City of God" now about to be published by the religious of the above-named convent, with the authenticated autograph manuscript of that work there preserved,—and having ascertained by a personal revision of a great part of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition of 'Ciudad de Dios,' with the exception of a few mere orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to the autograph of that work as composed and written by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] ✠JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled 'Ciudad de Dios.' Wishing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

✠H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publication of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these divisions as follow:

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

The Incarnation

**The Mysteries of the Life of the Holy Mother
of God from the Incarnation of the Divine
Word in her virginal Womb to the Return
of the Holy Family from Egypt.**

INTRODUCTION

1. When I was ready to present before the throne of God the insignificant results of my labors in writing the first part of the most holy life of Mary, the Mother of God, I wished to subject it to the scrutiny and correction of the divine light, by which I had been guided in my shortcomings. I was very anxious to be consoled by the renewed assurance, and benign approval of the Most High, and to know, whether He wished me to continue or to abandon this work, which is so far above my lowliness. The Lord responded saying: "Thou hast written well, and according to our pleasure; but We desire thee to understand, that in order to manifest the mysteries and most high sacraments of the rest of the life of our only and chosen Spouse, Mother of our Onlybegotten, thou hast need of a new and more exalted preparation. It is our wish that thou die to all that is imperfect and visible, and that thou live according to the spirit; that thou renounce all the occupations and habits of an earthly creature and assume instead those of an angel, striving to attain in them a still greater purity and an entire conformity with what thou art to understand and write."

2. In this answer of the Most High I understood, that such a high perfection of life and habits and such an unwonted exercise of virtues was proposed and required of me, that, full of diffidence, I became disturbed and fearful of undertaking a work so arduous and difficult for an earthly creature. I felt within myself great repugnance rising up in the flesh against the spirit. The

spirit called me with interior force, urging me to strive after the disposition, which was required of me, and advancing as argument the pleasure of the Lord and the benefits accruing to myself. On the other hand the law of sin (Rom. 7, 23), which I felt in my members, opposed the divine promptings and discouraged me by the fear of my own inconstancy. I felt a great distaste, which deterred me and a great pusillanimity which filled me with fear. In this excitement I began to believe, that I was not capable of treating about such high things, especially as they were so foreign to the condition and estate of a woman.

3. Overcome by fears and difficulties, I resolved not to continue this work, and to use all possible means to adhere to this determination. The common enemy knew my fear and cowardice, and, as his utmost cruelty is more aroused against the weak and disheartened, he made use of this very disposition to attack me with incredible fury. It seemed to him, that I was left without help in his hands. In order to conceal his malice, he sought to transform himself into an angel of light, pretending to be very solicitous for my soul and for my welfare. Under this false pretext he perfidiously deluged me with his suggestions and doubts; he represented to me the danger of damnation and frightened me with punishments similar to those of the chief of the angels (Is. 14, 12), since I had sought in my pride to comprehend, what was above my powers and in opposition to God himself.

4. He pointed out to me many souls, who, professing virtue, were deceived by some secret presumption and by yielding to the insinuations of the devil; and he made me believe, that in so far as I sought to scrutinize the secrets of the divine Majesty (Prov. 25, 27), I could not but be

guilty of pride and presumption, thus being already judged. He urged very strongly, that the present times were ill suited for such matters and sought to confirm his assertion by what happened to some well known persons, who were found to labor under deceit and error. He reminded me of the dread of the spiritual life in others; how great would be the discredit, which would arise by any mistake of mine and what evil effect it would have on those of little piety; all this I would know by experience and to my regret, if I persisted in writing about this matter. And as it is true evidently, that all the opposition to the spiritual life and the small esteem in which the mystic virtues are held, is caused by that mortal enemy, so, for the purpose of doing away with Christian devotion and piety in many souls, he succeeds in deceiving some and in sowing the cockle among the good seed of the Lord (Matth. 13, 25). Thus he causes confusion and obscures the true sentiment concerning it, making it more difficult to distinguish the darkness from the light. I am not surprised to see him succeed therein, as the true discernment is the special work of God and of those, who participate in his true wisdom, and do not govern themselves only by earthly insight.

5. It is not easy during this mortal life to discern true prudence from the false; for often also the good intention and zeal warp the human judgment, when counsel and light from on high are wanting. I had occasion to learn this in the execution of that which I am about to undertake: for some persons, well known as devout, not only those who loved me on account of their piety and desired my welfare, but also those who were less loving and considerate: all alike at one time wished to deter me from this undertaking, and also from the path, which I was going, as if I was proceeding upon it by my own

choice. Their fear of drawing discredit or confusion upon those who were striving after piety with me, or upon religion or my neighbors, and especially upon the convent in which I lived, caused them anxiety and to me, affliction. I was much enamoured by the security, which the ordinary paths of the other nuns seemed to offer; I acknowledge, that this suited more my own insight and my inclination and desires, and was urged upon me still more by my timidity and my great fears.

6. Cast about upon these impetuous waves, my heart sought to reach the port of obedience in order to reassure me in the bitter sea of my confusion. To add to my tribulation, it began to be rumored about in our order, that my spiritual father and superior, who had for many years directed my soul and who well understood my interior trials, who moreover had commanded me to write the preceding part of this history, who would most likely encourage, quiet, and console me, was suggested for removal to a higher office. The suggestion was not acted upon, but it occasioned his absence for many days, and the dragon took advantage of all this in order to pour out against me the furious river of his wrath (Apoc. 13, 15). Thus, though in vain, he exerted all his malice, on this occasion and others, to entice me from obedience and deprive me of the guidance of my superior and master.

7. In addition to all the contradictions and temptations already mentioned, and many others not possible to describe, the demon sought to deprive me of my health, causing many aches, indispositions and disorders of the whole body. He harassed me with insurmountable sadness and conflicting thoughts; he seemed to confuse my understanding, hinder correct thinking, weaken my will power, and sift me in body and soul. And it happened

that in the midst of this confusion I committed some faults, which were serious enough in me, although they were committed not so much in malice as from human frailty. Nevertheless the serpent sought to use them for my destruction more than any other means; for thus having interrupted the flow of good works, his fury was let loose to cause still greater faults in this embarrassment by inveigling me to exaggerate my guilt. To this he drove me by impious and most insidious suggestions, seeking to persuade me, that all that I had experienced in the path which I had trodden, was false and erroneous.

8. As these insinuations, on account of the faults committed and on account of my continual consternation and fears, began to appear plausible, I resisted them less than others; and it was only through the special mercies of the Lord, that I did not fall entirely from all belief and hope in a remedy. But I found myself so entangled in difficulties and surrounded by darkness, that I may say, the groanings of death encompassed me and the sorrows of hell engulfed me (Ps. 17, 5) inspiring me with dread of extreme peril. I resolved to burn the manuscripts of the first part of this divine history and to desist from writing the second. The angel of satan, who inspired me with this resolution, induced me also to withdraw myself from the whole undertaking: to put an end to the pursuit of the spiritual life, to neglect my interior life, and not to communicate about it with any one. Thus would I be able to do penance for my sins, appease the Lord, propitiate Him, and retain his friendship. In order to make sure of the effects of his concealed malice he proposed, that I make a vow not to write any more on account of the danger of being deceived and of deceiving; but that instead, I amend my life, retrench my imperfections and embrace penance.

9. With this masque of seeming virtue the dragon pretended to establish his damnable counsels and cover himself with the skin of a sheep, while in reality he acted as a bloodthirsty and devouring wolf. He persevered for some time in this attack and all alone I remained for fifteen days in a night of darkness, without relief or consolation either human or divine: without the former, because I was without the help and the counsel of obedience, and without the latter, because the Lord had interrupted the flow of his favors, his enlightenments and continual inspiration. Above all was I distressed by despair of salvation and in it, the persuasion, that death and the danger of my eternal damnation was approaching; all this was instigated and fostered in me by the enemy.

10. But as the aftertastes of his temptations are so bitter and end but in despair, the very disturbance, by which he upset the whole republic of my powers and acquired habits, made me more wary of fulfilling anything which he urged on me and proposed to me. He availed himself of the continual fear, which tormented me with the dread of offending God and of losing his friendship and when, in my doubts, I applied myself to works of piety, he sought to draw me away. This very fear however made me hesitate at what the astute dragon had tried to convince me of and in this uncertainty I deferred giving assent to it. My high regard for obedience also, by which I had been ordered to write, and the contrariness of that which I felt in my interior, helped me to resist and to recoil at his suggestions. Above all the assistance of the Most High defended me and permitted not the beasts to snatch my soul, which amid sighs and groans confessed Him. I cannot describe in words the temptations, combats, troubles, dismays and

afflictions, which I suffered in this battle: for I saw myself placed in such a state, that in my judgment there was really no greater difference between my condition and that of the damned, except that in hell there is no redemption, while in mine it was still possible.

11. One day, in order to get some respite, I cried out from the bottom of my heart saying: "O woe is me, that I have come to such a state! and woe to my soul, which finds itself therein! Whither shall I turn, since all the portals of my salvation are closed?" Immediately a strong and sweet voice gave answer within myself: "Whither dost thou wish to go outside of God himself?" By this answer I perceived that my cure was at hand in the Lord, and at the breaking of this dawn I began to raise myself from the depth of the confusion, into which I was cast, and I felt a powerful increase in the fervor of my desires and in the acts of faith, hope and charity. I debased myself in the presence of the Most High and, in firm confidence in his goodness, I wept over my faults with bitter sorrow. I confessed them many times and sighing from the depth of heart, I began to seek again the former light and truth. And as the divine Wisdom comes forth to meet those by whom it is invoked (Wis. 6, 17), it advanced toward me in delight and cleared away the night of my confusion and tormenting afflictions.

12. Presently that bright day broke, which I had desired so much; the quiet possession of peace returned; I enjoyed the sweet love and vision of my Lord and Master, and with it I again perceived, why I should believe, accept and esteem the benefits and favors, which his mighty arm wrought in me. I gave Him thanks as far as was in my power; and I saw, who I was and who God is; that a creature by itself can do nothing, that it

is nothing, because sin is nothing. I saw also what man can do when raised up and assisted up by the divine right hand, being much more than can be imagined by our earthly faculties. Humbled in the perception of these truths and in the presence of the inaccessible light, (which is vast and strong, without deceit or falsehood), my heart flowed over in sweet affections of love, praise and thanksgiving. For now I understood, that He had guarded and defended me, so that in the confused night of temptations my lamp might not be extinguished (Prov. 31, 18); and in the depth of my gratitude I annihilated myself to the dust and humiliated myself as a worm of the earth.

13. To make this benefit more certain, I immediately heard an interior exhortation, without knowing clearly from whence it proceeded; while it severely reprehended me for my disloyalty and my wrongful ways, it at the same time admonished and enlightened, instructed and corrected me. It furnished me with a deep understanding of good and evil, of virtue and vice, of what was secure, useful and beneficial, as well as their contraries; it laid open to me the way of eternity, gave me a knowledge of the means and of the end, of the value of life everlasting, and of the miserable unhappiness and the so little considered ruin of endless perdition.

14. In the profound knowledge of these two extremes, I confess that I was dumbfounded and cast about between the fear of my dreadful infirmity and the desire of reaching the happiness, of which I was unworthy on account of my demerits. I was full of the thought of the kindness and mercy of the Most High; and the fear of losing Him: I beheld the two different ends awaiting the creatures: eternal glory and eternal misery; and it seemed a small matter to me to suffer all the pains and the

torments of the world, of purgatory and hell itself, in order to attain to the one and to avoid the other. And although I perceived, that the divine help is assured to those who seek to make use of it, yet as I also saw by this light, that life and death are in our hands (Eccli. 15, 18), and that our weakness or malice may prevent the proper use of grace, and that the tree will lie for all eternity as it once has fallen (Eccles. 11, 3), on this account I was overcome by the deepest sorrow, which penetrated my heart.

15. This sorrow was increased by a most severe answer or inquiry, which came from the Lord. For while I found myself thus annihilated in the consciousness of my weakness and danger and by the thought of having offended his justice, so that I dared not raise my eyes toward Him, He met my speechless sorrow by the advances of his mercy, saying to me in answer to them: "Which dost thou wish, my soul? Which dost thou seek? Which of these ways wilt thou choose? What is thy resolve?" This question was an arrow to my heart: for although I knew for certain, that the Lord knew my desires better than I myself, the delay between the question and the answer was incredibly painful to me; I wished, if possible, that the Lord should anticipate my answer and should not show Himself ignorant of the response, which I would give. But, impelled by great emotion, I made response in words coming from the innermost of soul, and said; "Lord and omnipotent God! The path of virtue, the way of eternal life do I chose, this do I desire, and in this do Thou place me; and as I do not merit it in thy justice, I appeal to they mercy, and I offer for myself the infinite merits of thy most holy Son and my Redeemer, Jesus Christ."

16. I was made aware, that this highest Judge re-

membered the promise, which is given to the Church, that He would grant all that is asked in the name of his Onlybegotten (John 16, 23), that in Him and on his account my petition was granted and its fulfillment hastened according to my poor wishes. Certain conditions were made and proposed to me by an intellectual voice, saying to me interiorly: "Soul, created by the hand of the Almighty, if thou wishest, as one of the elect, to follow in the path of the true light and attain the position of a most chaste spouse of the Lord, who calls thee, it is befitting, that thou observe the laws and precepts of love. The first thing required of thee is, that thou reject entirely all earthly inclinations, renouncing all and every affection toward the transient things, so that thou have no love or affection toward any created being, no matter how useful, beautiful or agreeable it may appear to thee. Cherish no created image, harbor no earthly affection; let thy will rest in no created object, except in so far as thy Lord and Spouse shall command thee for the well-ordering of thy love, or in so far as thou canst be aided thereby to love Him alone."

17. "And when, after thus reaching this perfect abnegation and renunciation of thyself, thou shalt have freed and disentangled thyself from all earthly things, seek the Lord, raising thyself with the swift wings of the dove toward the high habitation, in which He, in his condescension, wishes to place thy spirit; so that there thou mayest live in his presence and have a secure dwelling-place. This great Lord is a most jealous Spouse and his love and emulation are strong as death (Cant. 8, 6). He wishes to adorn thee and set thee in a secure place, in order that thou mayest not issue from it, or leave his presence for another, where thou findest Him not or enjoyest not his caresses. He, with whom thou art to con-

verse without mistrust, wishes to sign thee with his own hand, and this is a most equitable law, which the spouses of the great King must observe; for even those in the world observe it, in order to show their faithfulness. It is due to the nobility of thy Spouse, that thou observe a behavior corresponding to the dignity and position conferred by Him, without descending to anything not befitting this estate or making thee unworthy of the adornment lavished upon thee for entrance into his bridal chamber."

18. "Next I require of thee, that thou despoil thyself with diligence of the vestments torn by thy faults and imperfections, soiled by the effects of sin, and made odious by the inclinations of nature. His Majesty wishes to wash off the stains, to purify and renew thee with his beauty, but under condition, that thou never lose sight of the poor and despicable vestments of which thou hast been divested, so that in the memory and knowledge of this benefit, thou mayest spread the odor of sweetness for this great King by the nard of thy humility (Cant. 1, 11), and so that thou mayest never forget the return, which thou owest to the Author of thy salvation. Thus will He, by the precious balsam of his blood, purify thee, heal thy wounds and enlighten thee copiously."

19. "In addition to all this" (this voice continued to say) "in order that thus forgetting all earthly things thou mayest be coveted by the highest King, seek to adorn thyself with the jewels, which He in his pleasure has prepared for thee. The vestments, which shall cover thee, are to be whiter than the snow, more brilliant than the diamond, more resplendent than the sun and yet they will be at the same time so delicate, that they will easily be spoiled by any negligence, making thee abominable in the sight of thy Spouse. But if thou preserve them in

the purity which He desires, thy steps will be beautiful as the Prince's daughter (Cant. 7, 1), and his Majesty will be pleased with thy sentiments and thy words. As a cincture of thy vestment He will give thee the knowledge of his divine power and his holy fear, in order that, having bound thy inclinations, thou mayest direct thyself by his pleasure. The jewels of thy necklace, which adorn thy neck, signifying thy humble submission, shall be the costly stones of faith, hope and charity. As a clasp for thy hair (which are the high and exalted thoughts and thy heavenly intelligences), thou wilt have from Him the infused science and wisdom, and the embroideries of thy vestments shall be all the beauty and richness of the virtues. Thy diligence in performing what is most perfect shall serve thee as sandals, and they laces shall be the avoidance and restraints, that thou wilt use in order to keep from evil. The rings, which will beautify thy fingers, shall be the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and the beauty of thy face shall be the participation of the Divinity, which on account of his holy love, shall shine therefrom. Thereto thou shalt add the coloring of confusion for having offended Him, in order that it may make thee ashamed of offending Him in the future, comparing at the same time the coarse and sordid habits of the past with those that now adorn thee."

20. "And because thy own merits would make but a poor and miserable return for such a high espousal, the Most High wishes to ratify this contract by singling out, as if for thee alone, the infinite merits of thy Spouse Jesus Christ, and He makes thee a partaker of all his possessions and treasures in the heavens and upon earth. For all belongs to this supreme Lord (Esther 13, 11), and of all this thou shalt be mistress as his spouse for thy own use and for the greater love of Him. But

remember, soul, that in order to obtain such a gift, thou must hide all this within thyself, without ever losing thy secret; for I warn thee of the danger of soiling thy beauty with the least imperfection; but if at any time thou committest such an imperfection out of weakness, rise from it at once, like a strong one, and acknowledging it, weep over the small fault as if it had been the most grievous."

21. "And in order that thou mayest have a dwelling-place and habitation befitting such a great estate, thy Spouse does not wish to set thee any limit, but it is his pleasure, that thou dwell in the infinite regions of his Divinity and that thou roam about and disport thyself through the illimitable fields of his attributes and perfections, where the view of the intellect is without restraint, where the will is delighted without shadow of misgiving, and where the inclinations are satiated without bitterness. This is the paradise always delightful, where the most beloved brides of Christ find their recreation, where they gather the fragrant flowers and myrrh, and where the infinite is found for those that have renounced the imperfect nothing. There will thy habitation be secure; and in order that thy intercourse and companionship may be in correspondence with it, I desire that thou converse with the angels, holding them as friends and companions, and copying from them, during their frequent conversations and intercourse with thee, their virtues by faithful imitation."

22. "Take notice" (continued the voice) "O soul, of the greatness of this benefit; for the Mother of thy Spouse and the Queen of heaven adopts thee anew for her daughter, receives thee as her disciple, and assumes the place of a Mother and of a Teacher toward thee. Through her intercession dost thou receive those special favors and

they are all granted to thee that thou mayest write her most holy life. On this account thou hast been pardoned without thy merit, and that, which otherwise thou wouldst not have reached, has been conceded to thee. What would become of thee, O soul, if it were not for the Mother of mercy? Thou wouldst already have perished, if her intercession had failed thee; poor and useless would have been thy works, if, by divine condescension, thou hadst not been selected to write this history, but the eternal Father chose thee for his daughter, in view of this work, and for a spouse of his Only-begotten Son; and the Son received thee to his close embraces, and the Holy Spirit selected thee for his enlightenments. The document of this contract and espousal is written and imprinted on the white parchment of the purity of most holy Mary: there the finger and the power of the Most High have written it; the ink is the blood of the Lamb; the executor is the eternal Father; the tie which binds thee to Christ is the Holy Spirit; the bondsmen are the merits of the same Jesus Christ and of his Mother; for thou art but a vile worm, having nothing to offer and being expected to give merely thy free consent."

23. So far the admonishing voice, which I heard. Although I judged it to be that of an angel, yet whether such it was, I could not ascertain clearly, for I did not perceive it in the same way as at other times. Such manifestations and disclosures accommodate themselves to the dispositions of the soul at the time of their reception, as for instance it happened to the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24, 16). Many other experiences I had in order to overcome the opposition of the serpent against the writing of this history, but it would draw out this introduction too much to mention them now. I continued my prayers for some days, asking the Lord to govern and

direct me in order not to make a mistake, and representing to Him my incapacity and timidity. His Majesty persisted in exhorting me to ordain my life toward all purity and the greatest perfection, and in urging me to continue in it after having begun. And especially the Queen of the angels intimated to me her will many times, and with great sweetness and tenderness commanded me to obey Her as her daughter and write her most holy life, which I had commenced.

24. To all this I wished to add the security of obedience. Without saying anything of that, which I had heard from the Lord and from his most holy Mother, I asked my confessor and superior what he would direct me to do in this matter. He answered by commanding me under obedience to continue and to write the second part of this history. Finding myself thus compelled both by the Lord and by obedience, I returned again to the presence of the Most High, where I found myself one day in prayer, and, renouncing my whole self and recognizing my insignificance and liability to err, I prostrated myself before his Majesty and said: "My Lord, my Lord, what wishest Thou to do with me?" Whereupon I received the following intelligence.

25. It seemed to me, that the divine light of the blessed Trinity showed me my own self full of poverty and defects, and severely reprehending me for them, furnished me at the same time with the highest doctrine and salutary directions for a perfect life, and for this purpose God purified and enlightened me anew. I became aware that the Mother of grace, most holy Mary, standing before the throne of the Divinity, was interceding and pleading for me. With such assistance my confidence took new life and profiting by the clemency of such a Mother, I addressed myself to Her and spoke to Her only

these words: "My Lady and my Refuge, consider, as a true Mother, the poverty of thy slave." It seemed to me as if She heard my prayer and speaking with the Most High, She said: "My Lord, I wish to receive this useless and poor creature anew as a daughter and adopt her as my own." (Truly this was the act of a most liberal and mighty Queen!) But the Most High answered: "My Spouse, for such a great favor as this, what does this soul bring in return? She does not deserve it, being a useless and destitute worm, and thankless for our gifts."

26. O wonderful power of the divine word! How shall I describe the effects produced in me by this answer of the Allpowerful? I humbled myself to the depth of my nothingness and I was filled with the knowledge of the misery of creatures and of my own ingratitude toward God. My heart sank within me in sorrow for my sins and in the desire of obtaining the unmerited happiness of being the child of that Sovereign. I raised my eyes full of dread to the throne of the Most High and my visage was transported in fear and hope; I turned toward my Advocate, and desiring to be admitted as her slave, since I did not merit the title of daughter, I spoke from the bottom of my heart without forming any words; and I heard the great Lady say to the Lord:

27. "Divine Lord and my God, it is true, this poor creature has nothing to offer to thy justice, but I offer for her the merits and the blood, which my most holy Son poured out for her and with it I present also the dignity of Mother of thy onlybegotten Son, which I received from thy ineffable kindness, all the works, which I performed in thy service in having borne Him in my womb, and nourished Him with the milk of my breast, and above all I offer Thee thy own bounty and Divinity;

I earnestly entreat Thee to consider this creature as my adopted daughter and disciple for whom I will stand security. Under my guidance She will amend her faults and perform her works according to thy pleasure."

28. The Most High, (may He be eternally praised for hearing the petition of the great Queen interceding for the least of his creatures), yielded to these prayers, and immediately in the joy of my soul I felt immense effects, such as are impossible to describe; with my whole heart I turned toward all the creatures of heaven and earth, and, not being able to contain my exultation, I invited them to exalt for me and with me the Author of grace. It seemed to me that I addressed them in the following words: "O ye inhabitants and courtiers of heaven and all ye living creatures, formed by the hand of the Most High, behold this marvel of his liberality and mercy and bless and exalt Him for all eternity, since He has raised from the dust the most vile of the universe and has enriched the most destitute; He has honored the most unworthy, though He is the highest God and the powerful King. And since you, sons of Adam, here see the poorest orphan succored, the greatest sinner pardoned; issue forth from your ignorance, raise yourself from your listlessness and renew your hope; for if his powerful arm has assisted me, if He has called and forgiven me, all of you can hope for your salvation; and if you wish to assure yourselves of it, seek, seek the protection of the most holy Mary, ask Her for her intercession, and you will find Her to be the Mother of ineffable mercy and clemency."

29. I turned also to this most exalted Queen and said to Her: "Aye, O my Lady, now I do not call myself an orphan, since I have a Mother, and a Mother, who is the Queen of all creation; I shall not any more be ignorant, since I have as Teacher the Mistress of divine wisdom,

not poor, since I have as Lord Him, who is Master of all the treasures of heaven and earth; I have a Mother, who protects me; an Instructress, who teaches and corrects me; a Mistress, who commands and governs me. Blessed art Thou amongst all women, wonderful among all creatures, admirable in heaven and on earth, and let all confess thy greatness with eternal praises. Since it is not easy or possible for the least among creatures, the lowest worm of the earth to give Thee any return: receive it then from the divine right hand and in the divine vision, where Thou standest in the presence of God enjoying Thyself through all eternity: I shall remain thy acknowledged and bounden slave, praising the Almighty as long as my life shall last, since his liberal mercy has so favored me, as to give me my Queen as my Mother and Teacher. Let my loving muteness praise Thee, since my tongue has not words or terms adequate for doing it; for all of them are strained and limited."

30. It is not possible to describe what the soul feels during such mysterious favors. They were the source of great good to my soul, for immediately I was made aware of a perfection of life, and of works for which I fail to find terms. But all this, the Most High told me, was given to me on account of the most holy Mary and in order to write her life. It was intimated to me, that by ratifying this blessing, the eternal Father chose me to manifest the sacraments of his Daughter; that the Holy Spirit poured out his light and inspirations that I might declare the hidden gifts of his Spouse; and that the most holy Son appointed me to manifest the mysteries of his most pure Mother Mary. And in order that I might become capable of this work, the Holy Trinity enlightened and bathed my soul in a special light of the Divinity and the divine power touched up my faculties as with a

pencil, furnishing them with new habits for the perfect execution of this work.

31. The Most High also commanded me to strive to imitate with all my heart, according to my weak powers, all that I should understand and write about the heroic virtues and the most holy operations of the heavenly Queen, guiding my life according to her example. Knowing how unfit I am for the fulfillment of this obligation, the same most kind Queen offered to me anew her favor, help and instruction for all that the Lord commanded and pointed out to me. Then I asked for the blessing of the most holy Trinity in order to begin the second part of this heavenly history. I felt that all three persons of the Godhead conferred their blessing upon me. Issuing from the trance, I sought to wash my soul in the Sacraments and, full of contrition for my sins, in the name of the Lord and of obedience, I set myself about this work for the glory of the Most High and for his most holy Mother, the ever immaculate Virgin Mary.

32. This second part comprises the life of the Queen of the angels from the mystery of the Incarnation to the Ascension of Christ our Lord into heaven, which is the principal and the most important part of this history, for it includes the whole life and mysteries of the Lord himself with his Passion and most holy Death. I wish only to remark here, that the graces and blessings conceded to most holy Mary in preparation for the Incarnation, began to flow from the moment of her Immaculate Conception; already at that time, in the intention and the decree of God, She was the Mother of the Word. But in the measure as the realization of the Incarnation drew nigh, the favors and gifts of grace continued to increase. Although they seemed to be all of

the same kind and nature from the beginning, yet they continued to augment and increase; and there are not terms new and varied enough to equal in their significance these increases and advances in the blessings conferred. Thus it becomes necessary in this narrative to measure all by the infinite power of the Lord, who, giving much, retains enough to give infinitely more, while the capacity of each soul, and especially the soul of the Queen of heaven, is in its way infinite, being able to receive ever more and more. And this happened with the soul of holy Mary, until She arrived at a summit of holiness and participation of the Divinity, to which no other creature has attained nor will ever attain in all eternity. May the Lord himself enlighten me, that I may follow up this work according to his divine pleasure. Amen.

BOOK ONE

BOOK III, I OF II PART

Contains the most Exquisite Preparations of the Almighty for the Incarnation of the Word In Mary most Holy; the Circumstances Accompanying this Mystery; the Exalted State, in which the Blessed Mother was placed; her Visit to Saint Elisabeth and the Sanctification of the Baptist: Her Return to Nazareth and a Memorable Battle of the Virgin with Lucifer

CHAPTER I.

THE MOST HIGH BEGINS TO PREPARE IN MOST HOLY MARY THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION; THE EVENTS OF THE NINE DAYS PRECEDING THIS MYSTERY, ESPECIALLY THE HAPPENINGS OF THE FIRST DAY.

1. In order that her most faultless life might be to all an example of the highest holiness, the Most High had placed upon our Queen and Mistress the duties of a spouse of saint Joseph which was a position requiring more intercourse with her neighbors. The heavenly Mistress, finding Herself in this new estate, was filled with such exalted thoughts and sentiments in the fulfillment of her duties, and ordered all the activities of her life with such wisdom, that She was an object of admirable emulation to the angelic spirits and an unparalleled example for men. Few knew Her and still fewer had spoken with Her: but these happy ones were so filled with that celestial influence of Mary, that with a wonderful joy and with unwonted flights of spirit they sought to express and

manifest the light, which illumined their hearts and which they knew came from Her. The most prudent Queen was not unaware of these operations of the Most High; but neither was it yet time, nor would her most profound humility as yet consent to their becoming known to the world. She continually besought the Lord to hide them from men, to make all the favors of his right hand redound solely to his praise, and to permit Her to be ignored and despised by all the mortals, in as far as his infinite goodness would not be offended thereby.

2. These prayers were accepted by her divine Spouse with great benignity and his providence arranged all things in such a manner, that the very light, which incited men to proclaim her greatness, at the same time caused them to be mute. Moved by divine power, they refrained from expressing their thoughts, inwardly praising the Lord for the light, which they felt within themselves. Filled with marvel they suspended their judgment, and leaving behind the creatures, they sought their Creator. Many turned from sin at the mere sight of Her; others amended their lives; all were affected at seeing Her and experienced heavenly influences in their souls. But immediately they forgot the source of these influences; for if they could have remained in her presence, or could have retained the memory of her image, and if God had not prevented it by a mystery, nothing would have been able to divert their attention from Her and all would have sought Her without wavering.

3. In such fruitful occupations and in augmenting the gifts and graces from which all this good proceeded, our Queen, the Spouse of Joseph, busied Herself during the six months and seventeen days, which intervened between her espousal and the Incarnation of the Word. I cannot pretend to refer even briefly to her great heroic acts of

all the virtues, interior and exterior, to all her deeds of charity, humility, religion, and all her works of mercy, the alms and benefactions; for this exceeds the power of the pen. The best I can do is to sum up and say: that the Most High found in most holy Mary the fulfillment of all his pleasure and of his wishes, as far as is possible in the correspondence of a creature with its Creator. By her sanctity and merits God felt Himself as it were obliged, and, (according to our way of speaking), compelled, to hasten his steps and extend the arms of his Omnipotence to bring about the greatest of wonders conceivable in the world before or after: namely the Incarnation of the Onlybegotten of the Father in the virginal womb of this Lady.

4. In order to proceed with a dignity befitting Himself, God prepared most holy Mary in a singular manner during the nine days immediately preceding this mystery, and allowed the river of his Divinity to rush impetuously forth (Psalm 45, 5) to inundate this City of God with its floods. He communicated such great graces and gifts and favors, that I am struck dumb by the perception of what has been made known to me concerning this miracle, and my lowliness is filled with dread at even the mention of what I understood. For the tongue, the pen, and all the faculties of a creature fall far below any possibility of revealing such incomprehensible sacraments. Therefore I wish it to be understood, that all I say here is only an insignificant shadow of the smallest part of these wonders and ineffable prodigies, which are not at all to be encompassed by our limited words, but only by the power divine, which I do not possess.

5. On the first day of this most blessed novena the heavenly Princess Mary, after a slight rest, according to the example of her father David and according to the

diurnal order and arrangement laid out for Her by the Lord, left her couch at midnight (Psalm 118, 62), and, prostrate in the presence of the Most High, commenced her accustomed prayer and holy exercises. The angels, who attended upon Her, spoke to Her and said: "Spouse of our King and Lord, arise, for his Majesty calls Thee." She raised Herself with fervent affection and answered: "The Lord commands the dust to raise itself from the dust." And turning toward the countenance of the Lord, who called Her, She added: "Most high and powerful Master, what wishest Thou to do with me?" At these words her most holy soul was raised in spirit to a new and higher habitation, closer to the same Lord and more remote from all earthly and passing things.

6. She felt at once, that She was being prepared by those illuminations and purifications, which at other times She had experienced in some of the most exalted visions of the Divinity. I do not dwell on them, since I have described them in the first part (Part I, 620-629). The Divinity manifested Itself not by an intuitive, but by an abstractive vision; however so clearly, that by it She understood more of this incomprehensible Object, than what the blessed see and enjoy by intuition. For this vision was more exalted and more profound than the others of that kind; since this heavenly Lady made Herself more capable day by day and, because She made such perfect use of graces, She disposed Herself for ever greater ones. Moreover, the repeated enlightenments and visions of the Divinity continually enabled Her to respond more and more befittingly to its infinite operations.

7. In this vision our Princess Mary learned most high secrets of the Divinity and of its perfections, and especially of God's communications *ad extra* in the work of

creation. She saw that it originated in the goodness and liberality of God, that creatures were not necessary for supplementing his Divine existence, nor for his infinite glory, since without them He was glorious through the interminable eternities before the creation of the world. Many sacraments and secrets were manifested to our Queen, which neither can nor should be made known to all; for She alone was the only One (Cant. 6, 8; 7, 6), the chosen One, selected by the highest King and Lord of creation for these delights. But as her Highness in this vision perceived this impulse and inclination of the Divinity to communicate Itself *ad extra* with a force greater than that which makes all the elements tend toward their center, and as She was drawn within the sphere of this divine love, She besought the eternal Father with heart aflame, that He send his Onlybegotten into the world and give salvation to men, since in this manner He should satisfy, and, (speaking humanly), execute the promptings of his Divinity and its perfections.

8. These petitions of his Spouse were very sweet to the Lord, they were the scarlet lace, with which She bound and secured his love. And in order to put his desires into execution He sought first to prepare the tabernacle or temple, whither He was to descend from the bosom of the eternal Father. He resolved to furnish his beloved and chosen Mother with a clear knowledge of all his works *ad extra*, just as his Omnipotence had made them. On the first day therefore, and in this same vision, He manifested to Her all that He had made on the first day of the creation of the world, as it is recorded in Genesis, and She perceived all with greater clearness and comprehension, than if She had been an eye-witness; for She knew them first as they are in God, and then as they are in themselves.

9. She perceived and understood, how the Lord in the beginning (Gen. 1; 1, 5), created heaven and earth; in how far and in what way it was void, and how the darkness was over the face of the abyss; how the spirit of the Lord hovered over the waters and how, at the divine command, light was made, and what was its nature; how, after the darkness was divided, it was called night and the light day, and how thus the first day was made. She knew the size of the earth, its longitude, latitude and depth, its caverns, hell, limbo and purgatory with their inhabitants; the countries, climes, the meridians and divisions of the world, and all its inhabitants and occupants. With the same clearness She knew the inferior orbs and the empyrean heaven; how the angels were made on the first day; She was informed of their nature, conditions, diversity, hierarchies, offices, grades and virtues. The rebellion of the bad angels was revealed to Her, their fall and the occasion and the cause of that fall, though the Lord always concealed from Her that which concerned Himself. She understood the punishment and the effects of sin in the demons, beholding them as they are in themselves; and at the conclusion of the first day, the Lord showed to Her, how She too was formed of this lowly earthly material and endowed with the same nature as all those, who return to the dust; He did not however say, that She would again return to it; yet He gave Her such a profound knowledge of the earthly existence, that the great Queen humiliated Herself to the abyss of nothingness; being without fault, She debased Herself more than all the children of Adam with all their miseries.

10. This whole vision and all its effects the Most High arranged in such a way as to open up in the heart of Mary the deep trenches that were required for the foundations

of the edifice, which He wished to erect in Her: namely so high a one, that it would reach up to the substantial and hypostatic union of the human and divine nature. And as the dignity of Mother of God was without limits and to a certain extent infinite, it was becoming that She should be grounded in a proportionate humility, such as would be without limits though still within the bounds of reason itself. Attaining the summit of virtue, this blessed One among women humiliated Herself to such an extent, that the most holy Trinity was, as it were, fully paid and satisfied, and (according to our mode of understanding) constrained to raise Her to the highest position and dignity possible among creatures and nearest to the Divinity itself. In this highest benevolence his Majesty spoke and said to Her:

11. "My Spouse and Dove, great is my desire of redeeming man from sin and my immense kindness is as it were strained in waiting for the time, in which I shall descend in order to repair the world; ask Me continually during these days and with great affection for the fulfillment of this desire. Prostrate in my royal presence let not thy petitions and clamors cease, asking Me that the Onlybegotten of the Father descend in reality to unite Himself with the human nature." Whereupon the heavenly Princess responded and said: "Lord and God eternal, whose is all the power and wisdom, whose wish none can resist (Esther 13, 9), who shall hinder thy Omnipotence? Who shall detain the impetuous current of thy Divinity, so that thy pleasure in conferring this benefit upon the whole human race remain unfulfilled? If perhaps, O my Beloved, I am a hindrance to such an immeasurable benefit, let me perish before I impede thy pleasure; this blessing cannot depend upon the merits of any creature; therefore, my Lord and

Master, do not wait, as we might later on merit it so much the less. The sins of men increase and the offenses against Thee are multiplied; how shall we merit the very blessing, of which we become daily more unworthy? In Thee thyself, my Lord, exists the last cause and motive of our salvation; thy infinite bounty, thy numberless mercies incite Thee, the groans of thy Prophets and of the Fathers of thy people solicit Thee, the saints sigh after Thee, the sinners look for Thee and all of them together call out to Thee; and if I, insignificant wormlet, on account of my ingratitude, am not unworthy of thy merciful condescension, I venture to beseech Thee, from the bottom of my heart, to speed thy coming and to hasten thy Redemption for thy greater glory."

12. When the Princess of heaven had finished this prayer, She returned to her ordinary and more natural state; but anxious to fulfill the mandate of the Lord, She continued during that whole day her petitions for the Incarnation of the Word and with the deepest humility She repeated the exercises of prostrating Herself to the ground and praying in the form of a cross. For the Holy Ghost, who governed Her, had taught Her this posture, by which She so highly pleased the most blessed Trinity. God saw, in the body of the future Mother of the Word, as it were the crucified person of Christ and therefore He received this morning sacrifice of the most pure Virgin as an advance offering of that of his most holy Son.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

13. My daughter, the mortals are not capable of understanding the ineffable operations of the arm of the Omnipotent in preparing me for the Incarnation of the eternal Word. Especially during the nine days, which

preceded this exalted sacrament was my spirit elevated and united with the immutable being of the Divinity. I was submerged in the ocean of his infinite perfections, participating in all those eminent and divine effect, which are beyond all presentiment of the human hearts. The knowledge of creatures communicated to me penetrated into their very essence, so that it was more profound and piercing than that of all the angelic spirits, though their knowledge of creation, on account of the beatific vision, is altogether admirable. Moreover the images of them all were impressed upon my mind to be used by me according as I desired.

14. What I wish of thee today is to take notice how I used this knowledge and to imitate me according to thy power with the help of the infused light, which thou hast received for this purpose. Profit by the knowledge of creatures by making of them a ladder to ascend unto God thy Creator; so that thou mayest seek in all of them their first beginning and their last end. Let them serve thee as a mirror from which the Godhead is reflected, reminding thee of his Omnipotence and inciting thee to the love, which He seeks in thee. Be thou filled with wonder and praise at the greatness and magnificence of the Creator and in his presence humiliate thyself to the dust. Shun no difficulty or suffering in order to become meek and humble of heart. Take notice, my dearest, that this virtue of humility was the firm foundation of all the wonders, which the Most High wrought in me; and in order that thou mayest esteem this virtue so much the more, remember that of all others, it is at the same time the most precious, the most delicate and perishable; for if thou lose it in any respect, and if thou be not humble in all things without exception, thou wilt not be humble in anything. Remember thy earthly and cor-

ruptible nature, and be not ignorant of the fact, that the Most High has providentially formed man in such a way that his own existence and formation intimate and rehearse the important lesson of humility never allowing him to be without this salutary teaching. On this account He has not formed him of the most excellent material, and has concealed the noblest part of his being in the sanctuary of his interior (Exod. 30, 24), teaching him to weigh as in a balance on the one side, the infinite and eternal existence of the Lord, and on the other, his own ignoble material existence. Thus he is to give unto God what belongs to Him, and to himself what belongs to his own self (Matth. 22, 21).

15. Most zealously I attended to this adjustment, becoming an example and guide therein to all the mortals. I wish that thou also do it in imitation of me, and that thou zealously study to acquire the humility, which pleases the Most High and myself, who desire thy true advancement. I wish that thy perfection be built up in the deep trenches of thy own self-knowledge; in order that the deeper its foundations are laid, to so much the higher and more exalted perfection may rise the edifice of thy virtue. Thus thy will shall find a most intimate conformity with that of the Lord, who looks down from the eminence of his throne upon the humble of the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE LORD ON THE SECOND DAY CONTINUES HIS FAVORS
IN PREPARATION FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE
WORD IN THE MOST HOLY MARY.

16. In the first part of this history (Part I, 219), I mentioned, that the most pure body of Mary was conceived and perfectly formed within the space of seven days. The Most High wished to work this miracle, in order that this most holy soul might not have to wait so long as the souls of ordinary mortals. He wished it to be created and infused before the usual time, (as it also really happened), in order that this beginning of the reparation of the world might have some similarity to the beginning of its creation. This correspondence again took place at the coming of the Redeemer so that, having formed the new Adam, Christ, God might rest as one who had strained all the powers of his Omnipotence in the greatest of his works; and that He might enjoy the most delicious Sabbath of all his delights. And as these wonders necessitated the intervention of the Mother of the divine Word, who was to give Him a visible form, and as She was to unite the two extremes, man and God, it was proper that She should bear relation to both. Her dignity was inferior only to that of God and superior to all that was not God; to this dignity belonged also a proportionate knowledge and understanding, as well of the highest essence of the Divinity, as also of all the inferior creatures.

17. Following up his intention, the supreme Lord con-

tinued the favors, by which He wished to dispose most holy Mary for the Incarnation during nine days, as I have begun to explain. On the second day, at the same hour of midnight, the Virgin Mary was visited in the same way as described in the last chapter. The divine power raised Her up by the same elevations and illuminings to prepare Her for the visions of the Divinity. He manifested Himself again in an abstractive manner as on the first day, and She was shown the works performed on the second day of the creation. She learnt how and when God divided the waters (Gen. 1, 6), some above and others below, establishing the firmament, and above it the crystal, known also as the watery heaven. Her insight penetrated into the greatness, order, conditions, movements and all the other qualities and conditions of the heavens.

18. And in the most prudent Virgin this knowledge did not lay idle, nor remain sterile; for immediately the most clear light of the Divinity overflowed in Her, and inflamed and emblazoned Her with admiration, praise and love of the goodness and power of God. Being transformed as it were with a godlike excellence, She produced heroic acts of all the virtues, entirely pleasing to his divine Majesty. And as in the preceding first day God had made Her a participant of his wisdom, so on this second day, He made Her in corresponding measure a participant in the divine Omnipotence, and gave Her power over the influences of the heavens, of the planets and elements, commanding them all to obey Her. Thus was this great Queen raised to Sovereignty over the sea, the earth, the elements and the celestial orbs, with all the creatures, which are contained therein.

19. This sovereignty and supreme power belonged to the dignity of most holy Mary on account of the reason

mentioned above; and besides for two other special ones; the first: because this Lady was the privileged Queen, exempt from the common law of sin and its consequences: therefore She was not to be put in the same general class with the insensate sons of Adam, against whom the Omnipotent armed the creatures (Wisd. 5, 18) for vengeance of his injuries and for the punishment of their frenzy. For if they had not in their disobedience turned against their Creator, neither would the elements nor their dependencies have been disobedient toward them, nor would they have molested them, nor turned against them the rigor and inclemency of their activity. And if this rebellion of the creatures is a punishment of sin, it could not justly extend itself to the most holy Mary, who was immaculate and without fault. Nor was it just, that She should be less privileged than the angels, who were not subject to these consequences of sin, or deprived of the dominion over the elementary powers. Although most holy Mary was of corporeal and terrestrial substance, yet She raised Herself above all corporeal and spiritual creatures, and made Herself Queen and Mistress of all creation. In this, therefore, She deserved so much the higher credit, as it was the rarer and the more precious. More must be conceded to the Queen than to her vassals, more to the Mistress than to the servants.

20. The second reason is, because her most holy Son was Himself to obey this heavenly Queen and his Mother. Since He was the Creator of the elements and of all things, it follows naturally that they should obey Her, to whom the Creator subjected Himself, and that they should be commanded by Her. Was not the person of Christ himself, in so far as his human nature was concerned, to be governed by his Mother according to the

constitution and law of nature? This privilege of sovereignty tended also greatly to enhance the virtues and merits of most holy Mary, for thereby that which in ourselves is usually done under constraint and against our will, was performed by Her freely and meritoriously. This most prudent Queen did not use her sovereignty over the elements and the creatures indiscriminately and for her own alleviation and comfort; but She commanded the creatures not to suspend their activities and influences in as far as they would naturally be painful and inconvenient to Her. For in these things She was to be like her most holy Son and suffer conjointly with Him. Her love and humility did not permit Her to withhold and suspend the inclemencies of the creatures in her regard, since She knew how valuable suffering is and how estimable in the eyes of the Lord.

21. Only on some occasions, when She knew that it was not for her benefit but necessary for her Son and Creator, the sweet Mother restrained the force of the elements and their influences, as we shall see farther on during her journey to Egypt and on other occasions, where She most prudently judged it proper, that the creatures recognize their Creator and reverence Him, or protect and serve Him in some necessity (Infr. 543, 590, 633). What mortal will not marvel at the knowledge of such a new miracle? To see a mere earthly creature, yet One clothed with the sovereignty and dominion of the whole creation, esteem Herself in her own eyes as the most unworthy and insignificant of the creatures, and, in these humble sentiments, command the wrath of the winds and all the rigors of the natural elements to turn against Her and under obedience fulfill her command! In obeying Her, however, these elements, full of reverence and courtesy toward such a Mistress,

yielded to her wishes, not in vengeance of the wrongs of their Creator, as they do in regard to the rest of the children of Adam, but in order to respect her commands.

22. In the presence of this humility of our invincible Queen, we mortals cannot deny our most arrogant vanity and presumption, or rather our audacity, since, seeing that on account of our insane outrages we merit the furious rebellion of the elements and of all the harmful forces of the universe against us, we complain of their rigor, as if their molestations were an injury. We deprecate the rigor of the cold, we complain of the exhaustion of heat; all painful things we abhor, and we condemn with all energy these ministers of divine justice and seek our own comforts and delights, as if they were to last forever and as if it were not certain that we are only drawing therefrom a heavier punishment of our faults.

23. But returning to the consideration of the knowledge and power given to the Princess of heaven and the other gifts preparing Her worthily for the position of Mother of God, we can understand their excellence, for we see in them a certain infinity or boundlessness, participating of the Divinity, and similar to that which was afterwards possessed by the most holy soul of Christ. For She not only knew all creatures in God, but comprehended them in such a way as to master them and at the same time reserve capacity for knowing many others, if there had existed more to be known. I call this knowledge an infinity, because it seems to partake of the qualities of infinite knowledge and because, in one and the same action of her mind and without successive advertence, She saw and perceived the number of the heavens, their latitude and profundity, their order, motions, qualities, their matter and form; the elements with all their changes and accidents: all of these She

knew at the same time. The only thing the most wise Virgin did not know was the immediate end of this knowledge until the moment of her consent and the fulfillment of the ineffable mercy of the Most High. She continued during these days her most fervent prayers for the coming of the Messias, according to the command of the Lord. And He had given Her to understand that He would not tarry, as the time destined for his arrival was at hand.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN
GAVE ME.

24. My daughter, from what thou art going to learn of the favors and blessings conferred upon me in preparation for the dignity of Mother of God, I wish thee to perceive the admirable order of his wisdom in the creation of man. Take notice, therefore, that his Creator made him out of nothing, not in order to be a slave, but in order to be the king and the master of all creation (Gen. 1, 26), and in order that he make use of creatures in sovereignty, command and mastery; yet at the same time man was to recognize himself as the image of his Maker and the work of his hand, remaining more devoted to God and more submissive to his will than the creatures to man; for all this was demanded by justice and reason. And in order that man might not be without information and knowledge of the Creator and of the means of perceiving and executing his will, He added to his natural light a greater one, more penetrating, more limpid, more certain, more free and extensive, namely the light of divine faith, by which man might know the existence of God and of his perfections, and conjointly

with these, his works. Furnished with this knowledge and dominion man was established in good standing, honored and enriched, having no excuse for not devoting himself entirely to the fulfillment of the divine will.

25. But the foolishness of man disturbs this order and destroys this harmony, when, being created as the lord and king of creatures, he enslaves himself, subjecting himself to them, and degrading his dignity in using visible things not as a prudent master, but as an unworthy vassal. For he debases himself beneath the lowest of creatures, by losing sight of the fact that he is their superior. All this perversity arises from the use of creatures not for the service of the Creator through well ordered faith, but for the indulgence of the passions and the delights of the senses. Hence also arises man's great abhorrence of those things which are not pleasing to the senses.

26. Thou, my dearest, look faithfully toward thy Creator and Lord and in thy soul seek to copy the image of his divine perfections: lose not the mastery and dominion over creatures, let none of them infringe upon thy liberty; but seek to triumph over all of them, allowing nothing to interpose itself between thee and thy Creator. Subject thyself gladly, not to the pleasurable in creatures, since that will obscure thy understanding and weaken thy will, but to the adverse and the painful resulting from their activity. Suffer this with joyous willingness, for I have done the same in imitation of my Son, although I had the power to neutralize their molestations and had no sins to atone for.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT FAVORS THE MOST HIGH CONFERRED ON MOST HOLY MARY ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE NOVENA BEFORE THE INCARNATION.

27. The right arm of the Most High, which threw open the doors of the Divinity to most holy Mary, continued to enrich and adorn at the expense of his infinite attributes this most pure spirit and virginal body which He had chosen as his tabernacle, as his temple, and as the holy city of his habitation. And the heavenly Lady, engulfed in this vastness of the Divinity, winged her flight day by day farther away from earthly things, and transformed Herself more and more into a heavenly being, discovering ever new sacraments in the Most High. For as He is the infinite Object of desire, although the appetite is satiated with that which is received, always more remains to be desired and understood. Not all the hierarchies of the angels, nor all men together, have attained such preferment in blessings, mysteries and sacraments as this Princess attained, especially as regards those due to Her as Mother of the Creator

28. On the third day of preparation at which I have now arrived, having again been prepared as on the first day, the Divinity manifested Itself anew in abstractive vision. Too slow and inadequate are our powers for understanding the increase of the gifts and graces, which the Most High then lavished on heavenly Mary; and at this juncture I am at a loss for words to explain even the least portion of what I perceived. I can only express

myself by saying, that the divine wisdom and power proceeded in a manner worthy of Her, who was to be the Mother of the Word, so as to ensure, as far as is possible for a creature, that likeness and proportion, which was due to the divine Persons. Whoever has even a faint understanding of the distance which lies between the two extremes, the infinite God and the limited human creature, can comprehend so much the better, what is necessary to bring them together and establish a proportion.

29. More and more the Queen of heaven reflected his infinite attributes and virtues; more and more brilliantly shone forth her beauty under the touch of the pencil of the divine Wisdom and under the colors and lights added to it from on high. On this day She was informed of the works of creation as they happened on the third day. She learned when and how the waters, which were beneath the firmament, flowed together in one place (Gen. 1, 9), disclosing the dry land, which the Lord called earth, while He called the waters the sea. She learned in what way the earth brought forth the fresh herbs, and all plants and fructiferous trees with their seeds, each one according to its kind. She was taught and She comprehended the greatness of the sea, its depth and its divisions, its correspondence with the streams and the fountains, that take their rise from it and flow back into it; the different plants and herbs, the flowers, trees, roots, fruits and seeds; She perceived how all and each one of them serve for the use of man. All this our Queen understood and penetrated with the keenest insight more clearly, distinctly and comprehensibly than Adam or Solomon. In comparison with Her all those skilled in medicine in the world would appear but ignorant even after the most thorough studies and largest experience. The most holy Mary knew all that was hidden from

sight, as Wisdom says (Wis. 7, 21); and just as She learned it without any fiction, She also communicates it without envy. Whatever Solomon says there in the book of Wisdom was realized in Her with incomparable and eminent perfection.

30. On some occasions our Queen made use of this science in order to exercise her charity toward the poor and needy, as will be related in the sequence of this history (No. 668, 867, 868, 1048; III. 159, 423). She had it under perfect control, and it was as familiar to Her as the well-trained musician is with his instrument. The same was true of all the rest of the sciences, whenever She found it desirable or necessary to make use of them in the service of the Most High. For She was Mistress of all of them more perfectly than any of the mortals who ever did excel in any art or science. She was versed in the virtuous qualities and activities of the stones, herbs and plants, and in Her was true what Christ our Lord promised to the Apostles and first Christians, that poisonous draughts would not hurt them. This privilege belonged to the Queen as a sovereign, so that neither poison or any other thing could ever injure Her or cause Her any harm except with her permission.

31. These privileges and favors the most prudent Princess and Lady always kept concealed, and She made no use of them for Herself, as I have said, desiring not to be deprived of a share in the suffering, which had been chosen by her most holy Son. Before conceiving Him and becoming his Mother, She was inspired with divine knowledge and science concerning the passibility of the Word made flesh. And when She became Mother She saw and experienced this truth in her Son and Lord himself and therefore She gave a greater license, or rather a more strict command, to creatures to afflict Her, since

She saw the results of this activity in their own Creator. Hence, as the Most High did not wish his only and chosen Spouse to be continually molested by the creatures, even though She herself desired it, He often restrained them and neutralized their operations, so that the heavenly Princess, unhindered by them, might occasionally enjoy the delights of the most high King.

32. There is another special favor, which the most holy Mary received for the benefit of the mortals on the third day and in that vision of the Divinity; for during this vision God manifested to Her in a special way the desire of his divine love to come to the aid of men and to raise them up from all their miseries. In accordance with the knowledge of his infinite mercy and the object for which it was conceded, the Most High gave to Mary a certain kind of participation of his own attributes, in order that afterwards, as the Mother and Advocate of sinners, She might intercede for them. This participation of the most holy Mary in the love of God and in his inclination to help Her, was so heavenly and powerful that if from that time on the strength of the Lord had not come to her aid, She would not have been able to bear the impetuosity of her desire to assist and save mankind. Filled with this love and charity, She would, if necessary or feasible, have delivered Herself an infinite number of times to the flames, to the sword and to the most exquisite torments of death for their salvation. All the torments, sorrows, tribulations, pains, infirmities She would have accepted and suffered; and She would have considered them a great delight for the salvation of sinners. Whatever all men have suffered from the beginning of the world till this hour, and whatever they will suffer till the end, would have been a small matter for the love of this most merciful Mother. Let therefore

mortals and sinners understand what they owe to most holy Mary.

33. From that day on, we can say, the heavenly Lady continued to be the Mother of kindness and great mercy, and for two reasons: first, because from that moment She sought with an especial and anxious desire to communicate without envy the treasures of grace, which She had comprehended and received; and therefore such an admirable sweetness grew up in her heart, that She was ready to communicate it to all men and to shelter them in her heart in order to make them participants of the divine love, which there was enkindled. Secondly, because this love of most holy Mary for the salvation of men was one of the principal dispositions required for conceiving the eternal Word in her virginal womb. It was eminently befitting that She should be all mercy, kindness, piety and clemency, who was Herself to conceive and give birth to the Word made man, since He in his mercy, clemency and love desired to humiliate Himself to the lowliness of our nature, and wished to be born of Her in order to suffer for men. It is said: like begets like: just as the water partakes of the qualities of the minerals through which it flows; and although the birth of Christ originated in the Divinity, yet it also partook of the conditions of the Mother as far as was possible. She therefore would not have been suitable for concurrence with the Holy Ghost in this conception, in which only the activity of the man was wanting, if She had not been endowed with perfections corresponding to those of the humanity of Christ.

34. The most holy Mary issued from this vision with ever increasing fervor, and during all the rest of the day She occupied Herself in the prayers and petitions commanded Her by the Lord. The heart of her Spouse was

wounded with love, so that (according to our mode of thinking) He already longed for the day and the hour when He should rest in the arms and recline at the breast of his Beloved.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN GAVE ME.

35. My dearest daughter, great were the favors which the hand of the Most High showered upon me in the visions of the Divinity, vouchsafed me during the nine days before his conception in my womb. And although He did not manifest Himself intuitively and altogether unveiled, yet He did it in an exalted manner and with such effects as are reserved to his wisdom. In the remembrance of what I perceived in this vision, I rose to the true perception of the position which God held in comparison to men and men in comparison to God; my heart was inflamed with love and was torn with sorrow; for I realized the immensity of his love towards mortals, and their most ungrateful oblivion of his incomprehensible goodness. Many times would I have died at the thought of these extremes, if God himself had not comforted and preserved me. This sacrifice of his servant was most pleasing to his Majesty and He accepted it with greater complacency than all the holocausts of the old Law; for He beheld my humility and delighted in it very much. Whenever I performed these exercises, He showed great mercy to me and to my people.

36. These sacraments, my dearest, I manifest to thee in order to encourage thee to imitate me, as far as is possible with thy weak forces aided by grace. Look upon the works, which thou hast learnt of, as a pattern and example to be closely followed. Meditate much, and weigh over and over again as well in the light of grace

as in that of reason, how exactly mortals ought to correspond to this immense kindness of God and to his eagerness to assist them. Compare at the same time the heartless obduracy of the children of Adam. I wish that thy heart be softened in affectionate thankfulness toward the Lord and melted in sorrow at these unhappy proceedings of men. I assure thee, my daughter, that on the day of the general adjustment, the cause of the greatest wrath of the just Judge shall be man's most ungrateful forgetfulness of this truth; and the confusion of men on account of this wrath shall be such, that on that day they would of their own accord cast themselves into the abyss of pain, if there were no ministers of divine justice to visit this retribution upon them.

37. In order to avoid such an abominable fault and in order to forestall such a horrible chastisement, renew in thyself the memory of the blessings, which thou hast received at the hands of his love and infinite clemency; and remember that God has distinguished thee in preference to the souls of many generations. Do not make the mistake of considering these great favors and special gifts as conferred on thee for thyself alone: they were conferred also for the sake of thy brethren: for the divine mercy is extended to all men. Therefore the return, which thou owest to the Lord, must be made first for thyself and then for thy brethren. And because thou art poor, offer up the life and merits of my most holy Son, and with them, all that I have suffered by the forces of my love. Thus wilt thou make thyself pleasing to God and tender some recompense for the ingratitude of mortals. In all these things exercise thyself repeatedly many times, remembering in the meanwhile what I thought and felt in similar acts and exercises.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST HIGH CONTINUES HIS FAVORS TO MOST HOLY MARY ON THE FOURTH DAY.

38. Still the favors and most exalted mysteries of the Most High toward our Queen and Lady in preparing Her for approaching dignity of Motherhood continued. The fourth day of this preparation had arrived and at the same hour She was again raised to the abstractive vision of the Divinity. But this vision was accompanied by new effects of exalted enlightenments in this most pure Soul. The divine power and wisdom has no bounds or limits; to his operations only our will, or the limitation of our created nature, offers resistance. But in the will of most holy Mary the divine power found no hindrance, for all her works were executed with plenitude of holiness and entirely according to the pleasure of the Lord, drawing Him on, as He himself said, and wounding his heart with love (Cant. 4, 9). Only in so far as most holy Mary was a mere creature was the power of the divine arm limited; but within these limits it could act without bound or restriction, and without measure, offering Her the waters of wisdom from the purest and most crystalline founts of the Divinity.

39. The Most High manifested to Her in this vision, by most special enlightenments, the new Law of grace which the Redeemer of the world was to establish, the Sacraments contained in it, the end for which He would leave them in his new Church of the Gospel, the gifts and blessings prepared for men, and his desire, that all

should be saved and that all should reap the fruit of the Redemption. And so great was the wisdom, which the most holy Mary drew from these visions, wherein She was taught by the highest Teacher and the Corrector of the wise (Wis. 7, 15), that, if by any means man or angel could describe it, more books would have to be written of this science of our Lady than all those which have been composed in this world concerning all the arts and sciences, and all the inventions of men. And no wonder her science was greater than that of all other men: for into the heart and mind of our Princess was emptied and exhausted the ocean of the Divinity, which the sins and the evil disposition of the creatures had confined, repressed and circumscribed. It was concealed within its own source until the proper time, which was no other than the hour in which She was chosen as Mother of the Onlybegotten of the Father.

40. Joined with the sweetness of this divine science, our Queen felt a loving, yet piercing sorrow, which this very science continued to renew. She perceived in the Most High the ineffable treasures of grace and blessings, which He had prepared for mortals and She saw the weight of the Divinity as it were inclined toward the desire of seeing all men enjoy them eternally. At the same time She saw and considered the wicked disposition of the world, and how blindly mortals impeded the flow of these treasures and deprived themselves of participation of the Divinity. From this resulted a new kind of martyrdom full of grief for the perdition of men and of the desire of remedying such lamentable loss. This caused Her to offer up the most exalted prayers, petitions, sacrifices, humiliations and heroic acts of love of God and of men, in order that no one, if possible, should henceforth damn himself, and that all should recognize

their Creator, and Redeemer, confess Him, adore and love Him. All this took place in this very vision; but as these petitions were of the same kind as those already described, I do not expatiate on them here.

41. In conjunction therewith the Lord showed Her also the works of creation performed on the fourth day (Gen. 1, 14-17). The heavenly Princess Mary learned how and when the luminaries of heaven were formed in the firmament for dividing day and night and for indicating the seasons, the days and the years; how for this purpose was created the great light of heaven, the sun, presiding as the lord of the day, and joined with it, the moon, the lesser light, which reigns over the darkness of the night. In like manner were formed the stars of the eighth heaven, in order that they might gladden the night with their brilliance and preside with their various influences over both the day and the night. She understood what was the material substance of these luminous orbs, their form, their size, their properties, their various movements and the uniformity as well as the inequality of the planets. She knew the number of the stars, and all their influences exerted upon the earth, both in regard to the living and the lifeless creatures; the effects and changes, which they cause in them by these influences.

42. This is not in conflict with what the Prophet says, (Psalm 146, 4), that God knows the number of the stars and has called them by their names; for David does not thereby deny to his Majesty the liberty of conceding to a creature that as a privilege which He possesses by nature. It is plain, that since this knowledge is communicable and since it would contribute to Mary's excellence, it should not be denied to Her. Has He not conferred upon Her greater favors, and has He not made Her the Queen of the stars and of all other creatures?

And this knowledge was as it were only a sequel of her dominion and sovereignty over the powers, influences and movements of all the celestial orbs, since they were commanded to obey Her as their Queen and Lady.

43. In consequence of this command, which the Lord gave to the celestial orbs and in accordance with the dominion which most holy Mary obtained over them, She possessed such power, that if She commanded the stars to leave their positions in heaven, they would obey Her instantly and would hasten to the regions which She chose to designate. The same is true of the sun and the planets: all would pause in their course and suspend their operations to execute the command of Mary. I have already said above (No. 21) that sometimes her Highness made use of this sovereignty; for, as we shall see farther on, it happened a few times in Egypt, where the rays of the sun are exceedingly strong, that She commanded the sun to moderate its heat and not to molest or fatigue the infant God, its Master. And the sun obeyed Her therein, causing inconvenience and suffering to Her, because She wished it, and yet respecting the tender years of the Sun of justice, whom She held in her arms. The same happened also with other stars, and on a few occasions She detained the sun in its course, as I will mention later.

44. Many other hidden sacraments the Most High manifested to our great Queen in this vision, and what I have said and will say of all these mysteries, leaves me dissatisfied and with a heart as it were torn asunder: for I see, that I can say little of that which I understand and, in proportion, I understand still less of what really did happen to the heavenly Lady. Many of the mysteries concerning Her are reserved for the last day, when her most holy Son shall proclaim them, since now we are not

capable of receiving their revelation. The most holy Mary issued from this vision still more inflamed and filled with the Divinity, entirely transformed by the knowledge of God's attributes and perfections; and her advance in virtues kept pace with her progress in divine favors. She multiplied her requests, her fervent sighs, and her meritorious works, in order to hasten the Incarnation of the Word and our salvation.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN GAVE ME.

45. My dearest daughter, I wish that thou busy thyself much in meditating and pondering upon that which thou hast understood of my doings and sufferings at the time, when the Most High gave me such a deep insight into his goodness, which drew Him as with an infinite force to enrich men, and when He showed me the want of correspondence and the dark ingratitude of the mortals. When I turned from the consideration of this most liberal condescension of the Most High, to the perception and understanding of the foolish hard-heartedness of the sinners, my soul was pierced with an arrow of mortal anguish, which remained for life. And I wish to tell thee of another mystery: many times the Most High in order to heal the affliction and consternation of my heart in this sorrow, sought to console me by saying: "Accept Thou, my Spouse, the gifts, which the blind and ignorant world in its unworthiness despises and is incapable of receiving and understanding." With these words the Most High was accustomed to set free the currents of his divine bounty, which rejoiced my soul more than human powers can comprehend, or tongue explain.

46. I desire, therefore, that thou, my friend, be now my companion in the sorrow which I suffered and which

is so little noticed by the living. In order to imitate me therein and in the effects of this most just grief, thou must deny thyself, forget thyself entirely, and crown thy heart with the thorns of sorrow at the behavior of mortals. Weep thou in seeing them laugh at their eternal damnation, for such weeping is the most legitimate occupation of the true spouses of my most holy Son. Let them seek their delight only in the tears, which they pour out on account of their sins and those of the ignorant world. Thus prepare thy heart in order that the Lord may make thee a participant of his treasures; not in order to become rich, but in order that his Majesty may fulfill his most generous love toward thee and in order that souls may find justification. Imitate me in all that I teach thee, since thou knowest that this is my desire in favoring thee.

CHAPTER V.

HIS MAJESTY MANIFESTS NEW MYSTERIES AND SACRAMENTS TOGETHER WITH THE WORKS OF THE FIFTH DAY OF THE CREATION TO MOST HOLY MARY, AND HER HIGHNESS CONTINUES TO PRAY FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD.

47. The fifth day of the novena, which the most blessed Trinity celebrated in the temple of most holy Mary, in order that the eternal Word might assume human shape in Her, had arrived. Just as in the preceding days She was elevated to an abstractive vision of the Divinity, and, as the veil fell more and more from the secrets of the infinite wisdom, She discovered new mysteries also during this day. For the preparations and enlightenments emitted ever stronger rays of light and divine graces, which flashed into her most holy soul and emptied the treasures of infinity into her faculties, assimilating and transforming the heavenly Lady more and more to a likeness of her God in order to make Her worthy of being his Mother.

48. In this vision, showing Himself to Her with ineffable signs of affection, the Most High spoke to the heavenly Queen and manifested to Her additional secrets, saying: "My Spouse and my Dove, in the secret of my bosom thou hast perceived the immense bounty, to which my love for the human race inclines Me, and the treasures, which are secretly prepared for their happiness: so powerful is this love in Me, that I wish to give them my Onlybegotten for their instruction and salvation.

Thou hast also seen something of the small returns, of their most listless ingratitude and contempt, in which men hold my clemency and love. Yet, although I have shown thee part of their malice, I wish, my friend, that thou shouldst once more know in Me, how small is the number of those who are to know and love me as my chosen ones; and how great and extended is the number of the ungrateful and the reprobate. The innumerable sins and abominations of these impure and defiled men, whom I have foreseen in my infinite knowledge, retard my bounteous mercy and have locked up the treasurehouse of my Divinity, making the world entirely unworthy of receiving my gifts."

49. The Princess Mary, through these words of the Most High, was instructed in the great mysteries regarding the number of the predestined and the reprobate; and also regarding the hindrances and impediments by which sinful men delayed the coming of the eternal Word as man into the world. Having present before Herself the vision both of the infinite bounty and equity of the Creator and of the measureless iniquity and malice of men, the most prudent Mistress, inflamed by the fire of divine love, spoke to his Majesty and said:

50. "My Lord and infinite God of wisdom and incomprehensible sanctity, what mystery is this, which Thou hast manifested to me? Without measure are the misdeeds of men, so that only thy wisdom can comprehend them. But can all these and many more, perhaps, extinguish thy bounty and love, or vie with them? No, my Lord and Master, it must not be so; the malice of men must not detain thy mercy. I am the most useless of all the human race; yet on its behalf I remind Thee of thy fidelity. Infallibly true it is, that heaven and earth will come to naught, before thy word can fail (Is. 51, 6),

and it is also true, that Thou hast many times given thy word through the holy Prophets; and Thou hast promised them by word of mouth, a Redeemer and our salvation. How then, my God, can these promises fail of fulfillment without conflicting with thy infinite wisdom; or how can man be deceived without conflicting with thy goodness? In order to induce Thee to fulfill thy promise and to secure them eternal felicity through thy incarnate Word, I have nothing to offer on the part of mortals nor can any creature oblige Thee; and if this blessing could be merited, then thy infinite and bounteous clemency would not thereby be glorified. Only through thy own Self can this obligation be imposed upon Thee, for only in God can a sufficient reason be found for his becoming man: in Thee alone was the reason and the motive for our creation, and therefore in Thee alone also the reason for our reparation after our fall. Do not seek, my God and most high King, for merits, nor for a greater motive, than thy own mercy and the exaltation of thy holy name."

51. "It is true, my Spouse," answered the Most High, "that on account of my goodness I bound Myself to the promise of vesting Myself in human nature and of dwelling among them, and that no one could merit in my sight such a promise; but the ungrateful behavior of men, so abominable in my sight and in my justice, does not merit the execution of this promise. For though I seek only their eternal happiness as a return of my love, I perceive and find only obduracy, by which they are certain to waste and despise the treasures of my grace and blessing. They will yield thorns instead of fruit, great insults for benefits, and base ingratitude for my unbounded and generous mercy; and the end of all these evils will be for them the privation of my vision in eternal torments.

Take notice of these truths recorded in the secrets of my wisdom, my Friend, and weigh these great sacraments; for to thee my heart is laid open, so that thou canst see the justice of my proceeding."

52. It is impossible to describe the hidden secrets, which most holy Mary then saw in the Lord; for She perceived in Him all the creatures of the past, present and the future, and the position of each one in creation, the good and bad actions and the final ending of each one. If She had not been strengthened, She could not have preserved her life under the effects and feelings caused by the knowledge and insight into these hidden sacraments and mysteries. But as his Majesty, in these new miracles and blessings had such high ends in view, He was not sparing but most liberal with the beloved One, whom He had chosen as his Mother. And as our Queen derived this science from the bosom of God itself, She participated also in the fire of his eternal Charity, which inflamed Her with the love of God and the neighbor. Therefore, continuing her intercession, She said:

53. "Lord and eternal God, invisible and immortal, I confess thy justice, I magnify thy works, I adore thy infinite Essence and hold in reverence thy judgments. My heart melts within me with tenderest affection, when I perceive thy unlimited bounty toward men and their dark ingratitude and grossness toward Thee. For all of them, O my God, Thou seekest eternal life; but there are few who are thankful for this inestimable benefit, and many who will perish by their malice. If on this account, O my eternal Good, Thou relinquishest thy undertaking, we mortals are lost; but while Thou, in thy divine fore-knowledge, perceivest the sins and the malice of men who offend Thee so much, Thou also foreseest thy Onlybegotten made man and his works of infinite price

and value in thy sight; and these will counterbalance and exceed the malice of sin beyond all comparison. Through this Godman let thy equity be conquered and on his account give us Him now! and in order to urge my petitions upon Thee once more in the name of the human race, I unite myself with the spirit of this Word, already made man in thy mind, and pray for his coming in fact and for the eternal life of men through his hands."

54. At this prayer of most pure Mary, the eternal Father (in our way of speaking) represented to Himself his Onlybegotten as borne in the virginal womb of this great Queen; and He was moved by her humble and loving petitions. His apparent hesitation was merely a device of his tender love in order to enjoy so much the longer the voice of his Beloved, causing her sweet lips to distil most sweet honey (Cant. 4, 11) and her emissions to be like those of paradise (Cant. 4, 13). And to draw out still more this loving contention, the Lord answered Her: "My sweetest Spouse and chosen Dove, great is that which thou askest of Me and little is that which obliges Me on the part of men; how then shall such a singular blessing be conferred on those unworthy ones? Leave Me, my friend, to treat them according to their evil deserts." Our powerful and kind Advocate responded: "No, my Master, I will not desist from my importunity; if much I ask, I ask it of Thee, who are rich in mercies, powerful in action, true in thy words. My father David said of Thee and of the eternal Word: "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109, 4). Let then that Priest come, who is at the same time to be the sacrifice for our rescue; let Him come, since Thou canst not repent of thy promise; for Thou dost not promise in ignorance. Let me be

clothed, O my sweet love, with the strength of this Man God, which will not allow me to put a stop to my importunity, until Thou give me thy blessing as to my father Jacob" (Gen. 32, 26).

55. In this contest (just as it once happened to Jacob) our Lady and Queen was asked, what was her name; and She said: "I am a daughter of Adam, formed by thy hands from the insignificant dust." And the Most High answered: "Henceforth Thou shalt be called: Chosen for the Mother of the Onlybegotten." But the latter part of this name was heard only by the courtiers of heaven, while to Her it was as yet hidden until the proper time. She therefore heard only the word "Chosen." Having thus protracted this amorous contention according to the disposition of his divine wisdom and as far as served to inflame the heart of this elected One, the whole blessed Trinity gave to Mary, our most pure Queen, the explicit promise, that They would now send into the world the eternal Word made man. Filled with incomparable joy and exultation by this fiat, She asked and received the benediction of the Most High. Thus this strong Woman issued forth from the contest with God more victorious than Jacob; for She came out rich, strong and laden with spoils, and the One that was wounded and weakened (to speak in our way) was God himself; for He was drawn by the love of this Lady to clothe Himself in that sacred bridal chamber of her womb with the weakness of our passible nature. He disguised and enveloped the strength of his Divinity, so as to conquer in allowing Himself to be conquered, and in order to give us life by his death. Let the mortals see and acknowledge, how most holy Mary, next to her most blessed Son, is the cause of their salvation.

56. During this vision were also revealed to this great

Queen the works of the fifth day of the creation in the manner in which they happened; She saw how, by the force of the divine command, were engendered and produced in the waters beneath the firmament, the imperfect reptiles, which creep upon the earth, the winged animals that course through the air, and the finny tribes that glide through the watery regions. Of all these creatures She knew the beginnings, the substance, the form and figure according to their kinds; She knew all the species of the animals that inhabit the fields and woods, their conditions, peculiarities, their uses and connections; She knew the birds of heaven (for so we call the atmosphere), with the varied forms of each kind, their ornaments, feathers, their lightness; the innumerable fishes of the seas and the rivers, the differences between the whales, their forms, composition and qualities, their caverns and the foods furnished them by the sea, the ends which they serve, the use to which they can be put in the world. And his Majesty especially commanded all these hosts of creatures to recognize and obey most holy Mary, giving Her the power to command all of them, as it happened on many occasions to be mentioned later on (No. 185, 431, 636). Therewith She issued from the trance of this day and She occupied Herself during the rest of it in the exercises and petitions, which the Most High had pointed out to Her.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY LADY GAVE ME.

57. My daughter, the more complete knowledge of the wonderful operations of the arm of the Almighty in raising me during the abstractive visions of the Divinity to the dignity of Mother, is reserved for the predestined when they shall come to know them in the heavenly

Jerusalem. There they shall understand and see them in the Lord Himself and with that special delight and astonishment, which the angels experienced, when the Most High revealed these things to them for his exaltation and praise. And since his Majesty has shown Himself so lovingly generous toward thee, giving thee in preference to all the generations of men, such great knowledge and light concerning these so hidden sacraments, I desire, my friend, that thou signalize thyself above all creatures in praising and magnifying his holy name for the works of his powerful arm in my regard.

58. At the same time thou must strive, with all thy power, to imitate me in the works, which I performed by the aid of these great and wonderful blessings. Pray and sigh for the eternal salvation of thy brethren, and that the name of my Son may be extolled by all and known to the whole world. Thou must establish the habit of this kind of prayer, by a constant resolve, founded upon firm faith and unshaken confidence, and by never losing sight of thy misery in profound humility and self-abasement. Thus prepared, thou must battle with the divine love for the good of thy people, firmly convinced, that the most glorious triumphs of divine love may especially be looked for in its dealings with the humble, who love God in uprightness. Raise thyself above thyself and give Him thanks for the special blessings conferred upon thee and for those conferred upon the human race. Transformed by this divine love, thou wilt merit other gifts, both for thyself and for thy brethren; and whenever thou findest thyself in his divine presence, do thou ask for his benediction.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOST HIGH MANIFESTS TO MARY, OUR MISTRESS,
ADDITIONAL MYSTERIES AND SHOWS HER THE WORKS
OF THE SIXTH DAY OF CREATION.

59. While the Most High continued the proximate preparation of our heavenly Princess for the reception of the eternal Word in her virginal womb, She, on her part, persevered without intermission in her fervent sighs and prayers to hasten his coming into the world. When the night of the sixth of these days, which I have begun to describe, had arrived, and when She had previously been elevated by still more profound illuminations, She was again called and invited in spirit to the abstractive vision of the Divinity. Although this happened in the same manner as at other times, yet it was accompanied by more heavenly effects and by a more profound insight into the attributes of the Most High. She remained nine hours in this trance and issued from it at the third hour. Yet, although the high vision of the essence of God ceased at that hour, the most holy Mary continued to enjoy another kind of vision and prayer. This was indeed inferior to the first, but in itself was most exalted and more excellent than that experienced by any of the saints or the just. The gifts and favors so far described partook more and more of the divine during the last days preceding the Incarnation, without at the same time being a hindrance to the active occupations of her married state, for here Martha had no right to complain, that Mary forsook her in her ministrations (Luc. 10, 40).

60. Having seen God in this vision She was immediately shown the works on the sixth day of the creation of

the world. She witnessed, as if She Herself had been present, how at the command of the Lord the earth brought forth the living beings according to their kinds, as Moses says (Gen. 1, 24). Holy Scripture here refers to the terrestrial animals, which being more perfect than the fishes and birds in life and activity, are called by a name signifying the more important part of their nature. She saw and understood all the kinds and species of animals, which were created on this sixth day, and by what name they were called: some, beasts of burden, because they serve and assist man, others, wild beasts, as being more fierce and untamed; others, reptiles, because they do not raise themselves or very little from the earth. She knew and comprehended the qualities of all of them: their fury, their strength, the useful purposes which they serve, and all their distinctions and singularities. Over all these She was invested with dominion and they were commanded to obey Her. She could without opposition on their part have trodden upon asps and basilisks, for all would have meekly borne her heel. Many times did some of these animals show their subjection to her commands, as when, at the birth of her most Holy Son, the ox and the ass prostrated themselves and by their breaths warmed the infant God at the command of his blessed Mother.

61. In this plenitude of knowledge and science our heavenly Queen understood perfectly the secret ways of God in making all creation serve for the benefit of man, and how much man owes to his Creator on this account. And it was most proper that She should possess this knowledge and understanding, so that with it She might be able to give fitting thanks for these blessings. Neither men nor angels have done so, failing to correspond and falling short of their duty in this regard. All these voids

were filled by the Queen of all, and She satisfied for the debt of gratitude, which we could not or would not pay. Through Her, divine equity was duly satisfied, considering Her as a medium between itself and the creatures. By her innocence and gratitude She became more pleasing to his Majesty than all the rest of the creatures. The mysterious advent of God into the world was thus being prepared: for the last hindrance was removed by the sanctification of Her, who was to be his Mother.

62. After seeing the creation of all the irrational creatures, She became aware, how the most blessed Trinity, in order to complete and perfect the world, said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. 1, 26), and how by virtue of this divine decree the first man was formed of the earth as the first parent of all the rest. She had a profound insight into the harmonious composition of the human body and soul and of their faculties, of the creation and infusion of the soul into the body and of its intimate union with the body. Of the structure of the human body and all its parts, She obtained a deep knowledge: She was informed of the number of the bones, veins, arteries, nerves and ligatures; of the concourse of humors to compose the befitting temperaments, the faculties of nutrition, growth and locomotion; She learned in what manner the disturbances or changes in this harmony caused the sicknesses, and how these can be cured. All this the most prudent Virgin understood and comprehended without the least error, better than all the wise men of the world and better than even the angels.

63. The Lord manifested to Her also the happy state of original justice, in which He placed the first parents Adam and Eve; She understood their condition, beauty and perfection of innocence and grace, and for how short

a time they persevered in it. She perceived how they were tempted and overcome by the astuteness of the serpent (Gen. 2, 51), and what were the consequences of their sin; and how great were the fury and hate of the demon against the human race. At the vision of all these things our Queen made great and heroic acts of virtue, highly pleasing to God. She understood, that She was a daughter of these first parents and that She descended from a nature so thankless to its Creator. In the remembrance of this She humiliated Herself in his divine presence, thereby wounding the heart of God and obliging Him to raise Her above all that is created. She took it upon Herself to weep for the first sin and for all the rest, that followed from it, as if She Herself had been guilty of them all. Hence, even at that time, that first sin might have been called a fortunate fault, which caused tears so precious in the eyes of the Lord, and which earned us such sureties and pledges of our Redemption.

64. Rendering worthy thanks to the Creator for the magnificent work of the creation of man, She reflected deeply on his disobedience, the seduction and deception of Ève, and She inwardly resolved to yield that perpetual obedience, which these first parents had refused to their Creator. So acceptable in his eyes was this subjection, that his Majesty in the presence of the heavenly courtiers decreed the immediate fulfillment and execution of that, which was prefigured in the history of the king Assuerus, by whom the queen Vashti was repudiated and deprived of royal dignity on account of disobedience, while the humble and gracious Èsther was raised to her place (Èsther 7, 2).

65. There was an admirable similarity between that event and these mysteries; for the exalted and true King, in order to show the greatness of his powers and the

treasures of his Divinity, had prepared the great banquet of his creation, and having spread the liberal repast for all the creatures, invited the guests, that is the human race, by the creation of its first parents. Vashti, our mother Eve, disobeyed, failing to submit herself to the divine command, and now amid the wonderful acclamation and jubilee of the angels, the true Assuerus ordered the most humble Esther to be on that day elevated to Sovereignty over all creation, this Esther being none other than the most holy Mary, full of grace and beauty, chosen among all the daughters of men as their Restoratrix and the Mother of his Christ.

66. In the plenitude of this mystery the Most High infused into the heart of our Queen a new abhorrence of the demon, such as filled Esther toward Aman (Esther 7, 10); and thus it happened, that She thrust him from his position of superiority and command over the world. She crushed the head of his pride, hanging him on the gallows of the Cross, where he had hoped to destroy and conquer the Godman, but was himself chastised and overcome by it. Toward all this the most holy Mary was instrumental, as we shall relate in its place (Vol. III, 653). Just as the envy of the dragon against the Woman, that is this heavenly Lady, commenced in heaven, when he saw Her clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 4, Part I, 95); so this strife continued until he was deprived of his tyrannous dominion. Just as the most faithful Mardocheus was given the position of the proud Aman (Esther 6, 10); so also was honored the most chaste and faithful Joseph, who continually urged Her to pray for the liberty of her people. This was the constant subject of conversation between Joseph and his most pure Spouse; for this very purpose was he raised to the summit of sanctity, and to the exalted dignity of

holding the sealing ring of the highest King (Esther 8, 2), whereby he received authority to command the Godman himself, as is related in the Gospel. Having experienced all these mysteries, our Queen issued from her vision.

INSTRUCTION, WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN GAVE ME.

67. Wonderful, my daughter, was the gift of humility, which the Most High conferred upon me in the event described by thee. And since his Majesty does not reject the prayers of those, that dispose themselves to receive it, I desire that thou imitate me and be my companion in the exercise of this virtue. I had no part in the sin of Adam, for I was exempted from his disobedience; but because I partook of his nature and by it was his daughter, I humiliated myself in my estimation to nothingness. In the light of this example then, how far must those humiliate themselves, who not only have had a part in the first sin, but also have committed other sins without number? The aim and motive of this humiliation moreover, should not be to remove the punishments of those sins, but to make restoration and recompense for the diminution and loss of honor, which was thereby occasioned to the Creator and Lord.

68. If a brother of thine should grievously offend thy natural father, thou wouldst not be a loving and loyal daughter of thy father, nor a true sister to thy brother, if thou wouldst not grieve for the offense and weep not over his ruin as over thy own; for to the father is due reverence and to thy brother thou owest love as to thyself. Consider then, dearest, and examine in the proper light, how much difference there is between thy Father who is in heaven and thy natural father, and how all of you are his children, bound together by the strictest

obligation of brethren and of servants of one true Master. Just as thou wouldst shed tears of humiliation and confusion at some ignominious fault of thy natural brother; so I wish that thou do it for the sins, which the mortals commit against God, sorrowing for them in confusion as if thou wert responsible for them thyself. That is what I did at the thought of the disobedience of Adam and Eve and of all the evils, which ensued therefrom to the human race. And the Most High was pleased with my charitable interest; for most agreeable in his sight are the tears shed for the sins, which are forgotten by those, that have committed them.

69. At the same time see thou bear ever in mind, that, no matter how great and rare are the favors received from the Most High, thou do not despise the danger of sin nor condemn the solicitous and humble performance of the ordinary duties of precept and charity. For these do not oblige thee to leave the presence of God: faith teaches thee, and inspiration should govern thee, to bear Him with thee in all occupations and places, quitting thyself and thy inclinations, but fulfilling in all things the will of thy Lord and Spouse. Do not allow thyself to be led in these sentiments by the trend of thy own inclinations, nor by that which seems to agree with thy own interior liking and taste; for many times the greatest danger is hidden beneath this cloak. In such doubts and hesitations let holy obedience be thy umpire and master; through it thou canst decide securely, and thou wilt need no other criterion for thy actions. Great victories and advances in merit are connected with the true submission of self and subjection of our own judgments to those of others. Thou shouldst never wish to retain for thyself the power to will or not to will: then thou shalt sing of victories and overcome thy enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOST HIGH CELEBRATES A NEW ESPOUSAL WITH THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN IN ORDER TO INAUGURATE THE NUPTIALS OF THE INCARNATION. HE ADORNS HER FOR IT.

70. Great are the works of the Most High, for all of them were and are executed with the plenitude of knowledge and goodness, ordained in equity and number (Wis. 11, 21). None of them is faulty, useless or ineffectual, superfluous or vain; all are exquisite and magnificent, finished and executed according to the full measure of his holy will. Such He desired them to be, in order that He might be known and magnified in them. But in comparison to the mystery of the Incarnation, all the works of God *ad extra*, although they are in themselves great, stupendous and marvelous, more to be admired than comprehended, are only a small spark, issuing from the unfathomable abyss of the Divinity. This great sacrament of vesting Himself in a passible and mortal nature is pre-eminently the great work of his infinite power and wisdom and the one which immeasurably excels all the other works and wonders of his powerful arm. For in this mystery, not merely a spark of the Divinity, but that whole vast volcano of the infinite Godhead, broke forth and communicated itself to men, uniting Itself by an indissoluble and eternal union to our terrestrial human nature.

71. If this wonderful sacrament of the King is to be measured only by his own vastness, it follows that the Woman, in whose womb He was to become man, deserved to be so perfectly adorned with the plenitude of

his treasures, that no gift or grace within the range of possibility be omitted, and all these gifts be so consummate, that nothing is wanting to them. As all this was reasonable and altogether befitting the greatness of the Omnipotent, He certainly fulfilled it in the most holy Mary, much better than king Assuerus did with the gracious Esther (Esther 2, 9), when he raised her to his magnificent throne. The Most High visited our Queen Mary with such great favors, privileges and gifts, that the like was never even conceived in the mind of creatures, and, when She issued forth in the presence of the courtiers of this great King of the eternal ages (I Tim. 1, 17), they recognized and exalted in Her the power of God, at the same time understanding, that He, who chose to select a woman for his Mother, knew also how to make her worthy of assuming that position.

72. The seventh day of this mysterious preparation for the approaching sacrament arrived, and in the same hour as already mentioned, the heavenly Lady was called and elevated in spirit, but with this difference, that She was bodily raised by her holy angels to the empyrean heaven, while in her stead one of them remained to represent Her in corporeal appearance. Placed into this highest heaven, She saw the Divinity by abstract vision as in other days; but always with new and more penetrating light, piercing to new and more profound mysteries, which God according to his free will can conceal or reveal. Presently She heard a voice proceeding from the royal throne, which said: "Our Spouse and chosen Dove, our gracious Friend, who hast been found pleasing in our eyes and hast been chosen among thousands: We wish to accept thee anew as our Bride, and therefore We wish to adorn and beautify thee in a manner worthy of our design."

73. On hearing these words the most Humble among the humble abased and annihilated Herself in the presence of the Most High more than can be comprehended by human power. Entirely submissive to the divine pleasure and with entrancing modesty, She responded: "At thy feet, O Lord, lies the dust and abject worm, ready is thy poor slave for the fulfillment of all thy pleasure in her. Make use, O eternal Good, of this thy insignificant instrument according to thy desire, and dispose of it with thy right hand." Presently the Most High commanded two seraphim, of those nearest to his throne and highest in dignity to attend on this heavenly Virgin. Accompanied by others, they presented themselves in visible form before the throne, and there surrounded the most holy Mary, who was more inflamed with divine love than they.

74. It was a spectacle worthy of new wonder and jubilee for all the angelic spirits to see in this heavenly place, never touched by other feet, an humble Maiden consecrated as their Queen and raised to the closest proximity to God of all the created beings; to see that Woman, whom the world ignored and held in oblivious contempt, so highly esteemed and appreciated (Prov. 31, 10); to see our human nature in its first fruits receiving the pledge of superiority over the celestial choirs and already assuming its place among them. O what a holy and just envy must such a strange wonder have caused in the ancient courtiers of that heavenly Jerusalem! What thoughts rose up within them in praise of its Author! What sentiments of humility did it awaken in them, subjecting all their high understandings to the decrees of the divine Will! They saw that He was holy and just, who exalted the humble, who favored human lowliness and raised it above the angelic choirs.

75. While the inhabitants of heaven were lost in their praiseworthy admiration, the most blessed Trinity, (according to our imperfect mode of understanding and speaking), conferred within Itself, how pleasing in its sight was the Princess Mary, how perfectly and completely She had corresponded with the blessings and gifts confided to Her, how adequately She had augmented the glory of the Lord; and how free She was of any fault, defect or hindrance, that might compromise the dignity of her predestined Motherhood of the Word. Accordingly the three Persons of the Trinity resolved to raise this Creature to the highest position of grace and friendship of God, such as no creature had ever or would ever attain; and then and there They gave to Her more than to all the rest of creatures together. The most blessed Trinity was pleased and rejoiced in seeing that the supreme holiness of Mary was such as had been conceived and determined for Her in the divine intellect.

76. In correspondence with this holiness, and as a completion of it, and as a testimony of the benevolence with which the Lord wished to communicate to Her ever new influences of his Divinity, He ordained and commanded, that most holy Mary be visibly clothed and adorned with mysterious vestments and jewels, which should symbolize the interior graces and privileges of a Queen and of a heavenly Spouse. Although such bridal adornment had already been conferred upon Her before that time, when She was presented in the temple (Part I, 436); yet now this was done under new and wonderful conditions; for it was to serve as the immediate preparation for the miracle of the Incarnation.

77. Presently therefore, upon the command of the Lord the two seraphim clothed most holy Mary with a tunic or ample robe, which, as a symbol of her purity and

grace, was so exquisitely white and resplendent, that if one single ray of the light so profusely emitted by it would flash into the world, it would by itself give more refulgence than all the stars combined, even if they were all suns; and in comparison with it, all the light, which is known to us, would appear as darkness. While the seraphim vested Her, the Most High gave Her a profound understanding of the obligation entailed thereby: namely, that She must make a befitting return to his Majesty, by proportioning her faithful love and the exalted perfection of her actions to that, which She had now learnt. Nevertheless, the purpose, for which the Lord intended these blessings, that is his Incarnation through Her, continued to be hidden to her mind. All the rest of the mysteries our Lady understood and for all of them She humiliated Herself with ineffable prudence, and She asked the divine assistance for corresponding to these favors and blessings.

78. Over this robe the same seraphim placed a girdle, as a symbol of the holy fear, which was infused into Her. It was very rich, with jewels of extreme refulgence and beauty. At the same time the fountain of light bursting forth from the Divinity enlightened and illumined the heavenly Princess, so that She understood the exalted reasons, why God should be feared by all the creatures. With this gift of fear of the Lord She was appropriately girded, as befitted a Creature, who was to treat and converse so familiarly with her Creator as his Mother.

79. Presently She perceived, that the seraphim adorned Her with most beautiful and abundant hair, held together by a rich clasp, more brilliant than pure and polished gold. She understood, that in this embellishment was conceded to Her the privilege of spending her whole life in exalted and divine thoughts,

inflamed by the subtlest charity as signified by the gold. In connection with this privilege She was established anew in the habits of unclouded wisdom and science, exquisitely binding up the hair of exalted thoughts by an ineffable participation in the wisdom and science of God himself. Sandals or shoes were also given to Her, to indicate, that all her steps and movements would be most beautiful (Cant. 7, 1), tending always to the high and holy aim of the greater glory of the Most High. And these shoes were laced with the especial grace of anxious diligence in doing good both before God and man (Luke 1, 39), as it happened when She hastened to visit saint Elisabeth and saint John; and thus this Daughter of the Prince issued most beautiful in her footsteps (Cant. 7, 1).

80. Her arms were adorned with bracelets, filling Her with magnanimity for undertaking great works in participation of the divine magnificence; and thus She always extended them toward courageous deeds (Prov. 31, 19). Her fingers were embellished by rings, in order that in smaller or more inferior matters She might act in a superior manner, exalted in aim and purpose and in all respect making her doings grand and admirable. To this they added a necklace, set with inestimable and brilliant jewels and containing symbols of the three most excellent virtues of faith, hope and charity in correspondence with the three divine Persons. Conjointly with this gift they renewed in Her the habits of these most noble virtues, which She would especially need in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.

81. In her ears they hung earrings of gold, filigreed with silver (Cant. 1, 10), thus preparing her ears for the message, which She was shortly to hear from the archangel Gabriel, and at the same time they furnished Her

with knowledge in order that She might listen attentively and give discreet and acceptable answers to the divine proposals. Thus would the pure silver of her innocence resound in the ears of the Lord and re-echo, in the bosom of the Divinity, those charming and sacred words: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." "Be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1, 38).

82. Then they spread over her garment inscriptions, which at the same time served as embroidery or borders of the finest colors mixed with gold. Some of them bore the legend: "Mary, Mother of God;" others: "Mary, Virgin and Mother." But these inscriptions were not intelligible to Her, nor were they explained to Her, but their meaning was known to the holy angels. The different colors symbolized the habits of all the virtues in the most excellent degree and their active exercise, surpassing all that was ever practiced by the rest of the intellectual creatures. And as a complement of all this beauty, they furnished Her as if with lotions for her face, by illuminating Her with the light drawn from the proximity and participation of the inexhaustible Being and perfection of God himself. For as She was destined actually and truly to shelter within Her virginal womb the infinite perfection of God, it was befitting, that She should have received it beforehand by grace in the highest measure possible to a mere creature.

83. In this adornment and beauty our Princess Mary stood before the Lord so beautiful and charming, that even the supreme King could desire Her as Spouse (Ps. 44, 12). I do not detain myself here in repeating what I have already said, what I will yet say in this history about her virtues; I only say that this adornment was accompanied by new features and effects altogether divine. All this was proper to the infinite power and to

its immense perfection and sanctity, which offer to our comprehension ever new fields of speculation. And when there is question of this ocean of perfection in most holy Mary, we certainly can hope only to skirt its shores. My understanding of that which I perceive, is always pregnant with vast fields of thought, on which I cannot expatiate.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY
GAVE ME.

84. My daughter, the work-shops and treasure-rooms of the Most High are those of a divine Lord and omnipotent King, and therefore without number or limit are the riches and treasures which they contain for the endowment of his chosen brides. He can enrich innumerable others just as He has enriched my soul, and yet infinitely more will remain. Although He will give to no creature as much as He has conferred upon me, it is not because He is not able or does not wish, but because no one will dispose himself for his grace as I did. But the Almighty is most liberal with some souls and enriches them so munificently, because they impede his gifts less, and dispose themselves better than others.

85. I desire, my most beloved, that thou place no obstacle to the love of thy Lord; but I wish, that thou dispose thyself for the jewels and gifts, intended for thee in order to make thee worthy of his bridal chamber. Remember that all the just souls receive this adornment from his hands, though each one according to the degree of the friendship and grace, which makes them capable of receiving them. If thou wishest to attain the highest purity of that perfection and become worthy of standing in the presence of thy Lord and Spouse, strive to be