

“Before the Magi Kings arrive.” (Mary of Agreda)

540. By the infused knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and Mary’s high supernatural enlightenment, our great Queen knew that the Magi Kings of the Orient would come to acknowledge and adore Her most holy Son as their true God. An Angel had been sent to them to announce the birth of the Word became Man, as mentioned in section 492 and the Virgin Mother was not ignorant of this message. Saint Joseph had no knowledge of the magi; because this had not been revealed to him, nor did his prudent Spouse informed him of this secret. In all things She was most wise and discreet, awaiting the sweet and timely schedule of God’s will.

Wis 8:1 Wisdom reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.

After the Circumcision, the holy spouse suggested to Mary that they leave their poor and forsaken habitation on account of the insufficient shelter which it afforded the divine Infant and to Her. It would now be possible to find lodging in Bethlehem, where they could remain until after presenting the Child in the temple of Jerusalem. This proposal of the most faithful spouse arose from his anxiety lest the Child and the Mother should desire comfort; but he left it all to His heavenly Spouse.

541. Without revealing the mystery, the humble Queen answered: “My spouse and master, I resign Myself to your will, and wherever you wish to go I will follow with great pleasure: arrange it as you please.” The heavenly Lady had an affection for the cave on account of its humbleness and poverty, and because the birth of Jesus had made it holy. It was also to be the place of the Magi’s visit, although She did not know at what time that would happen. She considered it more important to submit to Saint Joseph, letting Her spouse decide what was to be done. While they were thus conferring with each other, the Lord Himself informed them through the two Angels Michael and Gabriel, who were attending them in physical forms. They spoke to Mary and Joseph, saying: “Divine Will has arranged that three kings of the earth, coming from the Orient in search of the King of heaven, should adore the divine Word in this very place. They are already ten days on the way; for at the hour of the birth of Jesus they were informed of it, and they immediately set out on their journey. Therefore they will shortly arrive, fulfilling all that the Prophets had from very ancient times foreknown and foretold.”

542. By this announcement Saint Joseph was instructed on the will of the Lord. Mary then said: “My master, this place, chosen by the Most High for such

magnificent mysteries, although it is poor and ill-furnished in the eyes of the world, in the sight of eternal Wisdom is rich, precious, and the most preferable on this earth, since the Lord of heaven is satisfied with it and has made it holy by His presence. And if it is His pleasure, He will give us some protection and shelter against the wind and cold during the few days in which we are to stay here.” Saint Joseph was encouraged by these words from his spouse Mary. He answered Her, that, since the divine Child was to fulfill the law, which required Him to be presented in the temple, just as He had subjected Himself to the law of Circumcision, they could remain in this sacred place until that day should arrive. If, perhaps, the weather became wintery they could seek shelter in the city. They could easily do so; since from Bethlehem to Jerusalem there was only a distance of two hours.

543. In all these matters the most holy Mary conformed Herself to the will of Her watchful spouse. She knew his devotion for the child Jesus was more holy and venerable than the Holy of Holies in the temple. She never stopped Her care, lest She forget anything necessary to protect Him against the cold and the roughness of the weather. She also prepared the cave for the arrival of the Kings, cleaning it once more and arranging it anew as far as possible. But Her greatest attention and care was always reserved for the Child itself, bearing Him in Her arms continually unless absolute necessity demanded otherwise. Besides all this She made use of Her power as Queen of all creation whenever winter rose to excess. She

commanded the frost and the winds, the snow and the ice not to hurt their Creator, and to spend their fury upon Her person alone. The heavenly Queen gave Her commands as follows: “Restrain your wrath before your Creator, who has called you into existence and given you strength and activity. Be mindful of My Son even though you are furnished with powerful forces on account of sin for the punishment of the disobedience of the first Adam and his children. But with the second Adam named Jesus, who comes to repair this fall and cannot have any part therein, you must be courteous, and not offending Him, to whom you owe worship and subjection. And therefore I command you in His Name to cause no inconvenience or displeasure to Him.”

544. For upon Her command, the snow and rain approached no nearer than ten yards, the winds stopped short and the surrounding air retained a mild temperature. To this miracle was added another one: the Virgin Mother felt and suffered the cold as if it were exerting all its natural influences in that place. In this the weather obeyed the Loving Mother to the letter, as She wished not to exempt Herself from the weather while She prevented Her tender Child and Her God from suffering under it. Saint Joseph enjoyed the same privilege as the sweet Infant; he noticed the favorable change of the temperature, without knowing that it was due to the commands and power of Mary; for She had not revealed to him this privilege, because She had no command to that effect from the Most High.

545. As to the order and manner in which the great Queen nourished Her Child

Jesus, it is to be remarked that She offered Him Her virginal milk three times a day, and always with such reverence that She asked His permission beforehand and His pardon for the indignity. She considered Herself and acknowledged Herself unworthy of such a privilege. Many times, while holding Him in Her arms, She was on Her knees adoring Him; and if at any time it was necessary to seat Herself She always asked His permission. Many times She kissed the feet of Jesus, and when She wished to kiss His face She interiorly asked His consent. The sweetest Child returned these caresses of His Mother not only by the expression of pleasure in His facial expression, which was at the same time full of majesty, but also by other actions usual in children. In Him, however, they were accompanied by a serene deliberation. The most ordinary token of His love was to recline sweetly upon the breast of the most pure Mother, or upon Her shoulder, encircling Her neck with His divine arms. These caresses Mary met with so much attention and discretion that She neither sought them as other mothers, nor too withdrew from them. In all these things She behaved most perfectly and prudently, without defect or excess of any kind. The more openly and affectionately Her most holy Son showed His love toward Her, so much the more deeply did She humble Herself, and so much the greater was Her reverence.

546. It often happened that, holding Him in Her arms, She was privileged to see through His humanity the union of the Son of God with His human nature, and *witnessing the activity of His soul in*

interceding with the eternal Father for the human race. These operations and intercessions the heavenly Lady faithfully imitated. Jesus on His part looked upon Her with new accidental joy and delight, rejoicing Himself in the purity of this Creature, that He had created Her. And that His becoming Man had resulted in such a living image of His Divinity and humanity. “Who shall fail to see, that My coming from heaven and assuming flesh is fully justified, since by coming upon the earth and dethroning the demon, the world and the flesh, and by conquering and vanquishing them, such a Woman is called into existence as is My Mother among the children of Adam.” Mary of Agreda the writer of this book wrote, “O sweetest love, essence of my virtue, life of my Soul, most loving Jesus, behold and see that most holy Mary by Herself possesses such immense beauty as exceeds that of all the human race! She is the only and chosen One, so perfectly pleasing to You, my Lord and my God, that She not only equals but far surpasses all the rest of Your people; and that She alone compensates God for all the wickedness of the race of Adam.

Song of song 6:9 My dove, My perfect One, is only One, the darling of her mother, (Saint Ann is the name of Mary’s Mother.) flawless to her that bore Her. (Mary was born with a spirit very similar to Jesus, intelligence far greater than the smartest man and a body that was not attracted to worldly things.) The maidens saw Her and called Her happy; the queens and concubines also, and they praised Her.

^{6:10} “Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?”

547. So powerful were the effects of this delightful conversation with Her Son and true God, that She was more and more spiritualized and made Godlike. Many times in these flights of Her soul the force of Her burning love would have torn Her apart and destroyed the union of Her Soul and Body, if She had not been miraculously comforted and preserved. She spoke to Her most holy Son secret words so exalted and full of weight that they cannot come within the range of our expression. All that I can reproduce can never be anything more than a mere shadow of that which was revealed to me. Mary said to Him: “O My Love, sweet Life of My soul, who are You, and who am I? What do You wish to make of Me by thus becoming Man, lowering Your greatness and magnificence in favor of such useless dust? O what shall Your slave do to pay the debt of love which She owes to You? What return shall I make for the great things which You have done to Me? My being, My life, My senses, My feelings, My desires and longings, all is for You. Comfort Your servant and Your Mother, in order that She may not fail in Your service at the sight of Her own insignificance, and in order that She may not die for love of You. O how limited is the power of man! How insufficient is human affection, as it cannot sufficiently render a just return for Your love! But the victory of mercy and magnificence must always be Yours, and to You belong the songs of love; while we must on the contrary always

consider ourselves overcome and destroyed by Your power. Let us be humiliated and let us grovel in the dust, while Your greatness is magnified and exalted throughout time.” The heavenly Lady, participating in the doctrine of Her most holy Son, sometimes beheld the souls which in the course of the new law of grace were to distinguish themselves in divine love, the works which they were to perform, the martyrdom which they were to suffer in imitation of the Lord. In this knowledge She became so inflamed with love that Her longings of love caused in Her a greater martyrdom than those actually suffered by the saints. To Her happened what the Spouse in the Song of Songs mentions that the feelings of love are strong as death.

Song of Songs 8:6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame.

^{8:7} Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

To these agonies of the loving Mother, caused by the mortal wounds of divine affection, Her most holy Son answered, “Place Me as a sign or seal in Your heart and upon Your arm”, this caused in Mary the full understanding of these words as well as their actual fulfillment. By this divine suffering most holy Mary was a Martyr above all other martyrs.

548. Jesus ate nothing during the time in which He was nourished at the virginal breast of His most holy Mother, for this

milk was His only sustenance. This was most sweet and substantial, since it originated in a Body so pure, perfect and refined, and without any disorder or inequality. No other body was equal to it in healthfulness; and the sacred milk, even if it would have been preserved a long time, it remained free from corruption. By a special privilege it never changed or soured, though the milk of other women immediately degenerates and becomes corrupt, as experience teaches.

549. The most fortunate Joseph not only witnessed the favors and tenderness which passed between the Child and its Mother; but he himself shared in others, which Jesus deigned to confer upon him. Many times his heavenly Spouse placed Jesus in his arms. This happened whenever She had to do some work during which She could not hold Him Herself; as for instance, when She prepared the meals, or arranged the clothes of the Infant or cleaned the house. On these occasions Saint Joseph held Him in his arms and he always felt divine effects in His Soul. The Child Jesus showed exterior signs of affection by His pleased looks, by reclining upon his breast, and by other shows of affection usual with children in regard to their fathers, but in Him these occurrences were always tempered with kingly majesty. Yet all this was not so frequent in Jesus' dealings with Saint Joseph, nor with such levels of affection as with His true Virgin Mother. Whenever She left Jesus in his care, She received from saint Joseph the relic of the Circumcision, which the latter ordinarily carried about with him for his

happiness. Thus both the two Spouses were continually enriched: She by holding Her most holy Son, Joseph by His sacred Blood and deified flesh. They preserved it in a crystal vase, which Saint Joseph had purchased with the money sent to them by Saint Elisabeth. In this they had enclosed the particle of flesh and the sacred Blood shed at the Circumcision, which had been caught up in pieces of linen. The opening of the vase was encased in silver, which the mighty Queen had sealed by Her mere command. Thus the silver opening was more firmly sealed than if it had been soldered by the artisan, who had made the vessel. In this vase the prudent Mother treasured the relics during Her whole life and afterwards She entrusted it to the Apostles, leaving it as an inheritance to the holy Church. In this immense sea of mysteries I find myself so dumbfounded by my ignorance as a woman, and so narrowed in my powers of expression, that I must leave much of it to be contemplated by the faith and piety of the Christians.

Words of enlightenment from Mary.

550. My daughter, in the foregoing chapter, you have been instructed not to seek information from the Lord by supernatural means, neither in order to relieve any suffering, nor in order to satisfy a natural curiosity. Now I command you likewise not to yield, for any of these reasons, to the desire of performing any exterior action according to the promptings of nature. For in all the activity of your exterior faculties and senses you must seek to moderate and

subject your desires, not yielding to them in their demands, although they may have the color of virtue or piety. I was in no danger of going to excess in these affections on account of Me being sinless; nor was there a want of piety in My desire of remaining in the cave, where My most holy Son had been born and had been circumcised. Yet I did not wish to express My desire, even when asked about it by My spouse; for I preferred obedience to this pious inclination. I knew that it is more secure for the souls and more according to the pleasure of the Lord to seek His will in the counsel and decision coming from others, rather than in their own inclination. In Me this course of action was advisable only on account of the greater perfection, but in you and in other souls, who are subject to error in their judgment, this rule must be observed most rigorously. For in their ignorance men are easily carried away by their feelings and inclinations toward insignificant things, and very often they occupy themselves with small things as if they were important matters, and with vanities, as if they were realities. All such activity weakens the soul and deprives it of great spiritual blessings, of grace, enlightenment and merit.

551. This doctrine you write in your heart together with all the others which I am to give you. Seek to use it as a reminder of all that I did, so that as you have come to know it so you may also understand and execute it in your life. Take notice of the reverence, love and the holy and discreet fear, with which I conversed with My most holy Son. I always lived in this kind of watchfulness.

And even after I had conceived Him in My womb, I never lost it out of sight, nor did the great love which He showed Me change it in Me. In this great desire to please Him My heart found no rest until it was entirely united and absorbed in the enjoyment of this My highest Good and ultimate End. Excepting at certain times, during which I rested in His love as in My only joy, I invariably carried about with Me this continual peace, like one who restlessly pursues His way, and who permits Himself not to be delayed by anything that is useless or hinders the attainment of His desired object. So far was My heart from attaching itself to any earthly thing, or from following the inclination of the senses, that I lived as if I had not been composed of earthly substance. If other creatures are not free from passions, or do not overcome them as much as possible, let them not blame nature, but their own will. On the contrary, they justly deserve their weak nature; because, instead of governing and directing nature by the power of their souls (intelligence), they make no use of that power. They allow the natural inclinations to involve them into sin, using their understanding to find still more dangerous occupations and occasions of ruin. On account of these pitfalls presenting themselves in mortal life, I warn you, my dear, not to go after or seek any of the visible things, although they may appear to you necessary and most appropriate for the circumstances. Use all things, your cell, your garments, your food, and whatever else of this life, only in obedience and with the full consent of your superiors; because the Lord requires this of you;

and it is also My pleasure to see you apply all things for the service of God. According to these great rules which I have given you, you must regulate all your activity.