

“The Holy Family is invited by poor woman to live with her until the purification.” (Mary of Agreda)

573. After the departure of the three Kings and after the due celebration of the great mystery of the adoration of the infant Jesus, there was really nothing to wait for in that poor yet sacred place, and Mary and Joseph were free to leave it. The most prudent Mother then said to Saint Joseph: “My master and spouse, the offerings which the Kings have made to our God and Child must not remain here idle; but they must be applied in the service of His Majesty and should be used according to His will and pleasure. I deserve nothing, even of temporal goods. Dispose of all these gifts as belonging to My Son and to you.” The most faithful of husbands answered, with his accustomed humility and courtesy, that he would leave all to Her and would be pleased to see Her give them away. But Mary insisted anew and said: “Since You made an excuse of humility, My master, do it then for love of the poor, who are waiting for their share. They have a right to the things which their heavenly Father has created for their daily living.” They therefore immediately concluded to divide the gifts into three parts: one destined for the temple of Jerusalem, namely the incense and myrrh, as well as part of the gold; another part as offering to the priest, who had circumcised the Child, in order that he might use it for himself and for the synagogue or oratory in Bethlehem. The third part would be

distributed among the poor. Thus they gave away the Magi gifts with a generous and fervent affection.

574. A poor, honorable and pious woman was living close to the cave. She had come a few times to visit our Queen; for the house in which She lived was built up against the wall of the city of Bethlehem, not far from the cave. Some time later this devout woman, not being aware of what had happened, but having heard the rumor of the Kings, held a conversation with most holy Mary and asked Her whether She had heard that some wise men, who were said to be kings, had come from far seeking the Messiah? Holy Mary, aware of the good disposition of this woman, took occasion to instruct and catechize her in the common Jewish belief about the Messiah, without revealing to her hidden sacrament connected with Herself and the sweetest Child whom She held in Her arms. In order to relieve her poverty She gave her some of the gold destined for the poor. Thereby the condition of this fortunate woman was much improved. Thus she became attached with heart and soul to her Teacher and the charity of the Holy Mary. She invited the holy Family to live in her house; and as it was a poor one, it was so much the more agreeable to the Founders and Builders of holy poverty. The poor woman pleaded with great persistence, as she saw the great

inconvenience to which the most holy Mary and Joseph with the Child were subject in the cave. The Queen did not refuse her offer and answered, that She would let her know of Her decision. Mary and Saint Joseph conferred with each other and they resolved to leave the cave and lodge in the house of this woman. The Holy Family needed a place to stay because they were waiting the time of the purification and the presentation in the temple. They did it so much the more willingly as it afforded them a chance to remain near the cave of the Nativity. Also many people began to frequent the cave on account of the rumor of the visit of the Kings, which had been spread about.

575. On account of these and other considerations most holy Mary, with Saint Joseph and the sacred Child took leave of the cave although with a tender regret. They accepted the hospitality of that fortunate woman, who received them with the greatest charity and assigned to them the larger portion of her dwelling. The holy Angels of the Most High accompanied them in human forms. Whenever the heavenly Mother and Saint Joseph Her spouse piously revisited the memorable spots of the cave, they came and went with them. Moreover, when the Child and His Mother took leave of the cave, God appointed an Angel as its keeper and watcher, as He had done with the garden of Paradise. Gen (3:24) And this guard remained and does remain to this day sword in hand at the opening of the cave; and never since then has an animal entered there. However this holy Angel does not stop the entrance of hostile unbelievers, in whose possession this and

the other holy places are in. God allows men to execute their crimes. This permission would not be necessary, if Christian princes were filled with fervent zeal for the honor and glory of Christ and *would seek the restoration of these holy places*, consecrated by the Blood and the labors of the Lord and of His most holy Mother, and by the works of our Redemption.

For centuries the Holy Land was occupied by Muslims. Today Christians go and adore the places in which Jesus and His Mother stood. We have no way of knowing if the places we venerate are the exact locations. There are no Papal Bulls or other documents from the Pope to show these places are truly holy. History tells us that the mother of the Emperor of Rome named Constantine went to the Holy Land and determined the Holy Places. Her name was Helen and was later canonized a Saint by the Catholic Church.

There is no excuse for not attending with faithful diligence to the decent keeping of the Holy places. Nothing is impossible to the believer who can overcome the mountains. I, Mary of Agreda, was given to understand, that the pious devotion and veneration for the Holy Land is one of the most powerful means for establishing and confirming Catholic countries and their kings. Catholic kings with their excessive and unnecessary expenses would be avoided by using their wealth in such a pious enterprise. Using their wealth to the up keep of Holy Places would be pleasing both to God and to men. Making such an honest use

of a king's wealth they would have no desire to use their wealth on themselves.

576. The Holy Family moved to the woman's dwelling in the vicinity of the cave. They remained there until, according to the requirements of the law. She was to be present Herself with Her First-born for purification in the temple. For this mystery the most holy of creatures resolved to dispose Herself worthily by a fervent desire of carrying the infant Jesus as an offering to the eternal Father in His temple. With this intention the heavenly Lady, during the days which still remained until Her purification performed such heroic acts of love and all other virtues. Neither the tongue of Angels nor of men can explain them. By sincere piety and devotion, those Christians who dispose themselves to contemplation of Mary will merit too feel these mysteries.