

eborate the festival of the annunciation of the most Holy Virgin. The moment after she had received our Lord in the holy communion, she pronounced with admirable fervor the vow she had made of perpetual virginity. She then addressed the Holy Virgin, for whom she had a most tender devotion, praying her to present to her son the oblation of herself which she had just made; after which she passed some hours at the foot of the altar in holy meditation and in perfect union with God.

From that time Catharine seemed to be entirely divorced from this world; and she aspired continually to heaven, where she had fixed all her desires. She seemed even to taste in anticipation the sweetness of that heavenly state; but her body was not sufficiently strong to sustain the weight of her austerities, and the constant effort of her spirit to maintain itself in the presence of God. She was at length seized with a violent illness, from which she never entirely recovered. There always remained an affection of the stomach, accompanied by frequent vomiting, and a slow fever, which undermined her constitution by degrees, and threw her into a weakness which insensibly wasted her away. It was, however, evident that her soul acquired new strength in proportion as her body decayed. The nearer she approached the termination of her career, the more clearly she shone forth in all those virtues which she had practised with so much edification. But I need not stop here to particularize them to you, except to mention a few of those which made the most impression and were the source and spring of all the others.

She had a most tender love for God. Her only pleasure seemed to be, to keep herself in contemplation in his presence, to meditate on his majesty and mercy, to sing his