

the sun will one day serve as a mantle and the stars as a crown! *Mulier amicta sole et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim.* Apoc. xii. What is the poverty of this Virgin, who brings forth her divine Son in a stable, and can procure for her infant God no other bed than straw, no other cradle than a crib! Mother truly worthy of Him who will not have whereon to lay his head, who will live on alms, die naked on a cross, and leave as a treasure to his disciples the maxim: "Blessed are the poor." If we wish, my sisters, to comprehend this maxim, which the world cannot understand, and which even religious persons do not always relish, let us enter into the heart of Mary; we will there see evangelical poverty shine, like a precious stone, amidst so many other excellent virtues, and we will feel that she who possesses it is richer in her privations, than the princes and monarchs of the earth in the midst of all their opulence. But how rare are the truly poor of Jesus Christ? To merit the name, we must be dead to all things; have renounced in heart and effect the interests, enjoyments, ease, and conveniencies of life; think but little of life itself; feel a horror of superfluities; be without solicitude for necessities; receive with indifference, like St. Paul, health or sickness, tribulations or joy, abundance or want! Such is that universal detachment, that perfect poverty of spirit, which the Saviour has placed in the first rank of beatitudes; and such was the detachment of the heart of Mary. Hence that invincible patience in afflictions, contradictions, and sufferings; that unalterable sweetness towards even her most implacable and unjust enemies; that peace, that unalterable serenity, in the midst of dangers; that generosity, superior to every sacrifice; that spirit of mortification, which unceasingly immolated to penance a body that was pure and innocent; that annihilation of self-will; that blind and mute obedience, which admitted neither of examination, nor delay, nor distinction, nor reserve. Whether she heard the voice of the angel or of Joseph; whether the law of Moses or that of a prince commanded; whether it were necessary to leave Nazareth, her country, to repair to Bethlehem, or to fly from Bethlehem to Egypt; to interrupt the repose of the night, or bear the burden and heat of the day; to deliver her Son to the knife of circumcision, or offer him in the temple; to accompany him through the towns and villages of Judea, or ascend with him the hill of Calvary, she knew not how to deliberate or complain; she only desired to fulfil, no matter at what cost, the will of heaven. What an example, my sisters; and who will seek excuses to dispense themselves from obedience, when the mother of God finds none? But what have I undertaken, O Lord? Have I believed it possible, in a single discourse, to exhibit all the perfections of the heart of Mary?

Though I had a thousand tongues, could I even name them? Is not this sacred heart an abyss of virtues and of wonders? What are all my efforts to give even a faint idea of them? and after so many words, what have I said in comparison of what yet remains untold? Have I spoken of the faith of Mary: of that faith which transports not mountains, but makes the eternal Word descend from the highest heavens into her womb? Of her hope, more heroic than that of Abraham, since Mary hoped even after the death and burial of the true Isaac? Of her charity? O charity of Mary! vast furnace in which her heart was consumed, no mortal lips can express thy ardours! How many other perfections are there which we must pass over in silence! Alas, how imperfect is the portrait which I present to you, and how does my incapacity confound and afflict me? Oh! could I place before you, for an instant, the heart of this incomparable Virgin, such as the angels and blessed see it eternally, what would be the transports of your love! For, since such is the beauty of virtue, that from the heart where it resides, it sheds an inexpressible charm over the countenance, and a sort of heavenly brightness which enchants the eye; what a spectacle would it be to see so many virtues displayed in their source, in the heart of the most accomplished of creatures! Contemplate, at least, in spirit, my dear sisters, this object of your religious veneration, but do not content yourselves with rendering it sterile honours. It is proposed to your imitation, as well as to your devotion; or rather your most essential devotion is the imitation of its virtues. It seems to me, I hear a voice issue from this heart which says to you: O my beloved children, you whom I have withdrawn from the world, and united under my protection in this asylum, you who bear my name, and who have learned from your holy founders to love me, I ought to be your model. I have been pleasing to God only because I have been humble and docile, patient and mortified, chaste and modest, laborious and poor, meek, silent, recollected, fervent in prayer, detached from all perishable things, attentive only to glorify the Lord, charitable and indulgent to others, severe to myself, faithful to my least duties, and ready to surrender a thousand lives, rather than allow even the shadow of sin to approach me. What I have been, you must become, as far as your weakness will allow. It is in my train, virgins will arrive at the abode of eternal happiness: *Adducentur regi virgines post eam.* Psalms xliv. 15. I present to my Son only those who walk in my footsteps, and try to imitate me: *Proximæ ejus afferentur tibi.* Psalms xliv. 15. They only will enjoy the delights of heaven, and will sing the canticle of the Lamb: *Afferentur in latitia et exultatione.* Psalms xliv. 16. I open to you my heart, that its traits may be imprinted on