

**Book 2, Chapter 3 The Mystical City of God, The Divine History and Life of The Virgin
Mother of God**

**OF THE VIRTUE OF FAITH AND HOW MOST HOLY MARY
PRACTICED IT**

On account of this beauty and harmony regarding the habits of virtue, the soul of the most holy Mary was so enlightened, ennobled and entirely bent on the highest Good and last End of all creation; so alert, prompt, efficient and joyful in the practice of virtue, that, if it were possible for our weak insight to penetrate into the interior of her sacred soul, we would there find a more wonderful beauty than that of all creatures combined and inferior only to that of God himself. All the perfection of creatures were in purest Mary as if in their own sphere and center, and all virtues reached in Her the highest perfection, so that in no manner could it ever be said of Her this or that is wanting in order to make Her altogether beautiful and perfect.

Besides the infused virtues, She possessed all the acquired ones, which She augmented by practice and exercise. **In other souls, one single act cannot be called virtue, because many repeated acts are necessary to constitute virtue;** but in the most holy Mary each act was so efficacious, intense and consummate, that each one was superior to the virtues of all the other creatures. Accordingly, as her acts of virtue were so frequent and did not fall short in the least point of the highest degree of perfection, how incomparably excellent were not the habits of virtue, which the heavenly Mistress attained by her personal exertion? The end for which something is done is that which makes an act virtuous as being well done. In Mary, our Mistress, this end was God himself, highest possible end of all activity; for She did nothing through which She was not certain to advance the greater glory and pleasure of the Lord and She looked upon this as the motive and ultimate end of all her actions.

The infused virtues are divided into two classes. To the first belong only those, that have God himself for their immediate object; therefore they are called theological virtues, being **faith, hope, and charity.** To the second class belong all those other virtues, which have as their proximate object some means or some honorable good, which advances the soul toward its last end, namely God. These are called the moral virtues, because they are intimately connected with established customs, and, although they are many in number, **they can be reduced to four**, which are called the cardinal virtues: **prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance**. Of all these virtues and their different species I will say farther on as much as I can in order that I may make clear, how all of them and each one in particular adorned the faculties of the most holy Mary. At present I only mention in general, that none of them was wanting in Her and that she possessed all in the most perfect manner; moreover they were supplemented by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the fruits of the Spirit, and the Beatitudes. God did not fail to infuse into Her from the first moment of her Conception, all of the graces and gifts conducive to the highest beauty of the human soul and faculties; and this was true of the will as well as of the understanding, so that She had as well the knowledge as the habit of the sciences. In order to say it all in one word all the good, which the Most High could give Her as the Mother of his Son and as a mere creature,

He conferred upon Her in the most exalted degree. In addition to all this her virtues continually augmented: the infused virtues, because She added to them by her own merits, and the acquired virtues, because She nurtured and multiplied them by the intensity of her meritorious acts.

In few words the holy Elizabeth described the greatness of the faith of most holy Mary, when, as reported to us by the evangelist Luke, She exclaimed: "**Blessed art thou for having believed, because the words and promises of the Lord shall be fulfilled in Thee**" (Luke 1, 45). The faith of this great Lady must be estimated from the greatness of her good fortune and beatitude, and from her ineffable dignity.

The faith of the most holy Mary was an image of the whole creation and an open prodigy of the divine power, *for in Her the virtue of faith existed in the highest and the most perfect degree possible; in a certain manner and to a great extent, it made up for the want of faith in men.* The Most High has given this excellent virtue to mortals so that, in spite of the carnal and mortal nature, *they might have the knowledge of the Divinity and of his mysteries and admirable works: a knowledge so certain and infallibly secure,* that it is like seeing Him face to face, and like the vision of the blessed angels in heaven. The same object and the same truth, which they see openly, we perceive obscured under the veil of faith.

One glance at the world will make us understand, how many nations, reigns and provinces, since the beginning of the world, have lost their claims to this great blessing of the faith, so little understood by the thankless mortals: how many have unhappily flung it aside, after the **Lord had conferred it on them in his generous mercy,** and how many of the faithful, having without their merit received the gift of faith, neglect and *despise it, letting it lie idle and unproductive for the last end to which it is to direct and guide them.* It was befitting therefore, that the divine equity should have some recompense for such lamentable loss, and that such an incomparable benefit should find an adequate and proportionate return, as far as is possible from creatures; it was befitting that there ***should be found at least one Creature, in whom the virtue of faith should come to its fullest perfection, as an example and rule for the rest.***

All this was found in the great faith of the most holy Mary and on account of Her and for Her alone, if there had been no other creature in the world, it would have been most proper, that God should contrive and create the excellent virtue of faith; for according to our way of understanding, Mary by Herself was a sufficient pledge to the divine Providence, that He would find a proper return on the part of man, and that the object of this faith would not be frustrated by the want of correspondence among mortals. **The faith of this sovereign Queen was to make recompense for their default and She was to copy the divine prototype of this virtue in its highest perfection.** All the other faithful can measure and gauge themselves by the faith of this Mistress; for they will be more or less faithful, the more or less they approach the perfection of her incomparable faith. **Therefore She was set as Teacher and example of all the believing, including the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs and all that have believed or will believe in the Christian doctrines to the end of the world.**

The intelligent love, with which She explicitly believed all the divine truths, **cannot be expressed in words, without misrepresenting its intensity.** The most holy Mary knew all that She believed

and believed all that She knew; for the infused theological knowledge of the credibility of faith's mysteries, and the understanding of this credibility, existed in the wisest Virgin Mother in the highest degree possible in a mere creature. Her knowledge was kept in a constant actuality, and by means of her memory, like that of an angel, She never forgot, that which once She had learnt. This gift and faculty of the understanding She kept in constant operation in order to exercise her deep faith; only at times, as already said, God suspended faith by other acts of the mind. Except that She was not yet a comprehensor, nothing was wanting in regard to her intelligence of the matters of faith and in regard to the clear knowledge of the Divinity. In this regard She held a position far above that of all the wayfarers and She by Herself constituted a class of such high degrees, as cannot be attained by any other wayfarer to heaven.

*And if the most holy Mary, while She exercised the acts of faith and hope was in what might be called her most ordinary and therefore the lowest degree of activity, and if in that state She excelled all the angels and saints in merits by her faith and love, what must we say of the excellence of her acts, her merits and her affections, during the time in which She was exalted by the divine power to the blessed state of highest intuitive vision and clear knowledge of the Divinity? ***If this is beyond the comprehension of the angelic mind, how can an earthly creature ever hope to find words to describe it? I therefore can only express the mere wish, that all mortals might come to a knowledge of the precious value of faith, by leaving it from this heavenly Original, in whom faith attained its ultimate perfection and where it completely fulfilled the end for which it was created. Let the infidels, the heretics, the pagans and idolaters approach this Mistress of faith, most holy Mary, in order to be enlightened in their falsehoods and darksome errors and in Order to find the sure way toward the last end of their being. Let also Catholics approach and learn to understand the copious rewards of this virtue; let them ask the Lord with the Apostles to, increase their faith (Luke 7, 5). Not that they ever can reach the faith of most holy Mary, but let them ask for the desire to imitate Her and follow Her, for by her faith She teaches us, and by her merits She helps us to obtain this virtue.****

Saint Paul calls the patriarch Abraham the father of all the faithful (Rom. 6, 11), because he first received the promise, hoping against hope (Rom. 4, 18); He wishes to extol the excellence of the Patriarch's faith because he believed the promise of the Lord, that Sarah, his wife, would bear him a son though she was sterile, and, according to the laws of nature, incapable of conception; moreover, in offering his son as a sacrifice at God's command, he relinquished at the same time the prospect of the countless offspring, ***which the Lord had promised to him. This all, and many other sayings and promises of the Lord were made impossible of fulfillment according to the laws of nature, yet Abraham believed, that the divine power could execute them in a supernatural manner. Therefore he merited to be called the Father of all the believers and to receive the seal of his faith which justified him, namely circumcision.***

But our supereminent Lady, Mary, possesses much greater rights and titles to be called the Mother of faith and of all the faithful. In her hand is hoisted the standard and ensign of faith for all the believers in the law of grace. First indeed, according to the order of time, was the Patriarch and consequently he was ordained to be the father and head of the Hebrew people: great was his belief in the promises concerning Christ our Lord and in the works of the Most

High. Nevertheless incomparably more admirable was the faith of Mary in all these regards and She excels him in dignity. Greater difficulty and incongruity was there that a virgin should Conceive and bring forth, than that an aged and sterile woman should bear fruit; and the patriarch Abraham was not so certain of the sacrifice of Isaac, as Mary was of the inevitable sacrifice of her most holy Son. **She is the One, who perfectly believed and hoped in all the mysteries, and She shows to the whole Church, how it must believe in the Most High and in the works of his Redemption. Having thus understood the faith of Mary our Queen, we must admit Her to be the Mother of the faithful and the prototype of the Catholic faith and of holy hope.** And in order to conclude this chapter, I will add, that Christ, our Redeemer and Teacher, as He was a comprehensor and as his most holy soul enjoyed the highest glory and the beatific vision, had no necessity or occasion for faith, nor could He in his own actions give us an example of this virtue. But what the Lord could not do in his own Person, He did in the person of his most holy Mother, constituting Her as the Foundress, the Mother and the example of faith in his evangelical Church. And thus on the day of universal accounting this sovereign Mistress and Queen shall in an especial manner assist her most holy Son in the judgment of those, who, in spite of such an example, have not believed during their stay on earth.

WORDS OF THE QUEEN. The Virgin Mary speaks to Sister Mary of Agreda, Spain.

My daughter, the inestimable treasure of the virtue of divine faith is hidden to those mortals who have only carnal and earthly eyes; for they do not know how to appreciate and esteem a gift and blessing of such incomparable value. Consider, my dearest, what the world was without faith and what it would be today if my Son and Lord would not preserve faith. How many men whom the world has celebrated as great, powerful and wise have precipitated themselves, on account of the want of light of faith, from the darkness of their unbelief into most abominable sins, and thence into the eternal darkness of hell! How many kingdoms and provinces, being blind themselves, follow these still more blind leaders until they together fall into the abyss of eternal pains! **And they are followed by the bad Christians, who having received the grace and blessing of faith, live as if they had it not in their hearts.**

Do not forget, my dear friend, to be thankful for this precious jewel which the Lord has given thee as a dower and a wedding gift of thy espousal with Him, in order to draw thee to the bridal chamber of his holy Church and afterwards in loving companionship with Him in the eternal beatitude. Continually exercise this virtue of faith, for it places thee near to thy last end, after which thou strivest, and brings thee near to the object of thy desires and thy love. Faith teaches the sure way of eternal salvation, **faith is the light that shines in the darkness of this mortal life and pilgrimage; it leads men securely to the possession of the fatherland to which they are wayfaring, if they do not allow it to die out by infidelity and sinfulness.** Faith enlivens the other virtues and serves as a nourishment of the just man and a support in his labors. Faith confounds and fills with fear the infidels and the lax Christians in their negligence; *for it convinces them in this world of their sin and threatens punishment in the life to come.* **Faith is powerful to do all things, for nothing is impossible to the believer; faith makes all things attainable and possible. Faith illumines and ennobles the understanding of man,** since it directs him in the darkness of his natural ignorance, not to stray from the way, and it elevates him above himself so that he sees

and understands with infallible certainty what is far above his powers and assures him of it no less than if he saw it clearly before him. He is thus freed from the gross and vile narrowmindedness of those who will believe only what they can experience by their own limited natural powers, not considering that the soul, as long as it lives in the prison of this corruptible body, is very much circumscribed and limited in its sphere of action by the knowledge drawn from the coarse activity of the senses. **Appreciate, therefore, my daughter, this priceless treasure of the Catholic faith given thee by God, watch over it and practice it in great esteem and reverence.**