This article continues our series on the lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Her Divine Son as revealed to Venerable Maria of Agreda, the 17th-century Spanish nun, and documented in *The Mystical City of God*. On March 25, we published the poignant revelations of the Blessed Virgin on the remarkable events of Palm Sunday. Here we will consider the mystical occurrences within Limbo, where the Soul of our crucified Lord dwelled until the appointed hour of His Resurrection on "the first day of the week" (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Among others, these include (1) the exquisite care of the angels for the sacred Body of the crucified Christ, (2) the recognition by Adam and Eve of the priceless redemption of their race made necessary by the "havoc wrought by their disobedience," (3) the new glorious nature of Our Lord's physical Body, which would be made manifest to the world after His Resurrection, (4) the command of Christ to certain souls to rise from the dead, and (5) the mystical reunion of Christ with His Mother in unprecedented exaltation. The union of Christ, His Mother, and the patriarchs and other souls in Limbo offers us a glimpse of the joy that awaits the faithful after a pious life and holy death.

The remarkable level of detail in Maria of Agreda's mystical visions can be appreciated by noting that a full 19 chapters (IX through XXVII) are devoted to the events of Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday morning. All text below *(in italics)* is from one chapter only (Volume III {The Transfixion}, Book Two, Chapter XXVI). *The Mystical City of God* is available in English both in print edition and online.

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The divine Soul of Christ our Redeemer remained in limbo from half past three of Friday afternoon, until after three of the Sunday morning following. During this hour, He returned to the Sepulchre as the victorious Prince of the angels and of the saints, whom He had delivered from those nether prisons as spoils of His victory and as an earnest of His glorious triumph over the chastised and prostrate rebels of hell. In the sepulchre were many angels as its guard, venerating the sacred Body united to the Divinity. Some of them, obeying the command of their Queen and Mistress, had gathered the relics of the sacred Blood shed by Her divine Son, the particles of Flesh scattered about, the hair torn from His divine face and head, and all else that belonged to the perfection and integrity of His most sacred humanity. On these the Mother of prudence lavished Her solicitous care. The angels took charge of these relics, each one filled with joy at being privileged to hold the particles, which he was able to secure. Before any change was made, the Body of the Redeemer was shown to the holy Fathers, in the same wounded, lacerated and disfigured state in which it was left by the cruelty of the Jews. Beholding Him thus disfigured in death, the Patriarchs and Prophets and other saints adored Him and again confessed Him as the Incarnate Word, who had truly taken upon Himself our infirmities and sorrows (Is. 53, 4) and paid abundantly our debts,

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satisfying in His innocence and guiltlessness for what we ourselves owed to the justice of the eternal Father. There did our first parents Adam and Eve see the havoc wrought by their disobedience, the priceless remedy it necessitated, the immense goodness and mercy of the Redeemer. As they felt the effects of His copious Redemption in the glory of their souls, they praised anew the Omnipotent and Saint of saints, who had with such marvelous wisdom wrought such a salvation.

Then, in the presence of all those saints, through the ministry of those angels, were united to the sacred Body all the relics, which they had gathered, restoring it to its natural perfection and integrity. In the same moment, the most holy Soul reunited with the Body, giving it immortal life and glory. Instead of the winding-sheets and the ointments, in which it had been buried, it was clothed with the four gifts of glory, namely: with clearness, impassibility, agility and subtlety (John 19, 40). These gifts overflowed from the immense glory of the Soul of Christ into the sacred Body. Although these gifts were due to it as a natural inheritance and participation from the instant of its conception, because from that very moment His Soul was glorified and His whole humanity was united to the Divinity; yet they had been suspended in their effects upon the purest Body, in order to permit it to remain passible and capable of meriting for us our own glory. In the Resurrection, these gifts were justly called into activity in the proper degree corresponding to the glory of His Soul and to His union with the Divinity. As the glory of the most holy Soul of Christ our Savior is incomprehensible and ineffable to man, it is also impossible entirely to describe in our words or by our examples the glorious gifts of His deified Body; for in comparison to its purity, crystal would be obscure. The light inherent and shining forth from His Body so far exceeds that of the others, as the day does the night, or as many suns the light of one star; and all the beauty of creatures, if it were joined, would appear ugliness in comparison with his, nothing else being comparable to it in all creation.

The excellence of these gifts in the Resurrection were far beyond the glory of His Transfiguration or that manifested on other occasions of the kind mentioned in this history. For on these occasions He received it transitorily and for special purposes, while now He received it in plenitude and forever. Through impassibility, His Body became invincible to all created power, since no power can ever move or change Him. By subtlety, the gross and earthly matter was so purified that it could now penetrate other matter like a pure spirit. Accordingly, He penetrated through the rocks of the sepulchre without removing or displacing them, just as He had issued forth from the womb of His most blessed Mother. Agility so freed Him from the weight and slowness of matter, that it exceeded the agility of the immaterial angels, while He Himself could move about more quickly than they, as shown in His apparitions to the Apostles and on other occasions. The sacred wounds, which had disfigured His Body, now shone forth from His hands and feet and side so refulgent and

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brilliant, that they added a most entrancing beauty and charm. In all this glory and heavenly adornment, the Savior now arose from the grave; and in the presence of the saints and Patriarchs, He promised universal resurrection in their own flesh and body to all men, and that they, moreover, as an effect of His own Resurrection, should be similarly glorified. As an earnest and as a pledge of the universal resurrection, the Lord commanded the souls of many saints there present to reunite with their bodies and rise up to immortal life. Immediately this divine command was executed, and their bodies arose, as is mentioned by Saint Matthew, in anticipation of this mystery (Matthew 27, 52). Among them was Saint Anne, Saint Joseph and Saint Joachim, and others of the ancient Fathers and Patriarchs, who had distinguished themselves in the faith and hope of the Incarnation and had desired and prayed for it with greater earnestness to the Lord. As a reward for their zeal, the resurrection and glory of their bodies was now anticipated.

O how powerful and wonderful, how victorious and strong, appeared even now this Lion of Juda, the Son of David! None ever woke from sleep so quickly as Christ from death (Ps. 3, 4). At His imperious voice the dry and scattered bones of the ancient dead were joined together, and the flesh, which had long ago turned to dust, was united to the bones, renewed their former life, and adorned by the gifts of glory communicated to it by the life-restoring soul. In one instant all these saints gathered around their Savior, more refulgent and brilliant than the sun, pure, transparent, beauteous and agile, fit to follow Him everywhere and by their own good fortune they now confirmed the prophecy of Job, that, in our own flesh and with our own eyes, and not with those of others, we shall see our Redeemer for our consolation (Job 19, 26). Of all these mysteries the great Queen of Heaven was aware and She participated in them from Her retreat in the Cenacle. In the same instant in which the most holy Soul of Christ entered and gave life to His Body, the joy of Her immaculate soul, which I mentioned in the foregoing chapter as being restrained and, as it were, withheld, overflowed into Her immaculate body. And this overflow was so exquisite in its effects that She was transformed from sorrow to joy, from pain to delight, from grief to ineffable jubilation and rest. It happened that just at this time the Evangelist John, as he had done on the previous morning, stepped in to visit Her and console Her in Her bitter solitude, and thus unexpectedly, in the midst of splendor and glory, met Her, whom he had before scarcely recognized on account of Her overwhelming sorrow. The Apostle now beheld Her with wonder and deepest reverence and concluded that the Lord had risen, since His blessed Mother was thus transfigured with joy.

In this new joy and under the divine influences of Her supernatural vision, the great Lady began to prepare Herself for the visit of the Lord, which was near at hand. While eliciting acts of praise, and in Her canticles and prayers, She immediately felt within Her a new kind of jubilation and celestial delight, reaching far beyond the first joy, and corresponding in a

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wonderful manner to the sorrows and tribulations She had undergone in the Passion; and this new favor was different and much more exalted than the joys overflowing naturally from Her soul into Her body. Moreover, She perceived within Herself another, third and still more different effect, implying new divine favors. Namely, She felt infused into Her being the heavenly light heralding the advent of beatific vision, which I will not here explain, since I have descanted on it in the first part (Part I, No. 620). I merely add here that the Queen, on this occasion, received these divine influences more abundantly and in a more exalted degree; for now the Passion of Christ had gone before and She had acquired the merits of this Passion. Hence, the consolations from the hands of Her divine Son corresponded to the multitude of Her sorrows.

The blessed Mary being thus prepared, Christ our Savior, arisen and glorious, in the company of all the Saints and Patriarchs, made His appearance. The ever-humble Queen prostrated Herself upon the ground and adored Her divine Son; and the Lord raised Her up and drew Her to Himself. In this contact, which was more intimate than the contact with the humanity and the wounds of the Savior sought by Magdalen, the Virgin Mother participated in an extraordinary favor, which She alone, as exempt from sin, could merit. Although it was not the greatest of the favors She attained on this occasion, yet She could not have received it without failing of Her faculties, if She had not been previously strengthened by the angels and by the Lord Himself. This favor was that the glorious Body of the Son so closely united itself to that of His purest Mother, that He penetrated into it or She into His, as when, for instance, a crystal globe takes up within itself the light of the sun and is saturated with the splendor and beauty of its light. In the same way the body of the most holy Mary entered into that of Her divine Son by this heavenly embrace; it was, as it were, the portal of Her intimate knowledge concerning the glory of the most holy Soul and Body of Her Lord. As a consequence of these favors, constituting higher and higher degrees of ineffable gifts, the spirit of the Virgin Mother rose to the knowledge of the most hidden sacraments. In the midst of them, She heard a voice saying to Her: "My beloved, ascend higher!" (Luke 18, 10). By the power of these words, She was entirely transformed and saw the Divinity clearly and intuitively, wherein She found complete, though only temporary, rest and reward for all Her sorrows and labors. Silence alone here is proper, since reason and language are entirely inadequate to comprehend or express what passed in the blessed Mary during this beatific vision, the highest She had until then enjoyed. Let us celebrate this day in wonder and praise, with congratulations and loving and humble thanks for what She then merited for us, and for Her exaltation and joy.

For some hours, the heavenly Princess continued to enjoy the essence of God with Her

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divine Son, participating now in His triumph as She had in His torments. Then, by similar degrees, She again descended from this vision and found Herself in the end reclining on the right arm of the most sacred humanity and regaled in other ways by the right hand of His Divinity (Cant. 2, 6). She held sweetest converse with Her Son concerning the mysteries of His Passion and of His glory. In these conferences, She was again inebriated with the wine of love and charity, which now She drank unmeasured from the original fount. All that a mere creature can receive was conferred upon the blessed Mary on this occasion; for, according to our way of conceiving such things, the divine equity wished to compensate the injury (thus I must call it, because I cannot find a more proper word), which a creature so pure and immaculate had undergone in suffering the sorrows and torments of the Passion. For, as I have mentioned many times before, She suffered the same pains as Her Son, and now in this mystery She was inundated with a proportionate joy and delight.

Then, still remaining in Her exalted state, the great Lady turned to the holy Patriarchs and all the just, recognizing them and speaking to each in succession, praising the Almighty in His liberal mercy to each one of them. She was filled with an especial delight in speaking to Her parents, Saints Joachim and Anne, with Her spouse, Saint Joseph, with Saint John the Baptist, and with them She conversed more particularly than with the Patriarchs and Prophets and with the first parents, Adam and Eve. All of them prostrated themselves before the heavenly Lady, acknowledging Her as the Mother of the Redeemer of the world, as the cause of their rescue and the Coadjutrix of their Redemption. The divine wisdom impelled them thus to venerate and honor Her. But the Queen of all virtues and the Mistress of humility prostrated Herself on the ground and reverenced the saints according to their due. This the Lord permitted because the saints, although they were inferior in grace, were superior in their state of blessedness, endowed with imperishable and eternal glory, while the Mother of grace was yet in mortal life and a pilgrim and had not as yet assumed the state of fruition. The presence of Christ our Savior continued during all the conference of Mary with the holy Fathers. The most blessed Mary invited all the angels and saints there present to praise the Victor over death, sin and hell. Whereupon all sang new songs, psalms, hymns of glory and magnificence, until the hour arrived when the Risen Savior was to appear in other places, as I shall relate in the following chapter.

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