Today, on the feast of the Assumption, we continue our periodic look at the lives of the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son through her revelations to Venerable Maria of Agreda, the remarkable 17th-century Spanish nun, as documented in *The Mystical City of God*. In yesterday's article, on the occasion of the Vigil of the Assumption, we examined the final events in the earthly life of the most holy Mary. Of particular interest was a second "Annunciation" by the Angel Gabriel, informing the Blessed Virgin that she would end her earthly life in three years' time. Likewise, the "last will and testament" of the Blessed Mother was remarkable for its deep humility, even as Almighty God continued to grace her with previously untold honor and blessings.

In today's companion piece, we note that, according to the revelations given to Maria Agreda, the Blessed Virgin did indeed suffer a natural death of her own volition. This is consistent with the Eastern Rite tradition of Mary's "Dormition," or falling asleep, which is explicit in the writings of St. John Damascene and other Church Fathers, both East and West. Exempt by her Immaculate Conception and sinless life from the penalty of death, her Divine Son offered her the choice to enter heaven without experiencing death. In her magnificent humility, Mary replied that "it is proper that, as I have followed Thee in life, so I follow Thee also in death." Pope Pius XII's 1950 *Munificentissimus Deus*, which formally defined the Assumption, states that the Blessed Virgin, "when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory." Although the dogmatic definition is silent on whether or not Mary experienced death (separation of soul and body), her "falling asleep" is a venerable tradition worthy of belief.

The somewhat lengthy narrative below is drawn from Volume IV (The Coronation), Book Two, Chapters XIX through XXI). *The Mystical City of God* is available in English both in print edition and online. Of note, the English translation of this four-volume monumental work was begun on the feast of the Assumption in 1902 by Fiscar Marison.

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And now, according to the decree of the divine will, the day was approaching in which the true and living Ark of the covenant was to be placed in the temple of the celestial Jerusalem,

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with a greater glory and higher jubilee than its prophetic figure was installed by Solomon in the sanctuary beneath the wings of the cherubim (III King 8, 8). Three days before the most happy Transition of the great Lady, the Apostles and disciples were gathered in Jerusalem and in the Cenacle. The first one to arrive was Saint Peter, who was transported from Rome by the hands of an angel. At that place, the angel appeared to him and told him that the passing away of the most blessed Mary was imminent and that the Lord commanded him to go to Jerusalem in order to be present at that event. Thereupon the angel took him up and brought him from Italy to the Cenacle. [NB: This is consistent with the teaching of St. John Damascene in his Second Homily on the Dormition.] *Thither the Queen of the world had retired, somewhat weakened in body by the force of her divine love; for since she was so near to her end, she was subjected more completely to love's effects. The great Lady came to the entrance of her oratory in order to receive the vicar of Christ our Savior. Kneeling at his feet, she asked his blessing and said: "I give thanks and praise to the Almighty, that He has brought to me the holy Father for assisting me in the hour of my death." Then came Saint Paul, to whom the Queen showed the same reverence with similar tokens of her pleasure at seeing him. The Apostles saluted her as the Mother of God, as their Queen and as Mistress of all creation; but with a sorrow equal to their reverence, because they knew that they had come to witness her passing away. After these Apostles came the others and the disciples still living. Three days after, they were all assembled in the Cenacle. The heavenly Mother received them all with profound humility, reverence and love, asking each one to bless her. All of them complied, and saluted her with admirable reverence. By orders of the Lady given to Saint John, and with the assistance of Saint James the Less, they were all hospitably entertained and accommodated. Some of the Apostles who had been transported by the angels and informed by them of the purpose of their coming, were seized with tenderest grief and shed abundant tears at the thought of losing their only protection and consolation. Others were as yet ignorant of their approaching loss, especially the disciples, who had not been positively informed by the angels, but were moved by interior inspirations and a sweet and forcible intimation of God's will to come to Jerusalem. They immediately conferred with Saint Peter, desirous of knowing the occasion of their meeting; for all of them were convinced, that if there had been no special occasion, the Lord would not have urged them so strongly to come. The apostle Saint Peter, as the head of the Church, called them all together in order to tell them of the cause of their coming, and spoke to the assembly: "My dearest children and brethren, the Lord has called and brought us to Jerusalem from remote regions not without a cause most urgent and sorrowful to us. The Most High wishes now to raise up to the throne of eternal glory His most blessed Mother, our Mistress, our consolation and protection. His divine decree is that we all be present at her most happy and glorious Transition. When our Master and Redeemer ascended to the right hand of His Father, although He left us orphaned of His most delightful presence, we still retained His most blessed Mother. As our light now leaves us,*

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what shall we do? What help or hope have we to encourage us on our pilgrimage? I find none except the hope that we all shall follow her in due time." Saint Peter could speak no farther, because uncontrollable tears and sighs interrupted him. Neither could the rest of the Apostles answer for a long time, during which, amid copious and tenderest tears, they gave vent to the groans of their inmost heart. After some time the vicar of Christ recovered himself and added: "My children, let us seek the presence of our Mother and Lady. Let us spend the time left of her life in her company and ask her to bless us." They all be took themselves to the oratory of the great Queen and found her kneeling upon a couch, on which she was wont to recline for a short rest. They saw her full of beauty and celestial light, surrounded by the thousand angels of her guard. The natural condition and appearance of her sacred and virginal body were the same as at her thirty-third year; for, as I have already stated, from that age onward it experienced no change. It was not affected by the passing years, showing no signs of age, no wrinkles in her face or body, nor giving signs of weakening or fading, as in other children of Adam, who gradually fall away and drop from the natural perfection of early man or womanhood. This unchangeableness was the privilege of the most blessed Mary alone, as well because it consorted with the stability of her purest soul, as because it was the natural consequence of her immunity from the sin of Adam, the effects of which in this regard touched neither her sacred body nor her purest soul. The Apostles and disciples, and some of the other faithful, occupied her chamber, all of them preserving the utmost order in her presence. Saint Peter and Saint John placed themselves at the head of the couch. The great Lady looked upon them all with her accustomed modesty and reverence and spoke to them as follows: "My dearest children, give permission to your servant to speak in your presence and to disclose my humble desires." Saint Peter answered that all listened with attention and would obey her in all things; and he begged her to seat herself upon the couch, while speaking to them. It seemed to Saint Peter that she was exhausted from kneeling so long and that she had taken that position in order to pray to the Lord, and that in speaking to them, it was proper she should be seated as their Queen. But she, who was the Teacher of humility and obedience unto death, practiced both these virtues in that hour. She answered that she would obey in asking of them their blessing, and besought them to afford her this consolation. With the permission of Saint Peter she left the couch and, kneeling before the Apostle, said to him: "My lord, I beseech thee, as the universal pastor and head of the holy Church, to give me thy blessing in thy own and in its name. Pardon me thy handmaid for the smallness of the service I have rendered in my life. Grant that John dispose of my vestments, the two tunics, giving them to the two poor maidens, who have always obliged me by their charity." She then prostrated herself and kissed the feet of Saint Peter as the vicar of Christ, by her abundant tears eliciting not less the admiration than the tears of the Apostle and of all the by standers. From Saint Peter she went to Saint John, and kneeling likewise at his feet, said : "Pardon, my son and my master, my not having fulfilled toward thee the duties of a Mother as I ought and as the Lord had

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commanded me, when from the Cross He appointed thee as my son and me as thy mother (John 19, 27). I humbly and from my heart thank thee for the kindness which thou hast shown me as a son. Give me thy benediction for entering into the vision and company of Him Who created me." The sweetest Mother proceeded in her leave-taking, speaking to each of the Apostles in particular and to some of the disciples; and then to all the assembly together; for there were a great number. She rose to her feet and addressed them all, saying: "Dearest children and my masters, always have I kept you in my soul and written in my heart. I have loved you with that tender love and charity, which was given to me by my divine Son, whom I have seen in you, his chosen friends. In obedience to his holy and eternal will, I now go to the eternal mansions, where I promise you as a Mother I will look upon you by the clearest light of the Divinity, the vision of which my soul hopes and desires in security. I commend unto you my Mother, the Church, the exaltation of the name of the Most High, the spread of the evangelical law, the honor and veneration for the words of my Divine Son, the memory of His Passion and Death, the practice of His doctrine. My children, love the Church, and love one another with that bond of charity, which your Master has always inculcated upon you (John 13, 34). To thee, Peter, holy Pontiff, I commend my son John and all the rest." The words of the most blessed Mary, like arrows of a divine fire, penetrated the hearts of all the Apostles and hearers, and as she ceased speaking, all of them were dissolved in streams of tears and, seized with irreparable sorrow, cast themselves upon the ground with sighs and groans sufficient to move to compassion the very earth. All of them wept, and with them wept also the sweetest Mary, who could not resist this bitter and well-founded sorrow of her children. After some time She spoke to them again, and asked them to pray with her and for her in silence, which they did. During this quietness the Incarnate Word descended from heaven on a throne of ineffable glory, accompanied by all the saints and innumerable angels, and the house of the Cenacle was filled with glory. The most blessed Mary adored the Lord and kissed His feet. Prostrate before Him, she made the last and most profound act of faith and humility in her mortal life. On this occasion the most pure Creature, the Queen of the heavens, shrank within herself and lowered herself to the earth more profoundly than all men together ever have or ever will humiliate themselves for all their sins. Her Divine Son gave her His blessing and in the presence of the courtiers of heaven spoke to her these words: "My dearest Mother, whom I have chosen for My dwelling place, the hour is come in which thou art to pass from the life of this death and of the world into the glory of My Father and mine, where thou shalt possess the throne prepared for thee at My right hand and enjoy it through all eternity. And since, by My power and as My Mother, I have caused thee to enter the world free and exempt from sin, therefore also death shall have no right or permission to touch thee at thy exit from this world. If thou wishest not to pass through it, come with Me now to partake of My glory, which thou hast merited." The most prudent Mother prostrated herself at the feet of her Son and with a joyous countenance answered: "My Son and my Lord, I beseech Thee

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let thy mother and thy servant enter into eternal life by the common portal of natural death, like the other children of Adam. Thou, who art my true God, hast suffered death without being obliged to do so; it is proper that, as I have followed Thee in life, so I follow Thee also in death." Christ the Savior approved of the decision and the sacrifice of His most blessed Mother, and consented to its fulfillment. Then all the angels began to sing in celestial harmony some of the verses of the Canticles of Solomon and other new ones. Although only Saint John and some of the Apostles were enlightened as to the presence of Christ the Savior, yet the others felt in their interior its divine and powerful effects; but the music was heard as well by the Apostles and disciples, as by many others of the faithful there present. A divine fragrance also spread about, which penetrated even to the street. The house of the Cenacle was filled with a wonderful effulgence, visible to all, and the Lord ordained that multitudes of the people of Jerusalem gathered in the streets as witnesses to this new miracle. When the angels began their music, the most blessed Mary reclined back upon her couch or bed. Her tunic was folded about her sacred body, her hands were joined and her eyes fixed upon her Divine Son, and she was entirely inflamed with the fire of divine love. And as the angels intoned those verses of the second chapter of the Canticles: "Surge, propera, arnica mea," that is to say: "Arise, haste, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, the winter has passed," etc., She pronounced those words of her Son on the Cross: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." Then she closed her virginal eyes and expired. The sickness which took away her life was love, without any other weakness or accidental intervention of whatever kind. She died at the moment when the divine power suspended the assistance, which until then had counteracted the sensible ardors of her burning love of God. As soon as this miraculous assistance was withdrawn, the fire of her love consumed the life-humors of her heart and thus caused the cessation of her earthly existence. Then this most pure soul passed from her virginal body to be placed in boundless glory, on the throne at the right hand of her Divine Son. Immediately the music of the angels seemed to withdraw to the upper air; for that whole procession of angels and saints accompanied the King and Queen to the empyrean heavens. The sacred body of the most blessed Mary, which had been the temple and sanctuary of God in life, continued to shine with an effulgent light and breathed forth such a wonderful and unheard of fragrance, that all the bystanders were filled with interior and exterior sweetness. The thousand angels of her guard remained to watch over the inestimable treasure of her virginal body. The Apostles and disciples, amid the tears and the joy of the wonders they had seen, were absorbed in admiration for some time, and then sang many hymns and psalms in honor of the most blessed Mary now departed. This glorious Transition of the great Queen took place in the hour in which her Divine Son had died, at three o'clock on a Friday, the thirteenth day of August, she being seventy years of age, less the twenty-six days intervening between the thirteenth of August, on which she died, and the eighth of September, the day of her birth. The heavenly Mother had survived the death of Christ the Savior twenty-one years, four

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months and nineteen days; and His virginal birth, fifty-five years. This reckoning can be easily made in the following manner: when Christ our Savior was born, His virginal Mother was fifteen years, three months and seventeen days of age. The Lord lived thirty-three years and three months; so that at the time of His sacred Passion the most blessed Lady was forty-eight years, six months and seventeen days old; adding to these another twenty-one years, four months and nineteen days, we ascertain her age as seventy years, less twenty-five or twenty-six days. Great wonders and prodigies happened at the precious death of the Queen; for the sun was eclipsed and its light was hidden in sorrow for some hours. Many birds of different kinds gathered around the Cenacle, and by their sorrowful clamors and groans for a while caused the bystanders themselves to weep. All Jerusalem was in commotion, and many of the inhabitants collected in astonished crowds, confessing loudly the power of God and the greatness of his works. Others were astounded and as if beside themselves. The Apostles and disciples with others of the faithful broke forth in tears and sighs. Many sick persons came who all were cured. The souls in purgatory were released. But the greatest miracle was that three persons, a man in Jerusalem and two women living in the immediate neighborhood of the Cenacle, died in sin and impenitent in that same hour, subject to eternal damnation; but when their cause came before the tribunal of Christ, His sweetest Mother interceded for them and they were restored to life. They so mended their conduct that afterwards they died in grace and were saved. This privilege was not extended to others that died on that day in the world, but was restricted to those three who happened to die in that hour in Jerusalem.

In order that the Apostles, the disciples, and many others of the faithful might not be too deeply oppressed by sorrow, and in order that some of them might not die of grief caused by the passing away of the most blessed Mary, it was necessary that the divine power, by an especial providence, furnish them with consolation and dilate their heart for new influences in their incomparable affliction. For the feeling, that their loss was irretrievable in the present life, could not be repressed; the privation of such a Treasure could never find a recompense; and as the most sweet, loving and amiable intercourse and conversation of their great Queen had ravished the heart of each one, the ceasing of her protection and company left them as it were without the breath of life. But the Lord, who well knew how to estimate the just cause of their sorrow, secretly upheld them by His encouragements and so they set about the fitting burial of the sacred body and whatever the occasion demanded. Accordingly the holy Apostles, on whom this duty specially devolved, held a conference concerning the burial of the most sacred body of their Queen and Lady. They selected for that purpose a new sepulcher, which had been prepared mysteriously by the providence of her Divine Son. As they remembered, that, according to the custom of the Jews at burial, the deified body of their Master had been anointed with precious ointments and spices and wrapped in the sacred burial cloths; they thought not of doing otherwise with the virginal

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body of His most holy Mother. Accordingly they called the two maidens, who had assisted the Queen during her life and who had been designated as the heiresses of her tunics, and instructed them to anoint the body of the Mother of God with highest reverence and modesty and wrap it in the winding-sheets before it should be placed in the casket. With great reverence and fear the two maidens entered the room, where the body of the blessed Lady lay upon its couch; but the refulgence issuing from it barred and blinded them in such a manner that they could neither see nor touch the body, nor even ascertain in what particular place it rested. In fear and reverence still greater than on their entrance, the maidens left the room; and in great excitement and wonder they told the Apostles what had happened. They, not without divine inspiration, came to the conclusion, that this sacred Ark of the covenant was not to be touched or handled in the common way. Then Saint Peter and Saint John entered the oratory and perceived the effulgence, and at the same time they heard the celestial music of the angels, who were singing: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Others responded: "A Virgin before childbirth, in childbirth and after childbirth." From that time on, many of the faithful expressed their devotion toward the most blessed Mary in these words of praise; and from them they were handed down to be repeated by us with the approbation of the holy Church. The two holy Apostles, Saint Peter and Saint John, were for a time lost in admiration at what they saw and heard of their Queen; and in order to decide what to do, they sank on their knees, beseeching the Lord to make it known. Then they heard a voice saying: "Let not the sacred body be either uncovered or touched." Having thus been informed of the will of God, they brought a bier, and, the effulgence having diminished somewhat, they approached the couch and with their own hands reverently took hold of the tunic at the two ends. Thus, without changing its posture, they raised the sacred and virginal Treasure and placed it on the bier in the same position as it had occupied on the couch. They could easily do this, because they felt no more weight than that of the tunic. On this bier the former effulgence of the body moderated still more, and all of them, by disposition of the Lord and for the consolation of all those present, could now perceive and study the beauty of that virginal countenance and of her hands. As for the rest, the omnipotence of God protected this his heavenly dwelling, so that neither in life nor in death any one should behold any other part except what is common in ordinary conversation, namely, her most inspiring countenance, by which she had been known, and her hands, by which she had labored. So great was the care and solicitude for His most blessed Mother, that in this particular He used not so much precaution in regard to His own body, as that of the most pure Virgin. In her Immaculate Conception He made Her like to Himself; likewise at her birth, in as far as it did not take place in the common and natural manner of other men. He preserved her also from impure temptations and thoughts. But, as He was man and the Redeemer of the world through His Passion and Death, He permitted with His own body what He would not allow with hers, as that of a woman, and therefore He kept her virginal body entirely concealed; in fact, the

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most pure Lady during her life had herself asked that no one should be permitted to look upon it in death; which petition He fulfilled. Then the Apostles consulted further about her burial. Their decision becoming known among the multitudes of the faithful in Jerusalem, they brought many candles to be lighted at the bier, and it happened that all the lights burned through that day and the two following days without any of the candles being consumed or wasted in any shape or manner. In order that this and many other miracles wrought by the power of God on this occasion might become better known to the world, the Lord himself inspired all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be present at the burial of His most blessed Mother, so that there was scarcely any person in Jerusalem, even of the Jews or the gentiles, who were not attracted by the novelty of this spectacle. The Apostles took upon their shoulders the sacred body and the tabernacle of God and, as priests of the evangelical law, bore the Propitiatory of the divine oracles and blessings in orderly procession from the Cenacle in the city to the valley of Josaphat. This was the visible accompaniment of the dwellers of Jerusalem. But besides this there was another invisible multitude, that of the courtiers of heaven. It was composed of the thousand angels of the Queen, continuing their celestial songs, which were heard by the Apostles and disciples and many others, and which sweetly continued for three days. In addition to these many other spirits had descended from heaven, namely, many thousands or legions of angels with the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, among whom were Saint Joachim, Saint Anne, Saint Joseph, Saint Elisabeth and the Baptist and numerous other saints, who were sent by our Savior Jesus to assist at the exequies and burial of His most blessed Mother. In the midst of this celestial and earthly accompaniment, visible and invisible, the Apostles bore along the sacred body, and on the way happened great miracles, which would take much time to relate. In particular all the sick, of which there were many of the different kinds, were entirely cured. Many of the possessed were freed from the demons; for the evil spirits did not dare to wait until the sacred body came near the persons thus afflicted. Greater still were the miracles of conversions wrought among many Jews and gentiles, for on this occasion were opened up the treasures of divine mercy, so that many souls came to the knowledge of Christ our Savior and loudly confessed Him as the true God and Redeemer, demanding Baptism. Many days thereafter the Apostles and disciples labored hard in catechizing and baptising those who on that day had been converted to the holy faith. The Apostles, in carrying the sacred body, felt wonderful effects of divine light and consolation, in which the disciples shared according to their measure. All the multitudes of the people were seized with astonishment at the fragrance diffused about, the sweet music and the other prodigies. They proclaimed God great and powerful in this Creature and in testimony of their acknowledgment, they struck their breasts in sorrow and compunction. When the procession came to the holy sepulcher in the valley of Josaphat, the same two Apostles, Saint Peter and Saint John, who had laid the celestial Treasure from the couch onto the bier, with joyful reverence placed it in the sepulcher and covered it with a linen cloth, the hands of the angels performing more

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of these last rites than the hands of the Apostles. They closed up the sepulcher with a large stone, according to custom at other burials. The celestial courtiers returned to heaven, while the thousand angels of the Queen continued their watch, guarding the sacred body and keeping up the music as at her burial. The concourse of the people lessened and the holy Apostles and disciples, dissolved in tender tears, returned to the Cenacle. During a whole year the exquisite fragrance exhaled by the body of the Queen was noticeable throughout the Cenacle, and in her oratory, for many years. This sanctuary remained a place of refuge for all those that were burdened with labor and difficulties; all found miraculous assistance, as well in sickness as in hardships and necessities of other kind. After these miracles had continued for some years in Jerusalem, the sins of Jerusalem and of its inhabitants drew upon this city, among other punishments, that of being deprived of this inestimable blessing. [NB: We note that the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. would have occurred about fifteen years later.] *Having again gathered in the Cenacle, the Apostles came to the conclusion that some of them and of the disciples should watch at the sepulcher of their Queen as long as they should hear the celestial music, for all of them were wondering when the end of that miracle should be. Accordingly, some of them attended to the affairs of the Church in catechizing and baptizing the new converts; and others immediately returned to the sepulcher, while all of them paid frequent visits to it during the next three days. Saint Peter and Saint John, however, were more zealous in their attendance, coming only a few times to the Cenacle and immediately returning to where was laid the treasure of their heart. Nor were the irrational creatures missing at the exequies of the Mistress of the universe; for as the sacred body arrived near the grave, innumerable large and small birds gathered in the air, and many animals and wild beasts rushed from the mountains toward the sepulcher, the ones singing sorrowfully the others emitting groans and doleful sounds and all of them showing grief in their movements as if mourning over the common loss. Only a few unbelieving Jews, more hardened than the rocks and more impious than the wild beasts failed to show sorrow at the death of their Restoratrix, as they had failed to do also at the death of their Redeemer and Master.*

Of the glory and felicity of the saints in the beatific vision Saint Paul says with Isaias (I Cor. 2, 9; Is. 64, 4), that neither have mortal eyes seen, nor ears heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him and who hope in Him. In accordance with this Catholic truth, we should not wonder at what is related of Saint Augustine, the great light of the Church, that, in setting out to write a book on the glory of the blessed, he was visited by his friend, Saint Jerome, who had just died and entered into the glory of the Lord, and was admonished by his visitor, that he would not be able to compass his design; since no tongue or pen of man could describe the least part of the blessings enjoyed by the saints in the beatific vision. Such is the testimony of Saint Jerome; and if through holy Scriptures we had no other information than that this glory is eternal, it

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would be beyond all our comprehension. For, however much of our intellect may expand, it will never comprehend eternity; and as this is infinite and boundless, it is inexhaustible and incomprehensible, how much so ever it may be known and loved. Just as God, the Infinite and the Almighty, created all things, without being thereby exhausted, and even if He had created endless worlds ever anew, would remain still infinite and immutable; so also, although seen and enjoyed by countless saints, He will remain an infinite source of new knowledge and love; for in creation and in glory all creatures participate in Him only to a limited extent, each according to its condition, while He in Himself is without limitation or end. If, on this account, the glory even of the least of the saints is ineffable, what shall we say of the glory of the most blessed Mary, since among the saints she is the most holy and she by herself is more like to her Son than all the saints together, and since her grace and glory exceed those of all the rest, as those of an empress or sovereign over her vassals? This truth can and should be believed; but in mortal life it cannot be understood, or the least part of it be explained; for the inadequacy and deficiency of our words and expressions rather tend to obscure than to set forth its greatness. Let us in this life apply our labor, not in seeking to comprehend it, but in seeking to merit its manifestation in glory, where we shall experience more or less of this happiness according to our works. Our Redeemer Jesus entered heaven conducting the purest soul of His Mother at His right hand. She alone of all the mortals deserved exemption from particular judgment; hence for her there was none; no account was asked or demanded of her for what she had received; for such was the promise that had been given to her, when she was exempted from the common guilt and chosen as the Queen privileged above the laws of the children of Adam. For the same reason, instead of being judged with the rest, she shall be seated at the right hand of the Judge to judge with Him all the creatures. If in the first instant of her Conception she was the brightest Aurora, effulgent with the rays of the sun of the Divinity beyond all the brightness of the most exalted seraphim, and if afterwards she was still further illumined by the contact of the Hypostatic Word, Who derived His humanity from her purest substance, it necessarily follows that she should be His Companion for all eternity, possessing such a likeness to Him, that none greater can be possible between a God-man and a creature. In this light, the Redeemer Himself presented her before the throne of the Divinity; and speaking to the eternal Father in the presence of all the blessed, who were ravished at this wonder, the most sacred humanity uttered these words: "Eternal Father, My most beloved Mother, Thy beloved Daughter and the cherished Spouse of the Holy Ghost, now comes to take possession of the crown and glory, which We have prepared as a reward for her merit. She is the one who was born as the rose among thorns, untouched, pure and beautiful, worthy of being embraced by Us and of being placed upon a throne to which none of Our creatures can ever attain, and to which those conceived in sin cannot aspire. This is Our chosen and Our only One, distinguished above all else, to whom We communicated Our grace and Our perfections beyond the measure accorded to other creatures; in whom We have deposited

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the treasure of Our incomprehensible Divinity and its gifts; who most faithfully preserved and made fruitful the talents, which We gave her; who never swerved from Our will, and who found grace and pleasure in Our eyes. My Father, most equitous is the tribunal of Our justice and mercy, and in it the services of Our friends are, repaid in the most superabundant manner. It is right that to My Mother be given the reward of a Mother; and if during her whole life and in all her works she was as like to Me as is possible for a creature to be, let her also be as like to Me in glory and on the throne of Our Majesty, so that where holiness is in essence, there it may also be found in its highest participation." This decree of the Incarnate Word was approved by the Father and the Holy Ghost. The most holy soul of Mary was immediately raised to the right hand of her Son and true God, and placed on the royal throne of the most holy Trinity, which neither men, nor angels nor the seraphim themselves attain, and will not attain for all eternity. This is the most exalted and super-eminent privilege of our Queen and Lady, that she is seated on the throne with the three divine Persons and holds her place as Empress, while all the rest are set as servants and ministers to the highest King. To the eminence and majesty of that position, inaccessible to all other creatures, correspond her gifts of glory, comprehension, vision and fruition; because she enjoys, above all and more than all, that infinite Object, which the other blessed enjoy in an endless variety of degrees. She knows, penetrates and understands much deeper the eternal Being and its infinite attributes; She lovingly delights in its mysteries and most hidden secrets, more than all the rest of the blessed. Although between the glory of the divine Persons and that of the most holy Mary there is an infinite distance; for the light of the Divinity, as says the Apostle (I Tim. 6, 16), is inaccessible and in it alone dwells immortality and glory by essence; and though also the most holy soul of Christ without measure exceeds in its gifts those of His Mother; yet the great Queen surpasses inaccessibly all the saints in glory and has a likeness to that of Christ, which cannot be understood in this life, nor ever described. Just as little can be explained the extra joy, which the blessed experienced on that day in singing the new songs of praise to the Omnipotent and in celebrating the glory of His Daughter, Mother and Spouse; for in Her He had exalted all the works of his right hand. Although to the Lord himself could come no new or essential glory, because He possessed and possesses it immutably infinite through all eternity; yet the exterior manifestations of his pleasure and satisfaction at the fulfillment of his eternal decrees were greater on that day, and from the throne a voice, as if of the eternal Father resounded, saying: "In the glory of Our beloved and most loving Daughter, all the pleasure of Our holy will is fulfilled to our entire satisfaction. To all the creatures We have given existence, creating them out of nothing, in order that they may participate in Our infinite goods and treasures according to the inclination and pleasure of Our immense bounty. The very ones who were made capable of Our grace and glory, have abused this blessing. Our cherished Daughter alone had no part in the disobedience and prevarication of the rest, and she has earned what the unworthy children of perdition have despised; and

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Our Heart has not been disappointed in her at any time or moment. To her belong the rewards, which according to Our conditional decree We had prepared for the disobedient angels and for their followers among men, if they had been faithful to their grace and vocation. She has recompensed Us for their falling away by her subjection and obedience; she has pleased Us in all her operations and has merited a seat on the throne of Our Majesty."

On the third day after the most pure soul of Mary had taken possession of this glory never to leave it, the Lord manifested to the saints His divine will, that she should return to the world, resuscitate her sacred body and unite herself with it, so that she might in body and soul be again raised to the right hand of her Divine Son without waiting for the general resurrection of the dead. The appropriateness of this favor, its accordance with the others received by the most blessed Queen and with her super-eminent dignity, the saints could not but see; since even to mortals it is so credible, that even if the Church had not certified it, we would judge those impious and foolish, who would dare deny it. But the blessed saw it with greater clearness, together with the determined time and hour as manifested to them in God Himself. When the time for this wonder had arrived, Christ our Savior Himself descended from heaven bringing with Him at His right hand the soul of His most blessed Mother and accompanied by many legions of the Angels, the Patriarchs and ancient Prophets. They came to the sepulcher in the valley of Josaphat, and all being gathered in sight of the virginal temple, the Lord spoke the following words to the saints. "My Mother was conceived without stain of sin, in order that from her virginal substance I might stainlessly clothe Myself in the humanity in which I came to the world and redeemed it from sin. My flesh is her flesh; she co-operated with Me in the works of the Redemption; hence I must raise her, just as I rose from the dead, and this shall be at the same time and hour. For I wish to make her like Me in all things." All the ancient saints of the human race then gave thanks for this new favor in songs of praise and glory to the Lord. Those that especially distinguished themselves in their thanks giving were our first parents Adam and Eve, Saint Anne, Saint Joachim and Saint Joseph, as being the more close partakers in this miracle of His Omnipotence. Then the purest soul of the Queen, at the command of the Lord, entered the virginal body, re-animated it and raised it up, giving it a new life of immortality and glory and communicating to it the four gifts of clearness, impassibility, agility and subtlety, corresponding to those of the soul and overflowing from it into the body. Endowed with these gifts, the most blessed Mary issued from the tomb in body and soul, without raising the stone cover and without disturbing the position of the tunic and the mantle that had enveloped her sacred body. Since it is impossible to describe her beauty and refulgent glory, I will not make the attempt. It is sufficient to say, that just as the heavenly Mother had given to her Divine Son in her womb the form of man, pure, unstained and sinless, for the Redemption of the world, so in return the Lord, in this resurrection and new regeneration,

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gave to her a glory and beauty similar to His own. In this mysterious and divine interchange, each one did what was possible: most holy Mary engendered Christ, assimilating Him as much as possible to herself, and Christ resuscitated her, communicating to her of His glory as far as she was capable as a creature. Then, from the sepulcher was started a most solemn procession, moving with celestial music through the regions of the air and toward the empyrean heaven. This happened in the hour immediately after midnight, in which also the Lord had risen from the grave; and therefore not all of the Apostles were witness of this prodigy, but only some of them, who were present and watching at the sepulcher. The saints and angels entered heaven in the order in which they had started; and in the last place came Christ our Savior and at His right hand the Queen, clothed in the gold of variety (as David says Ps. 44, 10), and so beautiful that she was the admiration of the heavenly court. All of them turned toward her to look upon her and bless her with new jubilee and songs of praise. Thus were heard those mysterious eulogies recorded by Solomon: Come, daughters of Sion, to see your Queen, who is praised by the morning stars and celebrated by the sons of the Most High. Who is she that comes from the desert, like a column of all the aromatic perfumes? Who is She, that rises like the aurora, more beautiful than the moon, elect as the sun, terrible as many serried armies? Who is she that comes up from the desert resting upon her Beloved and spreading forth abundant delights? (Cant. 3, 6-9; 8, 5). Who is she in whom the Deity itself finds so much pleasure and delight above all other creatures and whom He exalts above them all in the heavens! O novelty worthy of the infinite Wisdom! O prodigy of His Omnipotence, which so magnifies and exalts her! Amid this glory the most blessed Mary arrived body and soul at the throne of the most blessed Trinity. And the three divine Persons received Her on it with an embrace eternally undissoluble. The eternal Father said to her: "Ascend higher, My Daughter and My Dove." The Incarnate Word spoke: "My Mother, of whom I have received human being and full return of My work in thy perfect imitation, receive now from My hand the reward thou hast merited." The Holy Ghost said: "My most beloved Spouse, enter into the eternal joy, which corresponds to the most faithful love; do Thou now enjoy thy love without solicitude; for past is the winter of suffering, for Thou hast arrived at Our eternal embraces." There the most blessed Mary was absorbed in the contemplation of the three divine Persons and as it were overwhelmed in the boundless ocean and abyss of the Divinity, while the saints were filled with wonder and new accidental delight. Since, at the occasion of this work of the Omnipotent happened other wonders, I shall speak of them as far as possible in the following chapter.

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