

Blessed is Her Name

The History and Divine Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary

by

Barbara Oleynick

Copyright © 2025 Barbara Oleynick
All rights reserved.
Printed in The United States.

DEDICATION

To the Mother of All and to all those who know that in the end
Her Immaculate Heart will triumph.

Table Of Contents

Preface.....	7
Chapter One.....	9
The Immaculate Conception.....	9
Chapter Two.....	14
The Bowels Of Hell.....	14
Chapter Three.....	17
The Birth Of Mary.....	17
Chapter Four.....	22
The Teaching Of Mary.....	22
Chapter Five.....	25
The Temple.....	25
Chapter Six.....	31
The Death Of Joachim.....	31
Chapter Seven.....	34
The Depths Of Hell.....	34
Chapter Eight.....	39
The Death Of Ann.....	39
Chapter Nine.....	41
Mary Comes Of Age.....	41
Chapter Ten.....	43
Betrothal Of Mary And Joseph.....	43
Chapter Eleven.....	45
The Instants Of Creation.....	45
Chapter Twelve.....	48
Blessed Are You Among Women.....	48

Chapter Thirteen.....	52
Revelation To Joseph	52
Chapter Fourteen	57
The Journey To Bethlehem.....	57
Chapter Fifteen.....	64
The Birth Of Christ	64
Chapter Sixteen Presentation.....	68
Chapter Seventeen.....	73
Journey To Egypt	73
Chapter Eighteen The Boy Jesus.....	82
Chapter Nineteen	87
The Return To Nazareth	87
Chapter Twenty Preaching At The Temple	91
Chapter Twenty-One.....	97
Jesus From Teen To Man.....	97
Chapter Twenty-Two	100
The Death Of Joseph.....	100
Chapter Twenty-Three	104
His Public Life Draws Near	104
Chapter Twenty-Four	107
A Mother’s Sacrifice	107
Chapter Twenty-Five Baptism Of Jesus	111
Chapter Twenty-Six- The Temptation of Jesus	113
Chapter Twenty-Seven Disciples Of Christ	116
Chapter Twenty-Eight	117
Chapter Twenty-Nine Growing Ministry	121
Chapter Thirty The Transfiguration.....	123
Chapter Thirty-One The Last Supper.....	124
Chapter Thirty- Two Mary’s Sorrow.....	128
Chapter Thirty-Three The Road To Calvary	130

Chapter Thirty-Four The Resurrection.....	133
Chapter Thirty-Five.....	135
The Ascension Of Christ.....	135
Chapter Thirty-Six The Pentecost.....	137
Chapter Thirty-Seven	139
The Battle Of Good And Evil.....	139
Chapter Thirty-Eight	143
The Apostles Creed.....	143
Chapter Thirty-Nine The Death Of James	146
Chapter Forty Freeing Of Peter	148
Chapter Forty-One The Gospels.....	152
Chapter Forty-Two	155
The Death Of Our Beloved	155
Chapter Forty-Three The Ascension Of Mary.....	160
Notes From The Author.....	164

PREFACE

Blessed is Her Name is a prose adaptation of an “inspired” screenplay written by Barbara Oleynick in 2000. It is based on the spiritual writings of Mary of Jesus of Ágreda, a devout Franciscan nun from Agreda, Spain, commonly known as Maria de Ágreda (1602–1665). Born into a family dedicated to God, her mother and she entered the convent of The Immaculate Conception in January 1619 while her father and two brothers became Franciscan friars - she was unexpectedly made Abbess at twenty-five by papal dispensation. Dying with a reputation for sanctity, her cause for canonization was introduced just seven years later, on June 21, 1672, by the Congregation of Rites at the Court of Spain.

Her lasting prominence stems not merely from her holy life but from her work “The Mystical City of God”. Conceived in 1627, nine years after joining the convent, it was initiated at her confessor’s command, and the first 400 pages were produced in only twenty days. Although she initially sought to suppress its publication, a copy was sent to Philip IV - who had long expressed interest in it. Later, following another confessor’s instruction, she burned all her writings, only to restart the work in 1655 and complete it by 1660; it was printed posthumously in Madrid in 1670.

Claiming to record divine revelations, The Mystical City of God details the mysteries of the Divine Life and Death of the Virgin Mary, celebrated as Mother of Humanity and Queen of Heaven. Originally a 4000-page Spanish text divided into four volumes, it was later translated into German in 1885 by the Redemptorist Fathers. Inspired by the German edition, Chicago priest Father George J. Blatter learned Spanish to produce an English translation, first published in 1912.

In September of 1999, Barbara began work-shopping her thesis from NYU, a musical called The Miracle of Fatima.

While visiting a local Catholic bookstore she experienced a serendipitous encounter when The Mystical City of God literally fell off a bookstore shelf onto her foot. Struck by the work, she read it throughout the year, often rereading chapters of the 1000-page tome.

She began writing a screenplay, something she had never done before on December 8, 2000, and finishing on December 25th. This new narrative adaptation of that screenplay brings the history and divine life of the Virgin Mother of God to a wider audience. For the time has come for Her to Triumph!

CHAPTER ONE

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In the year 25 B.C. the village of Nazareth hummed with energy, its narrow streets teeming energy with merchants calling out their wares and children weaving through the crowds in playful bursts of laughter. The rhythmic clang of a blacksmith's hammer echoed against stone walls, mingling with the chatter of vendors haggling over prices. The air was rich with the scent of warm, freshly baked bread, mingled with the earthy aroma of spices, cinnamon, cumin, and cardamom, spilling from woven baskets. Sunlight glinted off clay rooftops, and the distant bleating of goats blended into the symphony of daily life, painting a scene of a town alive with purpose and tradition.

A group of women clothed in long, flowing linen tunics of deep blues, muted reds and earthy natural creams clustered in the village square, their voices weaving together in a lively chorus of laughter and conversation. They encircled two younger women, both heavy with child, their hands brushing gently over rounded bellies as they murmured blessings and shared knowing smiles. The air crackled with excitement, the warmth of sisterhood wrapping around them like a comforting shawl. Sunlight danced on their faces, highlighting eyes gleaming with anticipation, while the rhythmic swish of woven skirts and the faint scent of lavender and baked figs carried through the breeze, marking the moment as one of joy, hope, and the promise of new life.

An older couple moved deliberately through the bustling crowd, their presence steady yet subdued. Joachim, his frame still strong despite the weight of years, carried himself with quiet dignity, his weathered hands clasped behind his back as he matched his wife's careful steps.

Beside him, Anne walked with a grace dulled by sorrow, her lined face shadowed by an ache too deep for words. Her eyes, once bright with youth, now held a distant, wistful gaze, reflecting burdens carried in silence. The folds of her earth-toned cloak fluttered slightly with each step, the fabric worn yet dignified, much like the woman herself.

As they approached the group of women, Joachim noticed the way Anne's gaze lingered on the pregnant women, her hand instinctively moving to rest on her own barren stomach. He leaned close, his voice a gentle murmur. *"Anne... don't."*

Anne forced a smile, though her eyes betrayed her pain. *"Joachim, I am fine. Come, let us wish them well. They are soon to receive such wonderful gifts from God. How blessed are they!"*

They approached the group, and the women's laughter faltered, their eyes darting uncomfortably to Anne. She greeted them with a warm smile, though her heart ached her words were sincere.

"You are due soon, Rachel, and you as well, Susanna. What do you think, another boy for each this time? Shall I pray for daughters for you?"

One of the women, her tone sharp and unkind, replied, *"You should pray for yourself, Anne."*

The group erupted into laughter, their voices cutting through the air like a knife. Another woman, emboldened by the first's cruelty, turned to Joachim.

"Joachim, I have a lovely younger sister. She is ready and quite ripe for giving you the child you need. Our law says you may take a new wife if the old becomes like a withered piece of land."

Joachim's jaw tightened, but he said nothing. Instead, he gently guided Anne away from the group, his heart breaking at the look of pain etched across her face.

The vibrant colors of the day gave way to the cool, silvery light of a full moon. The village of Nazareth lay quiet under the starlit sky, the stone homes casting long shadows in the moonlight until it came to rest on the humble dwelling of Joachim and Anne.

Kneeling in prayer, their heads bowed and hands clasped in quiet devotion. The room was hushed, save for the soft murmur of their voices rising like incense to the heavens. Joachim's voice, steady and reverent, broke the silence first. He began, his words heavy with both hope and longing.

“Almighty Father, we continue to pray for the coming of the Messiah. The One who will be the salvation of humanity. May His word be all that man knows and lives by. Your wrath is held back in times when it seems so needed, how great is Your love for Your children, Lord. Yet, they do not fear your might, nor do they honor the glory of Your greatness.”

Anne's voice joined his, softer but no less fervent, her words trembling with the weight of years of unanswered prayers. *“Most Holy Father, Lord of all, I continue in my prayer to bear a child so that we might honor the laws of our faith. This child we would dedicate to You. We pray this be Thy will and that it be done.”*

Their prayers lingered in the air, a sacred offering of faith and surrender, as the flickering light of a single oil lamp cast their shadows against the walls. Their prayers would be answered in ways neither could have imagined.

Ten years have passed since Joachim and Anne first began their fervent prayers for a child. The seasons had turned, and now the village lay blanketed in the quiet stillness of winter. The landscape, once vibrant with summer's warmth, was now stark and cold, the trees bare and the earth hardened by frost.

Inside their humble home, the years had etched their marks upon Joachim and Anne. Their faces bore the lines of time, their hair streaked with silver, yet their faith remained unshaken.

Once again, they knelt in prayer, their voices rising in unison, a testament to their enduring devotion. But this time, as they prayed, a sudden and radiant light filled the room, engulfing them in its brilliance. Before them appeared a young and strikingly handsome man, his presence both ethereal and tangible. It was the angel Gabriel, his form glowing with divine light, his voice gentle yet commanding.

“I am Gabriel, sent by the Holy Trinity with this message - you, Joachim and Anne, who have shown yourselves to be devout servants, who in continuous prayer for the redemption of humanity and the coming of the Messiah, have come to Our presence and have been heard in Our clemency. So too has been heard your prayer for a child. Our promise to you, by the favor of Our right hand, is that you will receive the Fruit of Benediction.

Anne, although sterile, shall miraculously conceive a daughter, to whom We give the name of Mary. She will be blessed among women. All nations shall know her as The Blessed. For love has softened the heart of the Almighty and has hastened His mercies toward man. This daughter shall be wonderful in all her doings and in all her life. From her childhood, let her be consecrated to God, as you have promised. She shall be elect, exalted, powerful, and full of the Holy Spirit. For the Conception of the Child, all heaven and earth shall rejoice.”

The light around Anne grew even brighter, and Gabriel turned to her, speaking privately. *“We will create in you a perfect work, which is the object of Our Omnipotence, and a pattern of the perfection intended for Our children, and the finishing crown of creation. In Her, who shall be free of sin, we deposit all the graces and good given and then lost by the first man. You alone will know that Mary shall be the portal of life and salvation for the sons of Adam.”*

With that, the angel Gabriel disappeared, and the light surrounding the couple faded, leaving them in stunned silence.

Winter gave way to the gentle warmth of late summer. Anne, now visibly with child, worked in her garden, her hands tending to the plants with care. Above her, a fleeting whiteness lingered in the air, an indistinct yet palpable presence. Anne hummed softly with a face radiant with joy. A neighbor passing by paused to greet her.

“It won’t be long now, will it, Anne?” the woman asked, her tone curious and warm.

Anne smiled, resting a hand on her rounded belly. *“The end of summer is still two months away.”*

“And what do you think? A boy? A girl?”

Anne laughed softly with eyes sparkling. *“A miracle at my age!”*

The two women shared a laugh, their voices carrying on the breeze.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOWELS OF HELL

Deep beneath the earth, the bowels of hell seethed with an unrelenting, insatiable fury. Flames roared like living beasts, their tongues of fire licking at the jagged, blackened rock, casting wild, flickering shadows that danced like tormented souls. The very ground pulsed with heat, cracked and molten, oozing with rivers of liquid fire that carved a path through the abyss. The air was thick with the acrid stench of sulfur and the echoes of anguished wails, their sorrow woven into the very fabric of the infernal expanse. Darkness loomed in the spaces between the flames, not the absence of light, but a consuming, suffocating void, pressing against the damned like an unseen hand. It was a place of endless torment, where time lost meaning and despair clung to the air like a choking fog, wrapping itself around all who dared to fall into its grasp.

Lucifer, his form towering and menacing, paced back and forth, his movements agitated. Suddenly, he threw his head back and let out a gut-wrenching roar, his voice echoing through the abyss. He spread his hand open, peering into it, and the image of Anne and her neighbor laughing appeared. He saw Anne place her hand on her pregnant belly, her joy unmistakable.

Lucifer's hand clenched into a fist, and he let out a guttural moan, his rage palpable.

Later, inside her home, Anne sat by the window, her fingers deftly stitching a delicate baby garment. The golden afternoon light spilled through the wooden shutters, casting warm, dappled patterns across the earthen floor. A gentle breeze stirred the fabric in her lap, carrying the faint scent of rosemary and freshly baked bread. The quiet hum of village life drifted in from outside, distant voices, the occasional bleat.

of a goat, but within these walls, all was calm, a sanctuary of quiet devotion.

Then, without warning, the air shifted. The warmth drained from the room, replaced by an unnatural chill that prickled against her skin. The soft light dimmed as if the very sun recoiled. A weight settled over her chest, thick and suffocating. The flickering oil lamp trembled, its flame shrinking, as a darkness, richer than shadow, pooled in the farthest corner.

And then, he was there.

Lucifer emerged, his presence warping the space around him, a figure of terrible beauty and consuming dread. His eyes, like smoldering embers, bore into her, and though his face was carved with the perfection of an angel, it was marred by something deeper, an ancient rage, a sorrow twisted into something cruel. The very air around him pulsed with an unseen force, pressing against her, threatening to suffocate the peace that had moments before filled the room. Anne's needle slipped from her fingers, forgotten, as she stared into the face of darkness itself.

His appearance was more man-like than beast, though his presence was no less terrifying. He began to berate her, his voice dripping with malice.

“Look at you, such an old, withered woman with child. And Joachim is even older than you are. It's not his, is it? You adulteress. You please me. You, who pray to God with such piety, carry your sin in your belly.”

Anne fell to her knees, weeping, her hands instinctively covering her belly to protect her unborn child. Before Lucifer could unleash a single word, a sudden radiance shattered the oppressive gloom. In an instant, two celestial beings descended, their presence illuminating the room with a brilliance that defied the very darkness seeping from the fallen angel's form.

One angel swept down with breathtaking swiftness, its massive wings unfurling like a shield of pure light, enveloping Anne in a barrier of divine protection.

The air around her, once thick with dread, now hummed with an unearthly warmth, a soothing strength that pushed back the suffocating grip of evil.

The second angel stood firm, towering before Lucifer with a presence that radiated unwavering authority. Its eyes burned with the fire of heaven itself, its robes gleaming like molten gold. Without hesitation, the angel's voice rang out, rich and commanding, each word thrumming with the power of the Almighty.

"You will not enter this house again," the angel declared, its voice shaking the very air. *"Do you not see that Anne is guarded by us, servants of the Lord. Depart, for you have no claim here!"*

The very walls of the home seemed to vibrate with the weight of the pronouncement. The darkness recoiled, hissing like a wounded serpent, and Lucifer's once-imposing form wavered, his fury met with an immovable force.

Lucifer's eyes narrowed, his voice laced with venom. *"Why does He guard such a wretched woman who carries a bastard child? He scrapes the bottom of the barrel for believers."*

The angel's voice was firm. *"Leave and know that Anne is never alone."*

Lucifer's form began to dissipate, but his voice lingered, a chilling echo. *"And I am watching. I am always watching."*

As his presence vanished, his voice spiraled into the abyss, a haunting reminder of his relentless malice. *"Why does the likes of such disturb me so? I will end her life if need be. Whatever it takes to return to a state of peace."*

CHAPTER THREE

THE BIRTH OF MARY

Two months later, the village of Nazareth lay bathed in the soft glow of a full moon, its light casting long shadows across the landscape. The night was still, the air crisp with the promise of dawn. On a hillside overlooking the village, Joachim knelt in prayer, his silhouette stark against the moonlit sky. His hands clasped, his head bowed as he quietly expressed his gratitude and requests.

The moon's gentle beam filtered into a room of his small stone house where Anne lay in the throes of labor. Yet, unlike the usual cries and struggles of childbirth, the room was filled with an otherworldly calm. Anne sat upright, her face serene, as if untouched by the pains of labor. Midwives moved about the room, their expressions a mix of awe and confusion.

"Anne," one midwife murmured, her voice tinged with wonder, *"I have never seen such a thing. Not one pain. Strange, is it not, Sister?"*

The second midwife chuckled softly, though her eyes betrayed her amazement. *"Perhaps it is her age. If I had known it would be so easy, I would have waited myself. Look, the child is coming forth."*

Anne, calm and composed, reached out as the midwife gently placed the newborn in her arms. The newborn girl was swaddled in the soft linen prepared for her arrival, her delicate form cradled with the utmost care. Yet, as she lay nestled in her mother's arms, something beyond the ordinary unfolded, her skin seemed to glow with a light not of this world, a gentle, celestial radiance that only Anne and the angels could perceive. It shimmered like the first blush of dawn, subtle yet undeniable, a quiet declaration of the divine touch upon her life.

The midwives, oblivious to the heavenly glow but sensing something extraordinary, exchanged wide-eyed glances. Their hands, so accustomed to the tremors of new life, trembled slightly as they beheld the child in silent awe.

At last, the first midwife found her voice, though it was barely more than a whisper. “*A girl!*” she breathed, wonder lacing her tone. “*Anne, you have a daughter. Look at her, exquisite, flawless. So perfect.*”

The second midwife nodded, her fingers gently tracing the infant’s soft cheek. A hushed reverence settled over the room, the air thick with something unspoken yet deeply felt. Neither woman knew that heaven itself had leaned in, to attend the birth of the infant that was destined to carry the salvation of humanity.

Anne cradled the child close, her heart swelling with a love that transcended words. The room seemed to glow with a gentle light emanating from the baby’s heart, a divine presence that filled the space with warmth and peace. The second midwife smiled, her tone light but filled with admiration. “*Well, it seems you do not need the likes of us. You managed quite well, Anne, much better than I imagined. Come, sister, let’s leave the new mother with her child. God has blessed you, finally. Good night, Anne.*”

As the midwives opened the door to leave, the first hints of dawn painted the sky in vibrant hues of pink and gold. The second midwife laughed softly. “*You mean good morning. Let us share the good news with Joachim!*”

The door closed behind them, and the room was once again bathed in the soft light of the rising sun. Anne sat alone with her newborn daughter, the rays of sunlight streaming through the slats of the window and illuminating the child’s tiny form. Anne gently examined her baby, touching her delicate fingers and toes, marveling at the miracle she held in her arms. The light radiating from the child’s heart seemed to grow brighter, filling the room with a sacred glow.

Overwhelmed with emotion, Anne gathered the child close and fell to her knees, her voice trembling with gratitude and awe. *“Lord, Creator of all life and most powerful, in Your infinite wisdom, You have given me this child. Thank You. But now I must ask, how am I to care for the one whom You alone have deemed to carry the Eternal Word? How shall I handle the One who will be the Mother of Your Son?”*

A voice, gentle yet filled with authority, filled the room. *“You shall care outwardly for her as a mother cares for her child, without any demonstration of reverence, but retain this reverence internally.”*

Suddenly, the room was awash in a brilliance beyond earthly comprehension. A host of angels appeared, their radiant forms shimmering like fire and pearl, filling every corner of the humble chamber with divine light. Their robes cascaded like liquid gold, their wings unfurling in luminous splendor, stirring the air with a whisper of celestial grace.

Then, as if the very heavens had drawn near, a melody rose, a hymn so pure, so achingly beautiful, that the very walls seemed to hum with its resonance. Angelic voices wove together in perfect harmony, a song of praise that trembled with joy and reverence for the newborn child, Mary. It was a sound not meant for mortal ears alone, but for the realms beyond, a proclamation to the heavens that the one chosen by God had entered the world.

Anne, cradling her daughter, felt the music wrap around her like warm light, her heart swelling with awe. The air shimmered as if the fabric between heaven and earth had grown thin, and in that sacred moment, she knew her child was blessed, set apart for a destiny beyond imagination.

The light emanating from the baby’s heart grew brighter, becoming a conduit through which God’s words were conveyed directly to the child, who understood all that was being spoken.

God’s voice resonated, *“My beloved, on earth, the Word shall have you as His Mother, without a father, as in heaven He has a Father without a mother.”*

The time has arrived by Our providence for bringing to life the light, the creature in human form, freed from sin, which is to crush the head of the serpent. The hour is at hand, so blessed for mortals, in whom the treasures of Our divinity are to be opened, and the gates of heaven unlocked. Let now the human race ready itself, for they are soon to receive the Teacher, the Brother, and the Friend, for He will be the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world.”

Then, turning to Gabriel, God commanded, “*Go to the caverns of limbo. Tell Enoch, Elias, the holy fathers, and the just, who have been waiting there for thousands of centuries, that the redemption of humanity is soon at hand.”*

The birth of Mary, the Mother of God, occurred on September 8, 14 B.C. It was the moment, which set the plan for the salvation of man.

With that, Gabriel vanished, his radiant form dissolving into the unseen, like a star fading into the vast expanse of dawn. The room, though quiet once more, still pulsed with the lingering warmth of his presence. Anne, now alone with her newborn daughter, gazed down at Mary, her heart swelling with an indescribable mix of love, wonder, and reverence.

Yet, she was not truly alone.

The remaining angels remained close, their ethereal glow casting a soft luminescence across the chamber. Though they did not speak, their presence was a silent proclamation, a vow of protection that would stretch beyond this moment, beyond this night, beyond time itself. They stood as unseen sentinels, guardians of the child whose name would one day echo through the ages. A gentle breeze stirred through the room, carrying with it a sense of peace, a quiet assurance that Mary would never walk unguarded.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE TEACHING OF MARY

Inside the humble home of Joachim and Anne, the atmosphere was filled with warmth and love. The couple, now parents to the newborn Mary, doted on their child with tender affection. Joachim, unaware of his daughter's divine destiny, held her in his arms like any loving father would. Mary, though gifted with the power of intellect and speech from birth, revealed none of this to her parents. Instead, she responded to their love with smiles and gentle touches, her tiny hands reaching for Joachim's face or clasping his fingers.

In the quiet of the night, while her parents slept, Mary would kneel in prayer, her lips moving silently as she communed with the divine. As she grew older and began to walk, she would take the hands of her mother and father, guiding them with quiet wisdom far beyond her years. She would release their hands only to extend her tiny fingers toward a butterfly, which would alight upon her, its delicate wings brushing her cheek.

When Anne guided little Mary through the winding streets of the village, the child, who was scarcely three years old, would often pause at the sight of someone in need. With a quiet determination that belied her tender age, Mary would gently slip off her soft shawl and carefully drape it over the shoulders of a frail, sickly figure huddled on the cold ground. Her tiny hands moved with a deliberate kindness, as if she understood the weight of her small gesture. At mealtimes, Mary would sit with her modest portion of food, her wide, innocent eyes glancing around at those who had nothing. Without hesitation, she would divide her meal, taking only the smallest bites for herself and offering the rest to the hungry souls who crossed her path. Her selfless acts, so pure and unassuming, left an indelible mark on the hearts of those who witnessed them.

When giving alms to the poor, she would kiss their hands and, when possible, their feet, praying fervently for their souls. “*Lord God,*” she would whisper, “*have mercy and favor on those in need.*”

On more than one occasion, Anne would find her small child kneeling in prayer, her hands clasped tightly, her face lifted to the heavens. Mary’s prayers were filled with humility and devotion. “*God most high,*” she would say, “*I cannot praise Thee with the worthiness due. I am not even a glimmer in Thy glory and magnificence. I am to serve Thee well, my Lord, and I know that soon the time for me to leave this home will come. I am most ready and impatient to enter Thy house and service. I ask Thee to inspire the hearts of my parents to fulfill Thy holy will, so that I may begin the task given by Thee to me.*”

At the same time, Anne was given a vision. She saw herself back at the moment of Mary’s conception, kneeling as the angel Gabriel delivered God’s message. Then, she saw herself bringing her child to the Temple, where Mary would live and be taught by holy men and women. Joachim, too, received the same vision. Together, they understood what must be done.

The vision became reality. Joachim and Anne walked through the streets of Jerusalem, Mary between them, her small hands clasped in theirs. As the Temple came into view, Mary released their hands and walked ahead, her steps steady and sure. They entered the large doorway and knelt, offering a devout and fervent prayer to the Lord. Joachim prayed, his voice heavy with sorrow,

“*Almighty Lord, with much grief, we do as You ask. We return this child to You. Our daughter, Your daughter.*”

Anne’s heart ached as she added her own silent prayer. “*She is Your child, my precious Lord, and she will carry forth the Word as You have destined. Such piety and profound humility, so apparent in this small being, I have never seen before. I return her to You and pray I have regarded her as You so instructed me.*”

Mary, too, prayed silently. *“Dearest Father, I feel both sadness and joy. For I leave two so dear and tender that my heart feels wounded. Yet it pounds with elation, for now I shall learn to serve You as You so deserve.”*

God’s voice filled the space, gentle yet commanding. *“Come, my beloved, come to My Temple, and seek what your heart so desires.”*

Fifteen steps led to the entrance of the temple. A rabbi came down to greet them, and took Mary’s hand, guiding her onto the first step. With his permission, Mary turned and knelt before Joachim and Anne. She took each of their hands, kissed them, and placed them on either side of her face, closing her eyes. Tears streamed from her parents’ eyes, but no words were spoken. Releasing them, Mary turned and walked up the remaining steps without assistance or looking back. The angels who had been with her since birth ascended the steps alongside her. The doors closed behind them all.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TEMPLE

Inside the Temple, the high priest Simeon led Mary to the prophetess Anne, one of her teachers, who had been enlightened by the Lord about Mary's divine providence. Simeon said to the woman.

“Sister Anne, I bring to you Mary, daughter of Joachim and Anne of Nazareth.”

Mary fell to her knees and kissed Anne's hand. *“I beg that I be taken under your holy guidance. I ask your blessings this day of my entrance into the house of God.”*

Anne smiled warmly. *“My daughter, thou shalt find in me a helpful mother. I will take care of thee and of thy education with all possible consideration. Come, I will show you where you will sleep and introduce you to the other young maidens who have come here also to learn.”*

They walked along a narrow hallway into a larger room where several young girls, ranging in age from five to thirteen, were gathered around tables reading scripture. They rose upon Anne and Mary's entrance. Mary went to each of them, taking their hands and kissing them. *“I ask you all, teach me what you know. Give me your blessings and allow me to serve you so that I might learn to be like you.”*

An older girl took Mary's hand and raised her to her feet. The others surrounded her, greeting her warmly.

Later that night, Mary was assisted by Anne in preparing for bed. After being tucked in and kissed on the forehead, Mary waited until Anne left before slipping out of bed. She lay prostrate on the ground, kissing the floor.

“Thank You, my Lord, for inviting and welcoming me into Your house. Thank You, earth, for supporting me and allowing me to stand in this holy place. For I am unworthy of treading and remaining upon it.”

She then turned to her angels. *“Celestial messengers of the Almighty, most faithful friends and companions, I beseech you with all the powers of my soul to remain with me in this holy Temple of my Lord. Remind me, as the teachers and guides of my actions, when I need correcting in my ways, so that I may fulfill in all things the perfect will of the Most High, give pleasure to the holy priests, and obey my teacher and my companions.”*

To the twelve angels of the Apocalypse, she added, *“And dear angel friends, if the Almighty permits you, go and comfort my holy parents in their time of sadness.”*

As the twelve angels departed to fulfill her request, Mary remained in heavenly conversation with the others. At the internal command of God, the angels prepared Mary’s soul for His presence.

Mary’s delicate frame suddenly began to glow, bathed in a radiant, otherworldly light that seemed to emanate from within. Her face, serene and luminous, reflected an indescribable ecstasy. Slowly, gracefully, she was lifted, body and soul, into the boundless expanse of the Empyrean Heaven, a realm of pure, celestial splendor. There, the Holy Trinity awaited her, their presence emanating an overwhelming sense of benevolence and joy. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit received her with infinite warmth, their divine approval shining like a thousand suns. As Mary stood in their midst, she was utterly transformed, her being suffused with a divine light that dissolved all earthly limitations. In that moment, she beheld the essence of divinity itself, not through a veil or a shadow, but intuitively, directly, face-to-face. The experience was beyond comprehension, a union so profound that it transcended time and space, leaving her forever changed, radiant, and eternally united with the source of all creation.

God spoke to her. *“My dove, My beloved One, I desire thee to see and understand the hidden gifts destined for the souls whom I have chosen as heirs. They who are to be rescued by the Lamb. Behold how liberal I am toward My creatures that know and love Me.*

My words are true, My promises faithful to those who follow Me, for they do not walk in darkness. I desire that you, as My chosen One, be an eyewitness of the treasures which I hold in reserve for raising up the humble, enriching the poor, exalting the downtrodden, and for rewarding all that mortals shall do and suffer for My name.”

Mary responded with profound humility. *“Most high, supreme, and eternal God, incomprehensible Thou art the Lord, infinite and eternal in essence and perfection. But what shall my littleness begin to do at the sight of Thy magnificence? I acknowledge myself unworthy to look upon Thy greatness, yet I am in great need of being regarded by it. In Thy presence, Lord, all creation is as nothing. Fulfill in me all Thy desire and Thy pleasure. And if trouble and persecutions are to be suffered, if humility and meekness are so precious in Thy eyes, do not deprive me of such rich treasures and pledge of love. But as for the rewards of these tribulations, give them to those more worthy. I ask, my Lord, for further favor, that I might make these four vows to You: the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and perpetual enclosure in the Temple that You have called me to.”*

With the acceptance of her vows, God adorned her with divine grace. Her senses were illuminated with effulgent light, filling them with beauty. The angels gathered around her, their celestial forms shimmering with an ethereal glow, as they began to adorn Mary with garments and jewels of unimaginable magnificence. They draped her in a mantle of exquisite splendor, its fabric woven from threads of light and grace, flowing like liquid radiance around her figure. Around her waist, they fastened a girdle adorned with varicolored stones, each gemstone glinting with the hues of a thousand rainbows, symbolizing the boundless diversity of divine creation. Gently, they placed a necklace around her neck, its delicate chain holding three luminous pearls, faith, hope, and charity, each one glowing with the purity of her soul.

Her hands, delicate yet strong, were graced with seven rings, each one a radiant emblem of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. The rings sparkled with an inner fire, as if alive with the very essence of divine grace. Finally, the angels crowned her with a diadem of inestimable beauty, its jewels casting a light so brilliant it seemed to outshine the stars themselves. As they placed it upon her head, their voices rose in a harmonious chorus, proclaiming her as the Spouse of God and Empress of Heaven. The air around her seemed to vibrate with the weight of this sacred moment, as all of creation bore witness to her exaltation, a testament to her unparalleled virtue and her eternal union with the divine.

God declared, *“Thou shalt be Our Spouse, Our beloved and chosen One among all creatures for all eternity. The angels shall serve thee, and all the nations and generations shall call thee blessed. I bestow on thee all the treasures of My grace and power. Ask for whatever thou desire, and it shall be done.”*

Mary’s final request was selfless. *“My Beloved Lord and Master, I urge You to send Your Only Begotten to the world as a remedy for mortals, that all men be called to the true knowledge of Your Divinity. I ask that Joachim and Anne receive an increase of the loving gifts of Your right hand; that the poor and afflicted be consoled and comforted in their troubles; and that I fulfill the pleasure of Your Divine will.”*

With these words, the heavens filled with music, and the angels returned Mary to her bed in the Temple. The next morning, Mary took the few earthly possessions her mother had given her - save a few books and garments and instructed her teacher to give them to the poor.

So, the Chosen One, radiant and untainted by sin, destined to bear the Light of the world, stepped into the hallowed halls of the Temple to begin her sacred studies. The air seemed to shimmer with reverence as she embraced the vows of poverty and obedience, weaving them into the very fabric of her existence. Her heart burned with a fervent desire to live these principles in every breath, every step, every fleeting moment of her young life.

With eyes alight and hands clasped in earnest supplication, she begged the priests to guide her, to carve a path of discipline and devotion, to lay before her the rules that would shape her into a vessel of divine purpose.

In Mary's small room, the first light of dawn crept through the window. Each day Mary rose from her bed at dawn, her movements quiet and deliberate. She knelt in prayer; her face lifted toward the heavens.

In the Temple, Mary joined her classmates in prayer, her voice rising in harmony with theirs. Her face was radiant, her devotion evident in every gesture.

From the third hour until evening, she was to occupy herself in manual works. She scrubbed the floors, cleaned the rooms, and washed the clothing of all the others. No task was beneath her. Nor was she ever asked to perform such deeds. It was as though they were the grandest gifts bestowed on her.

Mary ended each day sitting at a table, her eyes fixed on the pages of the Holy Scriptures. Her fingers traced the words as she read, her expression one of deep concentration.

Our Heavenly Princess would spend more hours on her knees or laying prostrate on the floor of her tiny room speaking with her celestial guardians or receiving more Divine knowledge by the Almighty Himself.

At the study tables, Mary sat among her peers, her small frame hunched over the sacred texts. Her fingers traced the ancient words with reverence; her brow furrowed in concentration. Though she understood the mysteries of the scriptures with a depth far beyond her years, she approached her studies with the eagerness of a novice. She asked questions, sought guidance, and listened intently to her teachers, her humility shining as brightly as her intellect.

In the dining hall, Mary moved among her classmates, serving them their meals with a grace that seemed almost otherworldly. She took only a small portion for herself, her actions a quiet testament to her vow of poverty. When the others thanked her, she would smile softly, her eyes

filled with a warmth that spoke of her genuine love for them. “*It is my joy to serve,*” she would say, her voice barely above a whisper.

As the years passed, Mary’s face matured, the soft roundness of childhood giving way to the delicate features of a young girl. Yet, her spirit remained unchanged- pure, devoted, and radiant with the light of divine grace. Her days were a rhythm of prayer, service, and study, each task performed with a love that seemed to transcend the earthly realm.

By the time Mary reached the age of eight, her life in the Temple had become a living testament to the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Her every action, no matter how small, was infused with a love that seemed to draw its strength from the divine. She was a beacon of light, not just for those within the Temple, but for all who would come to know her story.

And so, as moments continued to shift, each one had a brushstroke in the portrait of a soul destined for greatness. Through prayer, service, and unwavering devotion, Mary grew - not just in years, but in the grace and wisdom that would one day prepare her to bear the Light of the world.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DEATH OF JOACHIM

Mary knelt in the stillness of the Temple - her small frame illuminated by the faint glow of candlelight. Her face, usually serene, now reflected a profound ecstasy, as though her soul had transcended the earthly realm to commune with the divine. Her lips moved silently, her words unheard by mortal ears but carried on the breath of angels to the throne of God.

“Beautiful art thou in thy thoughts and deeds, my Beloved and Chosen One,” the voice of God resonated within her, a sound both gentle and infinite. *“I accept thy desire to serve and sacrifice for the greatest glory and now comes the time for such. For it is by my Divine ordainment that thy father Joachim must pass from this mortal to eternal and immortal life. His death will happen shortly, and he will pass in peace. He will be placed among the saints in limbo, to await the Redemption of the human race.”*

The child’s face shifted, her expression softening from sadness to a gentle smile, though tears streamed down her cheeks. She made no move to wipe them away, allowing them to fall freely. As they touched the ground, they sparkled and transformed into the glistening wings of her angel companions, who lifted her gently and carried her to the bedside of her father, Joachim.

In Joachim’s bedroom, where the air was heavy with the quiet solemnity of impending death. Mary stood silently, her presence a beacon of light in the dim room. She watched and listened as the Angel Gabriel appeared, his form radiant, and spoke to her father. “Most devoted servant of God,” Gabriel began, his voice filled with reverence, *“The Most High and Powerful Lord wishes thee to know now that Mary, thy daughter, is chosen and ordained by the Almighty as the*

One in whom the divine Word shall vest Himself. She is to be the Mother of the Messiah and the Blessed among women, the most exalted among all creatures, and only inferior to God Himself. It is she who has sent us in order to assist you in this, your hour of death. She is a most faithful powerful Intercessor before the Almighty.”

As Gabriel spoke, Anne, Joachim’s beloved spouse, stood at the head of the bed. By divine disposition, she heard and understood every word. Her heart swelled with a mixture of sorrow and awe; her eyes fixed on her husband’s face. As the last word was spoken, Joachim took his final breath, his soul lifting from his body in a radiant burst of light. A choir of angels surrounded him, escorting his soul to limbo, where he would await the Redemption of the human race.

Anne’s gaze shifted to her daughter, who now moved toward her with a grace that seemed almost otherworldly. Mary gently touched her mother’s face, her touch a silent comfort, before turning and leaving the room. The weight of the moment lingering in the air.

Time passed, and Mary, now nine years old, was seen praying fervently in the Temple. Her face, usually radiant with divine light, now reflected a deep sorrow. For weeks, she had knelt in prayer, her heart heavy with a sense of loss. God had stopped revealing Himself to her, and the absence of His presence was a pain she could scarcely bear.

In the quiet solitude of the Temple, Mary lay prostrate on the cold stone floor, her tiny form trembling with emotion. Her voice, though soft, carried the weight of her anguish.

“Dearest Father,” she whispered, her words trembling with sorrow, *“what have I done to offend Thee? Why dost Thou keep Thyself hidden from me? As well my holy companions? If this is but the depth of suffering, I must endure for Thee, I do it and beg for more. For it is the deepest of pain and sorrow that I could ever imagine.”*

Her tears fell silently, each one a testament to her unwavering devotion. Though the heavens seemed silent, her faith remained unshaken, her love for the Almighty burning brightly even in the darkness. She would endure this trial, as she had endured all others, with humility and grace, trusting His Divine Wisdom.

Mary knelt in the quiet solitude of her room, her small frame trembling with emotion. Her voice, though soft, carried the weight of her anguish as she once again addressed the celestial beings who had once been her constant companions.

“Celestial Princes, ambassadors of the great and highest King and most faithful friends of my soul,” she began, her words trembling with sorrow, *“why have you also left me? Please return, please. However, I do not wonder, my lords, at your displeasure, if through my thankless action I have merited to fall into the disgrace of you and my Creator.*

Lights of the heavens enlighten me in my ignorance in this matter, and if I have been at fault, correct me and obtain again the pardon of my Lord. Have pity on my sorrow, tell me where my Beloved is; tell me where He has hidden Himself. Since I know that He never withdraws His face and beauty from your sight!”

Her tears fell silently, each one a testament to her unwavering devotion. Yet, the heavens remained silent, and the room was filled with aching emptiness and the weight of her sorrow lingering in the air.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DEPTHS OF HELL

In the suffocating depths of Hell, where the air itself writhed with the acrid stench of sulfur and despair, Lucifer prowled the jagged, smoldering pathways. The ground beneath his feet hissed and cracked, molten rivers of damnation carving serpentine trails through the charred earth. His every step echoed with a haunting, primordial rhythm, a symphony of defiance and anguish forged over eons. His wings, once radiant, now hung like tattered shadows, their edges flickering with embers that refused to die. His eyes, twin infernos of unrelenting fire, burned with a gaze that could sear through the veil of worlds. They were locked on Mary, a fragile mortal soul whose torment blazed like a beacon in the abyss. Her suffering pulsed with a raw, almost divine intensity, a paradox that both repelled him and ensnared his curiosity. It was a light in the darkness, a thorn in his side, and he could not look away. Though he beheld her torment, a spectacle of grief and resilience against the oppressive backdrop of his infernal realm, there lay a profound mystery in the depths of her being. Mary's anguish was not the desperate cry of a defeated spirit; it was the lament of a soul steadfast in its purity, an enigma that eluded his malevolent grasp. Lucifer could see the scars of her hardship, the quivering flame of hope that stubbornly defied the darkness around her, yet the intricate layers of her inner light remained impervious to his probing malice. In that defiant glimmer, he recognized something dangerously reminiscent of a lost paradise purity that clashed with his very nature.

His mind churned with a turbulent mixture of fury and reluctant fascination. The infernal corridors echoed with the sound of his measured, seething steps, as if the very walls were privy to the tempest of his conflicted thoughts.

His voice, a sonorous baritone laced with malice and simmering frustration, boomed across the fiery abyss. He growled, his tone a venomous mixture of contempt and incredulity. *“Who is this wretched young creature whose pitiful words cause more confusion in my being than I care to have? Perhaps she might benefit from visitors of another kind.”*

At these words, the air itself seemed to tremble, charged with the promise of new horrors. The phrase “visitors of another kind” was not a mere throwaway threat; it was the prelude to schemes that had been fermenting in the depths of his infernal mind. The idea of dispatching agents, demons forged from his own essence of despair, filled him with a dark anticipation. These fiends would be sent forth as emissaries of ruin, destined to weave further threads into the tapestry of Mary's suffering.

Around him, the landscape of Hell shifted in response to his incantations. Rivers of molten torment flowed beneath bridges of charred bone, and the very air was redolent with the acrid stench of eternal damnation. Shadows danced across walls that seemed to breathe with the anguish of innumerable lost souls. In this grotesque symphony, Lucifer's internal conflict was laid bare. Here he was, the architect of misery, encountering a spirit so luminous that even the stifling gloom of Hell could not extinguish its radiance.

For a moment, as the echoes of his words faded into the crackling flames, Lucifer paused in his relentless pacing. A subtle, almost imperceptible flicker of uncertainty crossed his eyes, a brief acknowledgment that Mary's unyielding purity posed a riddle he was not entirely prepared to solve. Could it be that hidden within her agony was not just despair, but also a tiny, unyielding flicker of hope? And if that spark of hope existed, what chaos could it stir up in a place like Hell, where despair and suffering were the only rules, he allowed? The thought gnawed at him, unsettling the very order he had built.

In that charged silence, the infernal air grew heavier, as if even the denizens of Hell held their breath.

The dark irony was palpable: the one who had orchestrated countless tragedies now found himself wrestling with the unexpected force of a human soul, a force that threatened to unravel the very order he had so ruthlessly imposed. The plan to send his “visitors of another kind” was not merely about inflicting further pain - it was a calculated gambit to dissect the mystery of Mary’s purity, to shatter the illusion that such light could exist in the depths of eternal night.

Thus, with a final, dismissive snarl that resonated like the tolling of a death knell, Lucifer resumed his relentless pacing, his mind alight with schemes as convoluted and dangerous as the labyrinthine corridors of Hell itself. The stage was set, and the next act in this infernal drama was about unfolding confrontation between ancient malevolence and the stubborn, unyielding flame of human purity that promised to defy even the darkest of realms.

In Mary’s small room, she lay in a fitful sleep. Around her, dark shadows swirled, taking the form of demons that attempted to invade her mind and soul. Yet, as they drew near, they were repelled by an invisible force, vanishing as quickly as they had appeared. Lucifer, watching from afar, was not pleased. He commanded, his voice a low, menacing growl.

“Enter then into the hearts of her companions,” “Let greed and envy tarnish the others who work so hard at being servants of the Lord. How will this lowly creature suffer these afflictions?”

The next morning, the dining room of the Temple was filled with whispers as Mary entered. The other young girls, their hearts darkened by the influence of the demons, shunned her as she greeted them. They had grown accustomed to her doing their chores, and now they made her tasks even harder. One girl dropped her plate on the floor, then quickly returned to her seat, leaving Mary to clean the mess. Sister Anne entered the room, her expression stern.

“One must be more careful with that which our Lord provides as nourishment,” Anne said, her tone reproachful.

Mary bowed her head humbly. *“Yes, Sister; forgive my lack of agility and eagerness for food.” One of the students spoke up, her voice sharp with accusation. “She grabbed the plate from my hands, causing it to fall. I tried to give her my own, but she refused, saying it was rotten because I had already eaten from it.”*

Another girl chimed in, and her tone was equally harsh. *“Yes, and it’s not the first time, Sister. And the same is true for the scripture books we are to share. Mary takes them and hides them, I’m sure. That is why I do not know my lessons - I have not been able to study because of her.”*

Mary, her face filled with humility, responded gently. *“My friends and mistress, you are right, no doubt, that I am the least and most imperfect among you. However, you, my sisters, being better informed, must pardon my faults and teach me in my ignorance. For I love you and revere you as a servant and only wish to obey you in all things. Command me then and tell me what you desire of me.”*

But her words did not soften the hearts of her companions. Instead, Lucifer’s influence continued to prod them into causing her more harm, even resorting to physical acts of violence. When Mary was scrubbing the floors, they would push her down and hold her face in the bucket of water. They locked her in darkened rooms of the Temple, their cruelty hidden from the priests and mistresses - but not from God.

On one such occasion, the girls gathered in a room and began hurling insults and physical abuse at Mary. The commotion drew the attention of the priests and mistresses, who rushed to the scene.

Simeon, his voice filled with anger, demanded, *“What is the cause of this outrageous display against the very teachings of the Lord? Who is to blame for this? Answer me!”*

One of the students pointed an accusing finger at Mary. *“It is Mary of Nazareth who brought this on. She creates much strife and anger in us all. And when we confront her, she irritates and provokes us even more.”*

When we allow her own way, she becomes overbearing. She makes fun of us by throwing herself prostrate on the floor at our feet with pretend humility, then afterward she quarrels anew and throws all into an uproar! If she does not leave the Temple, it will be impossible to keep peace among us.”

The priest and mistress took Mary into their office and reprimanded her harshly. Anne, her voice filled with disappointment, said, *“What could make you do such a thing, Mary? Why do you bring such discord to a holy place? If this continues, we will have to banish you from the Temple.”*

Mary stood silently, accepting all that was said without attempting to state her innocence. When she was excused from the chambers, she went immediately to her companions and knelt at their feet, weeping openly. They thought her tears were from her punishment and allowed her humiliation with goodwill.

“Forgive me for causing you to act in such a manner,” Mary said, her voice trembling with sincerity. *“For it was very much at my doings, and I beg you to allow me to continue to serve you so that I may serve my Lord.”*

In her room, kneeling in prayer. *“Dearest Father, I have offended all. And my greatest offense is that I am blind to what actions of mine caused this. I pray for my sisters to whom I have caused such grief. I ask that I be shown how to not offend them anymore.”*

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEATH OF ANN

In the quiet quarters of Simeon and Anne, as they slept, a divine presence visited them each in dreams. God's voice, gentle yet unmistakable, whispered to them, revealing the truth of the turmoil that had unfolded within the Temple.

When morning light crept into the ancient halls, the two conferred in hushed tones, their hearts heavy with the weight of divine revelation. They summoned Mary once more, their expressions softened by the knowledge they now carried.

Simeon addressed her with calm resolve, his voice steady and kind. *"It has been told to us that none of what has been occurring is your fault. We will put an end to this so that you might continue in your desire to learn more of our Lord and how you might be of service to Him."*

Mary's eyes shone with devoted humility as she replied, her voice trembling with sincerity. *"I beseech thee, my superiors, to allow me to serve my sisters and bear the discomfort of their reproach. I benefit greatly from their instruction. But I will not disobey you, and if you so command, I will heed your word."*

The day passed into evening, and within the confines of her modest room, Mary's long-absent celestial companions reappeared. Their silent presence filled the space, their light casting a gentle glow that seemed to chase away the shadows of her sorrow. She conversed with them in fervent prayer, her heart pouring out its longing and devotion. After a period of deep concealment, the Lord revealed Himself once more, manifesting before her with a tender radiance that set her heart aglow with long-awaited warmth. His presence was a balm to her soul, a reminder that He had never truly left her. Time moved inexorably through the Temple, and before long, Mary was ten years old.

One day, she received heartrending news directly from God: her mother, Anne, was nearing the end of her earthly life.

At God's command, angels were dispatched to bring Mary back to her place of birth. In a scene steeped in sorrow and sacred duty, Mary sat at her mother's bedside, holding her hand gently as her final breath was drawn. With tender care, she closed her mother's eyes, pressed a soft kiss upon her cheek, and then upon her fingertips. As the angels escorted Anne's soul to Limbo, Mary returned to the Temple a living testament to both loss and the enduring promise of divine mercy.

CHAPTER NINE

MARY COMES OF AGE

Years continued to pass, and Mary, now just past fourteen, found her destiny once again stirred by heavenly decree. One night, as the priest Simeon slept, God spoke to him, instructing that arrangements be made for Mary's marriage. When morning arrived, Simeon sat with Mary to share his intentions. Before he could speak, Mary, with clear and unwavering conviction, addressed him first.

"Sir," she began, her voice steady but filled with earnestness, "I desire to preserve perpetual chastity during all my life; for I wish to dedicate myself to God in the service of this holy Temple in return for the great blessings He has bestowed upon me. And to do what is according to His will."

Simeon listened with gentle wisdom, his expression thoughtful replied. *"My daughter, thy holy desires are acceptable to the Lord; but remember that no maidens of Israel abstain from marriage as long as we expect the coming of the Messiah conformably to the divine prophecies. In the matrimonial state, thou can serve God truly and in great perfection. Therefore, you should begin to pray that God single out for you a husband that is pleasing to both you and the line of David."*

That same evening, within the intimate sanctuary of her room, Mary sought communion with the divine once more. Kneeling in prayer, her hands clasped tightly, she offered her heartfelt petition in a soft, impassioned voice. *"Highest Good and Love of my soul, Thou well know the secret of my bosom and my desires, which Thou hast excited in me*

from the first moment of my existence from Thee. Preserve me, then, my Spouse, pure and chaste, as I have desired. I call on Thy greatness, O Lord, and trust in Thy infinite mercies.”

Her words lingered in the air, a testament to her unwavering devotion and trust in the Almighty. In the interplay of divine commands and mortal yearning, Mary’s path was charted - a journey woven with sorrow, sacred duty, and the luminous promise of a destiny in service to the Almighty. Her heart, though burdened by the weight of her calling, remained steadfast, a beacon of faith and humility in a world yearning for redemption.

CHAPTER TEN

BETROTHAL OF MARY AND JOSEPH

In the village of Jerusalem, a procession led the faithful toward the inner sanctum of a temple, where several men knelt in earnest prayer. Among them was a man named Joseph, a descendant of David, thirty-three years old and handsome, his heart and body unsullied by sin. Like the others, he had vowed chastity to serve his Lord more wholly. As he prayed that day, an inner voice, clear and commanding, resonated within him:

"Joseph, my servant, Mary shall be your spouse; accept her with attentive reverence, for she is acceptable in my eyes, just and most pure in soul and body, and thou shall do all that she shall say to thee."

In that sacred moment, before his very eyes, a vision unfurled: Mary, engaged in her temple duties, appeared radiant as she bowed in prayer. This divine revelation filled his soul with purpose.

Later, within the temple's hallowed walls, Mary shone more resplendent than the moon - a vision of incomparable beauty and grace. Here, the priest had espoused her to the most chaste and holy of men, Joseph. Outside the temple, a tearful Mary bid farewell to the priests and Sister Anne. Together, she and Joseph walked the winding streets of Nazareth toward her ancestral home, which she had inherited from her parents. Their arrival was met with warm greetings from neighbors and friends alike.

The blessed Queen had returned to her birthplace with her new spouse. As was customary among the Hebrews, the first few days of married life were devoted to understanding one another's habits and temperaments - so that, in time, mutual allowances might be made in their conduct.

Each, eager to please the Most High and aware that it was His will that had brought them together, embraced their destiny without question.

Joseph studied his young bride with a purity that bespoke his noble spirit; his joy was found in witnessing her gentle piety. In turn, Mary delighted in watching Joseph, a humble carpenter, skillfully work the wood, ever grateful to the Lord for providing him with a means to support his new wife. Their shared moments of prayer and quiet conversation reaffirmed the vows they had made to God. In these exchanges, the Most High once more confirmed the virtue of chastity in Joseph's heart and the sacred love due to his holy spouse. In time, Joseph even received celestial enlightenment regarding Mary's many virtues - an effect visible when radiant light, seemingly reflected from Mary herself, engulfed him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE INSTANTS OF CREATION

Six months after their marriage, life in the village continued, and Joseph witnessed Mary's boundless compassion and unwavering desire to serve God. She performed acts of charity throughout the village - caring tenderly for the ill and the dying, and, every morning and evening, she raised her voice in prayer for the salvation of mankind. One evening, within the quiet confines of her modest room, Mary lay prostrate in prayer, her arms outstretched in the form of a cross. In a voice laden with yearning and humility, she cried:

"When will the Only begotten of the Father descend in reality to unite Himself with human nature? Who detains the current of the Divinity, so that the whole human race remains unfulfilled? If perhaps I am a hindrance, let me perish before I impede this blessing, for it cannot depend upon the merits of any creature.

Lord and God eternal, as the sins of men increase and the offenses against Thee are multiplied, how shall we merit the very blessing of which we become daily more unworthy? I venture to beseech Thee, from the bottom of my heart, to speed Thy coming and to hasten the Redemption for Thy greater glory."

At that moment, the celestial music of the Almighty swelled in the heavens, heralding the dawning of the plan of salvation.

That very night, and for the following nine days at the same midnight hour, Mary was raised by divine power, her being illuminated as visions of the Divinity unfolded before her eyes. Each night, she was shown the instants of creation: **The First Instant**, was God's revelation of His infinite attributes and ineffable desire to communicate His glory; in The Second Instant, She learned the determination of the purpose behind this divine communication.

In The Third Instant the careful selection and arrangement of this message was revealed. In this sacred sequence, the perfect composition of the holy humanity of Christ was decreed and modeled into Divine intelligence. **The Fourth Instant** of Creation revealed the gifts and graces to be conferred upon Christ's humanity in union with the Divinity, as well as the decree and predestination of the Mother of the Divine Word - along with the creation of a dwelling place where heaven and earth would be defined. In the **Fifth Instant**, Mary witnessed the creation of the angelic nature: the division of celestial hosts into nine choirs with their hierarchies, the predestination of the good and the reprobation of the wicked, and the very creation of heaven and hell. Lastly, in the **Sixth Instant**, God revealed the creation of a people - the determined order of the entire human race, beginning with one man and one woman, whose progeny would eventually herald the birth of the Virgin and her Son. The fall of Adam was foreseen, and as a remedy, it was ordained that the most holy humanity should be capable of suffering. These divine visions endowed Mary with wisdom beyond comprehension, a knowledge of reason, art, and science surpassing that of all men. Into the heart and mind of our Princess flowed the vast ocean of Divinity, previously confined by the sins and evil dispositions of mankind. She perceived in the Most High an ineffable treasure of grace and blessings, prepared for all mortals, and felt the Divine's infinite desire for humanity to partake in these eternal gifts. This profound awareness led her to offer the most exalted prayers, petitions, sacrifices, and acts of heroic love, so that no one might damn themselves but instead give thanks to the Creator. In those moments, Mary felt as though she was present at the very beginning of creation.

On the ninth evening, as ordained by God, the angel Gabriel was dispatched to visit Mary. The hour was nearly six, and the sun still lingered in the sky when Gabriel, accompanied by choirs of angels, appeared in her room. Though Mary was accustomed to divine visitations, she remained in prayer until she raised her head and beheld Gabriel's unusual grandeur. In that sparse room that was empty except for her simple cot, every surface seemed suffused with unearthly majesty, and her thoughts quickly converged on a single, wondrous conclusion.

"Is it possible that the blessed time has arrived, in which the Word of the eternal Father is to be born? Oh, who shall be worthy to see and know Him? Oh, who shall be allowed to kiss the earth touched by His feet?" Mary inquired, her voice trembling with awe.

Gabriel replied in a sonorous tone, *"Hail Mary, full of Grace, Blessed are You among women."*

Perplexed yet uplifted, Mary asked, *"What say thee, Gabriel, messenger of God? Who am I to be greeted with such a salutation? Blessed among women?"*

"Do not fear, Mary," Gabriel comforted her, *"for thou hast found grace before the Lord. Behold, thou shall give birth to Him, and thou shall name Him Jesus; He shall be great, and He shall be called Son of the Most High."*

"How shall this happen - that I conceive and bear since I know not, nor can know, man?" Mary questioned her heart both anxious and hopeful.

"It is by Divine power alone that thou shalt become a mother without the co-operation of man," explained Gabriel. *"The Holy Spirit shall remain with thee, manifesting as a new presence, and the virtue of the Most High shall overshadow thee so that the One who shall be called the Son of God be borne. And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth has likewise conceived a son, and he shall come before Him, for nothing is impossible for God."*

With these words, our Blessed Mother spoke the beginning of our salvation. In a voice filled with reverence and surrender, Mary pronounced, *"Let it be done unto me according to Thy Word."*

Thus, by her resounding "yes" to the Will of God, Mary came to comprehend the immeasurable love the Lord bore for humankind. The intensity of that love was unlike anything she had ever known. Her pure and immaculate heart swelled with such joy and emotion that it wept three drops of blood – a sacred sign. With these drops, mingled with the Lord's boundless love for all humanity, was formed Christ, true God and true Man, our Lord and Redeemer. This miraculous event occurred on the 25th of March, at dawn, in the very hour that our first father, Adam, was made -in the year of the world's creation, 5199.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN

A few days later, Mary asked Joseph to escort her to visit her cousin. They journeyed for four days on a mule along the road to Juda, bound for the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth. As Mary rode on the mule, she remarked, "*How generous and kind of you, my husband, to take me to my cousin. Why don't you allow me to walk for a distance while you rest on the back of the mule?*"

Joseph replied, "*Although I cannot deny you the tiniest of requests, my most precious spouse, I must deny you this. However, if you tire from the position, I will gladly have your company at my side to walk a ways.*"

He helped Mary down from the mule, and together they continued their journey on foot. After a while, Joseph inquired, "*How can it be that your cousin, so late in life, is with child?*"

Mary answered calmly, "*Perhaps the plan for this child calls for it to be born now, and of Elisabeth. I question not the work of our Lord.*"

Joseph added with a sigh, "*The imperfections of my heart lead to the imperfections of my thoughts and words. Look, I see the ridge of the village ahead. Soon, you will be able to rest and visit with your cousin.*"

As they neared the village of Juda, the view widened to reveal its outline. The travelers soon came upon Elisabeth's dwelling. The door swung open, and Mary was greeted warmly by her cousin. Inside the modest home, Mary said, "*The Lord be with you, my dearest cousin.*" Elisabeth replied, "*And with you, my cousin.*"

The two women retired to a small chamber furnished with a cot and a stool, taking great delight in each other's company. Mary gently placed her hand on Elisabeth's swollen belly and whispered, *"May God save thee, my dearest cousin, and may His divine light communicate to thee grace and life."*

At those words, a radiant light filled Elisabeth, and she received divine insight into her young cousin's condition. With a voice filled with wonder, Elisabeth declared, *"Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And why is it that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? My child has leaped in my womb for delight in the knowledge we have both been given. For what was foretold will soon be accomplished through you."*

Mary continued, *"Your son, the one who will be known as John, will come before Him. He will proclaim His goodness. For my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. His might hath done great things for me; holy is His name, and His mercy endures from generation to generation."*

Later, as Joseph prepared to take his leave of Juda, he and Zacharias exchanged farewells in silence - Zacharias still stricken mute as punishment for his disbelief. Through gestures, Zacharias indicated that three moons would pass before his child would be born, seeing this, with a gentle smile, Elisabeth mused, *"Oh, Zacharias, since when do the likes of men know the mind of babies? This child will arrive when it is ready, not a minute sooner."*

Joseph added kindly, *"And Mary will be your nurse until that time. No more tender hands could assist you, Elisabeth."*

Elisabeth nodded, *"This I know, Joseph, this I know well. Have a safe journey, my friend."*

Time flowed like a quiet river, and within the dim, candlelit warmth of Elisabeth's chamber, the miracle unfolded. After hours of labor, a cry pierced the stillness, a newborn's first breath of life. Elisabeth's son had arrived, his tiny form trembling with the raw vitality of existence.

Mary, her hands steady and tender, cradled the infant as though he were the most precious treasure in the world. She swaddled him in soft cloth, each fold a gesture of devotion, before carefully placing him into Elisabeth's waiting arms. The air seemed to shimmer with a sacred stillness, as if the very room held its breath in awe of the moment. Love, pure and boundless, radiated between the two women, binding them together in the quiet joy of new life. Not long after, in the home of one of the elders, the time had come for the circumcision and naming of the newborn. Due to Zacharias' muteness, Elisabeth presided over the ceremony. An elder inquired, "*What name shall the child have?*"

Another asked, "*By what shall we call him?*"

Elisabeth then declared, "*The time has come for you to name our son, Zacharias. What name do you give him?*"

She handed him a tablet and a writing tool. As he inscribed the words, "His name is John," Mary, now imbued with divine power, freed him from his affliction. Closing her eyes briefly, she whispered internally, "*Be free to speak. Lifted is your punishment for disbelief.*"

Zacharias then proclaimed in a clear voice, "*His name is John. Blessed is the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and wrought the redemption of His people, to enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to direct our feet into the way of peace.*"

A hush fell over the gathered assembly. Some fell to their knees and cried out, "*Miracle!*" Elisabeth and Zacharias exchanged knowing, loving glances with Mary. In response, Mary returned their looks before lowering her head in a humble, peaceful gesture.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REVELATION TO JOSEPH

Along the roadside, Mary rode once again on the back of a mule, guided by Joseph. As she made her way through the budding trees of spring, she gently placed her hand on her abdomen, a soft smile gracing her face, a silent testament to the life growing within her. Then the season shifted to late summer, Mary's silhouette emerged in the gentle morning light, now showing the first unmistakable signs of pregnancy. Joseph watched her in quiet contemplation as she concluded her canticle, his face etched with confusion and sorrow.

Later that day, in the quiet sanctuary of his room, Joseph knelt in prayer, his heart heavy with turmoil. He whispered, *"My heart is full of confusion, my Lord. For thou knowest I have kept my vow of chastity. What can it mean that my spouse, the purist of hearts and most trusting of temperaments, appears with child? How can this be? I beg thee, relieve me of this burden, for it tears at my very being to consider what our Law may require of me. I withhold and defer my judgment. I do not believe that Mary has offended Thee; yet much less can I presume that there is a mystery of which I, as her spouse, am not to be informed. Govern my mind and fulfill that which is most pleasing to Thee."*

Unbeknown to Joseph, Mary - by divine grace - heard the silent outpouring of his inner thoughts. Her eyes filled with tears at the evident sorrow and confusion in his prayer, though she could not reveal the hidden truth of her condition. Days passed, and as she continued to care for him with loving tenderness, her secret became ever more apparent. Joseph, isolated in his struggle, wrestled with a painful decision. The law commanded that he divorce her and turn her over to the authorities for punishment. One morning, unable to contain his sorrow any longer, he spoke aloud in the eating area while Mary served him.

"Do you not think it is best if you sit for a while? I cannot bear to eat anyway. Let the food go to those who want it. Do you know what takes place in the village today? The wife of the merchant Jacob will be stoned for her crime of adultery. Moreover, poor Jacob was the one who had to turn her in to the authorities, and he will be made to throw the first stone."

With those words, he abruptly rose and left the room, leaving Mary alone at the table as silent tears streamed down her face. In her anguish, she lifted her gaze heavenward and prayed, *"Blessed spirits and ministers of the Most High, who accompany me as His faithful servants and guardians I beseech you, present before God my request to lessen the suffering of my spouse, Joseph. Beseech the Lord to look upon and console him as a true Father. Moreover, you, my ever-faithful companions, reach into the heart of my devoted earthly friend and drive from his mind his resolve to leave me. Assure him of God's incomprehensible workings, most of which remain hidden from all."*

Later that day, in the solitude of his work shed, Joseph wept aloud to himself, speaking through his despair, *"I will leave in the night, in secret, for the temple of Jerusalem, and I shall offer up sums of money so that God might help and protect Mary from the scourge of men and free her from all misfortune."*

As if in answer to his lament, sudden rays of light broke through the gloom, softening the furrows of grief on his face and offering him a momentary solace. That night, in the quiet of her room, Mary knelt in fervent prayer, seeking communion with the Divine. Her voice was steady, filled with resolve as she declared, *"It is my duty not to be remiss in assisting the spouse whom I received from Thy hand. If I have found grace in Thy eyes, then He too must share in that grace. For I carry in my womb Thy Son, who will bear the likeness of man. I will require thy servant Joseph to assist me in the fulfillment of these great works."*

A gentle, commanding reply resonated in her heart, as if spoken by the Almighty Himself: *"My dearest one, I shall soon visit my servant Joseph and manifest to him, by my angel, that which is now unknown to him. I will fill him with my spirit and make him able to perform his part in these mysteries."*

Mary responded with humble gratitude, *"I trust in Thy infinite wisdom, for I believe that Joseph must pass through his trials so that he may possess the fortitude required for the journey Thou hast destined for us. For Thy compassion and mercy, I give Thee great thanks."*

A few nights later, Joseph tossed and turned fitfully in his room until he finally succumbed to deep sleep. In that slumber, an angel swept over him, imparting all that the Lord had decreed.

At sunrise, as he opened the shutters and welcomed the new day, a sudden, profound realization filled his soul, his beloved Mary was indeed to be the true Mother of God. Overcome, he fell to his knees in prayer, exclaiming, *"Oh, my Most High, for His dwelling-place and for His Mother: how could I, so unworthy a slave, have dared to doubt Thy fidelity? Why have I not made it my most earnest care to serve Thee on my knees?"*

Dear Lord, grant me the grace and strength to seek her forgiveness; and move her heart to mercy so that she may not despise this sorrowful servant."

Before Mary had awakened, Joseph, in the quiet hours of early morning, unwrapped a small bundle he had prepared and wandered about the house in tears, setting the rooms in order - scrubbing floors and tending to tasks that were once Mary's alone. When at last Mary arose, Joseph gently knocked on her door and entered, falling to his knees at her feet. With a voice heavy with contrition, he said,

"My Mistress and Spouse, true Mother of the eternal Word, for the sake of God and our Lord, I beseech thee to pardon me. I do not doubt that thou hast knowledge of all my thoughts, which fills me with even greater shame."

I shall not rise from these knees until thou assure me of thy favor, pardon, good will, and blessing."

Mary, eyes soft with compassion, replied, *"I, too, my master and companion, must ask thee for forgiveness for the pain and sorrow thou hast endured because of me. I have seen and felt the depth of thy suffering. Though I longed to reveal the reason for the hidden sacrament, it was not for me to disclose until the work of His holy and perfect Will was complete. It was never that I did not esteem thee as my lord and spouse that I remain silent."*

Moved by her words, Joseph murmured, *"Blessed art thou among all women. In none has He magnified His name as He has in thy humility; and in me, the most insignificant of the living, He has, in His divine condescension, chosen thee as His servant."*

At that moment, as Mary began to recite the Magnificat - a hymn she had often sung during her visit to Elisabeth - a miraculous transformation overtook her. She became aflame with a transcendent ecstasy, and a radiant globe of light enveloped her, transfiguring her with the gifts of glory. Joseph, witnessing this divine splendor, remained on his knees and lifted his hands in exaltation to his Queen. In a final, breathtaking vision, he gazed into Mary's womb and beheld the Christ Child, aglow with the same magnificent light - a sign of the fulfillment of all divine promise.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

In the heart of Nazareth, the streets pulsed with life, a chaotic symphony of clattering carts, shouting merchants, and the rhythmic shuffle of countless feet. The air was thick with the scent of spices, sweat, and the faint tang of dust kicked up by the ceaseless movement. Amid the clamor, a herald's voice rose above the din, sharp and commanding, announcing a new decree from Emperor Augustus. The words rippled through the crowd like a shock wave: a census was to be taken, demanding every soul within the vast Roman Empire be counted. The news spread quickly, stirring a mix of murmurs, groans, and hurried whispers. Families paused in their daily routines; their faces etched with concern and calculation. Journeys would need to be planned, lives uprooted, and long roads traveled, all to fulfill the will of an empire that stretched its hand into every corner of their lives. The weight of the decree hung heavy in the air, a reminder of the distant power that shaped their destinies.

Mary spoke softly; her voice filled with quiet understanding. She explained that this census, ordered by the emperor, was part of a greater plan, a plan set by God. Joseph, unaware of the deeper meaning, prepared to travel alone to Bethlehem, the town where all from Nazareth were required to register. But Mary knew the truth. Long ago, it had been prophesied that the Son of God, the Only Begotten, would be born in Bethlehem. She carried this sacred knowledge, aware that her child would enter the world not in grandeur, but in simplicity and humility, hidden from the eyes of the powerful. Though His arrival would be quiet, it would fulfill promises made long before, marking the beginning of something extraordinary.

Later, at home as they sat together at the table, Joseph spoke with tender concern, *"I dare not bring you on such a long journey, but I dare not leave Thee alone. I could not live without you and would not rest a moment away from you."* Mary, with gentle deference, allowed him to assume the responsibility of leading their family, a decision that had long been made, though hidden from his knowing.

On the day of their departure, the town teemed with people complying with the imperial edict. Joseph scoured the busy streets, desperately seeking a mule to ease the burden on his heavily pregnant wife. At last, he found a man willing to help. *"Please, sir, my wife is great with child; it is too far for her to walk. I will build for you a new yoke for your oxen in exchange,"* Joseph pleaded. The man replied with a wry smile, *"A new yoke and a new basin for fetching water from as well! Go, take it. He is old, I hope he does not die along the way!"*

With determined optimism, Joseph assured him, *"Trust that you will be rewarded for this deed! Moreover, rewarded well,"* and led the mule away, eager to reunite with Mary.

Soon, the couple set out on the road to Bethlehem. At first, they appeared to be traveling alone, but as they advanced, a wondrous sight unfolded: thousands of angels, sent by God, accompanied them on their journey. Some took on human form and were visible only to Mary, who, when not riding the mule, walked among these radiant beings - her own inner light mingling with the celestial glow. They passed through several small villages in search of rest, yet door after door was shut upon them. At one inn, the keeper grumbled, *"You cannot expect me to allow the likes of you in here."* But his wife interceded softly, *"Sire, look at her. She is young and near to her time. Let her at least rest against the wall. She can sit on the floor, and he can rest on the dirt outside."*

Following the quiet guidance of the woman, Joseph led Mary into a narrow hallway where he helped her settle onto the cool stone floor. No sooner had her head bowed against the wall and her eyes closed than the innkeeper barked, *"Go on, you heard my mistress - get out! Out! Or I will throw her out too."* Joseph was forced to leave her behind, but Mary was not alone; her angelic guardians gently lifted her, cushioning her head from the harsh stone as they watched over her.

By the third day, the weather had turned vicious. A terrible wind and lashing rainstorm battered the road, and Mary, visibly exhausted, struggled to remain seated on the mule. In the grip of the storm, she slid off and stumbled in the mud as the animal darted away from her reach. With swift determination, Joseph rushed to her side, lifting her into his arms and carrying her to the shelter of a nearby tree. Gently, he laid her on the ground and gathered fallen branches to shield her from the relentless elements. Collapsing to his knees, he prayed fervently, *"Almighty God, should not the One you have chosen as the doorway to the salvation of man be free of such suffering and discomfort? I beg you, spare her this at such a time. Allow me to walk in torrents but let the sun come out and dry her soaked garments."*

Miraculously, as if in response, the storm subsided; the wind died down, the rain ceased, and the sun burst forth in brilliant clarity. Joseph removed the branches from Mary, and before their eyes, her clothing dried. Even the mule returned, shaking off the water, and for a fleeting moment, they shared a gentle laugh.

"My very tired and patient spouse, could you manage to go a little further? Then in the morning we will set out early and reach our destination by late day," he said. Mary extended her hand, replying with warmth, *"I need but your hand to get up into a walking position. This little town of Bethlehem will seem like a grand city when we lay our eyes upon it. Will you not ride for a while, Joseph? You have walked the entire journey; you must be exhausted."*

He conceded, *"We will give the beast a rest; it still looks shaken by the storm. Come, we will walk together. May I speak as we go?"* Mary nodded, *"Say whatever your heart and mind need to, my devoted spouse."* With a heavy sigh, Joseph confessed, *"Why me? Why, such a lowly, unworthy being full of imperfections when there are others more fitting?"*

Mary, her voice imbued with quiet assurance, countered, *"Do you think our Lord does not know whom He has chosen? That your heart and mind - formed by His own hand - are of the greatest nobility to serve His Son?"*

Then, with a touch of sorrow, he added, *"But what of serving you? You nurture the child in your womb. You are His life-giving force. You, who are held so high in the esteem of our God - how am I to serve you? I can barely provide a beast for you to travel when it is so apparent that your time is near. I have failed you miserably, have I not?"*

Mary reached for his hand, replying gently, *"Which parts of this journey do you think are unknown to the Almighty? It is not by the number of possessions or coins in your satchel that deems you worthy, Joseph. No other mate could be more attentive. No other could be a better, more loving companion."*

As the first light of dawn broke across the sky, painting the horizon in hues of gold and amber, Mary and Joseph set out once more, their weary steps carrying them closer to Bethlehem. The sun climbed steadily, its warmth pressing down on the dusty road as the hours stretched on. By early afternoon on the fifth day, the silhouette of Bethlehem finally emerged in the distance, a cluster of low stone buildings nestled among rolling hills. The village buzzed with life, alive with the clamor of travelers who had come from far and wide. Carts creaked under the weight of belongings, mules brayed impatiently, and children darted through the narrow streets, their laughter ringing out like music.

Parents called to one another; their voices tinged with urgency as they searched for shelter in the crowded inns. Bethlehem, though small, pulsed with chaotic energy, a humble stage set for something extraordinary.

Mary and Joseph pressed forward, their hearts heavy with exhaustion but filled with quiet determination, as the town's promise, and its challenges, drew them in.

Joseph said with hopeful determination, *"There are many dwellings. I know we will find a kind soul who will provide us with shelter for the night. Let us begin. I should wash my face and look more presentable, no? There, there, come."* Leading the mule to a public water fountain, Joseph splashed water on his face.

A nearby crowd erupted in laughter. One man jeered, *"He washes in the water meant for our beasts. I guess it will do for the likes of them."* A woman added, *"Perhaps they like some grain to go with their water?"* Another man called out, *"At least let the one with four legs have a swallow, man!"*

Amid the laughter, Mary tenderly wiped Joseph's face with a piece of her mantle, and softly urged, *"Come; let us find our lodgings before it gets dark."* They moved from door to door throughout the town, each attempt met with rejection. Some doors were slammed in their faces, and they passed many others who shared their plight, unwanted and without shelter.

As dusk fell and the moon replaced the sun, they reached the far end of the village where one last inn stood. "Surely, they will show mercy. I will go and secure a room for you," Joseph declared.

He stepped away, leaving Mary resting on the back of the mule just outside the inn. But moments later, the innkeeper hurled Joseph onto the street. "I told you I have no room.

Moreover, even if I did, I would not let the likes of you in here. I told you to go to the cave - it suits you better. Get out!" he bellowed, slamming the door.

Rushing to his side, Mary found Joseph on his knees, face buried in his trembling hands as he wept. *"My precious one, my heart is broken that I cannot find you shelter in a warm dwelling for the night,"* he lamented. Mary, with a serene resolve, replied, *"Let your tears of sorrow be turned into tears of joy. Let us lovingly embrace poverty, which is the inestimable and precious treasure of my most holy Son. Now, what of this cave the innkeeper mentioned? Is that not a dwelling? It will shield us from the growing cold. Let us go gladly wherever the Lord leads us."*

Guided by forces beyond sight, Mary and Joseph wandered into a serene forest, where the air seemed to hum with a quiet, sacred energy. Above them, the trees parted as if by design, revealing a path illuminated by a soft, radiant glow. Heavenly beings, their forms shimmering like starlight, moved gracefully ahead, lighting the way with an ethereal warmth. The angels led them to a secluded cave, its entrance aglow with a gentle, otherworldly light that spilled onto the forest floor. Inside, the celestial hosts moved with purpose, their presence filling the space with a sense of reverence and anticipation. They were preparing the humble cave, transforming it into a sanctuary fit for the arrival of their queen. The air itself seemed to hold its breath, as if the earth and heavens alike were poised for the moment when the divine would touch the ordinary in the most extraordinary way. This place was held unworthy by all else in the town. None would demean themselves so far as to make use of it for such a purpose, except the teachers of humility and poverty - Christ our Savior and his purest Mother. For the wisdom of the Eternal Father has reserved it for them. He consecrated it in all its bareness, loneliness, and poverty as the first temple of light, and as the house of the true Sun of justice, which was to arise for the upright of heart from the resplendent Aurora Mary, turning the night of sin into the daylight of grace.

And so, in that humble cave - an unlikely sanctuary prepared by divine hands, the weary travelers found shelter, marking a pivotal moment in the fulfillment of ancient prophecy and the beginning of a new chapter in the sacred story of hope.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Mary and Joseph entered the cave in quiet reverence, falling to their knees to give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon them. In the soft glow of the fire that Joseph had kindled for warmth, Mary - accompanied by the gentle presence of her angelic guardians, who understood the miracle soon to unfold, began preparing the humble surroundings with her own hands. Feeling the stirrings of impending birth, she urged Joseph to rest. "*The night is far-gone, and you must be in need of rest. Sleep, Joseph,*" she said tenderly.

Before obeying her plea, Joseph first saw to Mary. Making use of a small crib left by shepherds for their animals, he arranged it carefully within the cave to provide comfort for his beloved. Once his task was complete, he left Mary in that quiet corner of the cave and retreated to a sheltered nook near the entrance. There, he knelt in prayer, and as he did, a divine spirit descended, placing him in a state of exalted, blessed sleep.

Mary, too, remained absorbed in prayer. In the stillness of the sacred space, the voice of God resounded around her: "*The time is now at hand for the coming of our Son. I renew in you all the knowledge of Divinity and humanity of this our child - the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. Happy am I who called to you and you answered yes, for you, my Beloved, please me beyond compare.*"

In response, Mary bowed her head and whispered, "*I ask My Lord God for new light and grace, that I may worthily raise up the Word made flesh, whom I am to bear and nourish.*" Then the voice continued with gentle authority, "*Rise up, Mary, for you are the Mother of God.*" Mary remained enraptured in this state of divine enlightenment, until she sensed the presence of the child within her womb.

The gentle movements signaled the impending birth - a movement that caused no pain but filled her with profound wonder.

Outside the radiant circle of light that enveloped her, the archangels Gabriel and Michael had taken human form, waiting in silent anticipation for the moment to reveal their sacred task. Mary knelt in quiet awe, her hands pressed together at her chest, her face glowing with a radiant, otherworldly light. Her heart swelled with wonder as a brilliant, pure light began to shine from within her, a light that seemed to come from her very soul. It grew brighter and brighter, so intense that it surpassed anything the human eye could bear. Then, from the shimmering glow, the archangels Michael and Gabriel stepped forward, their majestic forms radiating reverence and grace.

They knelt before her, their movements fluid and deliberate, and with hands outstretched, they formed a cradle of light and air. In that breathtaking moment, the luminous glow from Mary's womb flowed into the cradle they had made. And there, in the arms of the angels, the light took shape, transforming into the form of a newborn child. The Christ Child, the Light of the World, had come into being, His presence filling the humble cave with a peace and glory that transcended all understanding. At that moment, the choirs of angels sang the most magnificent hymns ever heard. From the outstretched arms of the archangels, the newborn babe was tenderly placed into the arms of his mother. As Mary and her child looked upon one another, a love so deep and trans-formative passed between them that it elevated their very souls. In the quiet communion of their hearts, the infant spoke: *"Mother, become like unto Me, for on this day you have given the human race the greatest gift. I bestow upon you an exalted grace, transforming your existence, that you may share in My likeness as both God and Man."*

Mary, with a gentle smile and unwavering devotion, replied, *"Elevate me, Lord, and I will run after Thee."* Then the child continued, *"Behold, my beloved, for thou art beautiful."*

And in the fullness of that sacred moment, the voice of God interjected, *"Mary, receive thy Only Begotten Son, imitate Him and rear Him; and remember, when I shall demand, thou must sacrifice Him."*

Overwhelmed with love, Mary cradled the child close and kissed his tender face with a tenderness known only to a mother's heart. Holding him in her arms, she became the first altar upon which he was placed. At that miraculous moment, the heavens seemed to open, and people from near and far came to witness the salvation of humankind in the form of this new life.

Joseph, awakened from his blessed sleep by the stirring of divine joy, rose and tears of adoration in his eyes, beheld the newborn. At Mary's gentle request, he handed her the wrapping and swaddling clothes they had brought along. With great care, she dressed her son, arranged straw and hay upon a flat stone, and laid him down. Then, with tender authority, she commanded the oxen and the mule to lie on either side of the crib, so as to keep the child warm and shield him from the chill of the night. Outside, the night sky was alive with shimmering stars, the north star shining brilliantly upon all the earth. Moved by the wonder of the moment, Mary spoke softly to her celestial companions, *"We must proclaim his birth, my celestial friends. Go, tell those whom you were instructed by God to tell."* With that command, the archangel Michael sped off to the sacred realms where the holy patriarchs - Enoch and Elias - and the venerable figures Joachim and Anne awaited, while another angel set out to deliver the news to Elisabeth and her son, John. Meanwhile, Gabriel was dispatched to a field to announce the wondrous event to the shepherds, who soon found themselves enveloped in the angel's radiant light.

"Ye upright men, be not afraid," Gabriel proclaimed, his voice echoing over the still night. *"For I announce to you tidings of great joy: today, in the city of David, is born the Redeemer, Christ our Lord. As a sign of this truth, you will find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger."* In response, a magnificent choir of angels burst forth in song, singing, *"Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth!"*

As the night gradually gave way to day, visitors began to come and go from the humble cave. On the eighth day, Mary called to Joseph, *"Although we know Him to be conceived without sin, He was born into this world as man. And in this world, man must be cleansed by the rite of circumcision."*

Joseph replied, *"I will go and return with a priest. First, His name must be known. When the holy angel informed me of this great event, he also told me that the sacred Son should be called Jesus."* Mary nodded in agreement, adding softly, *"This was the same name revealed to me when He assumed flesh in my womb."*

While the two holy parents conferred, innumerable angels descended from the heavens in human form, clad in shining white garments intricately embroidered with red. They carried palms in their hands, their heads adorned with crowns, emitting a splendor that rivaled the sun itself. At the forefront were the archangels Michael and Gabriel, who together presented a sign of exquisite beauty. A sign upon which was written the holy name of Jesus in resplendent script. Michael spoke with gentle authority, *"My Lady, this is the name of thy Son, written in the mind of God from all eternity. The blessed Trinity has bestowed it upon the Only Begotten Son, our Lord, as the signal of salvation for the whole human race. Establish Him at once on the throne of David."* Gabriel added, *"For He shall reign upon it, chastise His enemies, triumph over them, and make them His footstool, passing judgment upon them. He shall lift His friends to the glory of His right hand. But all this shall come at the cost of suffering and blood - He is destined to shed it in receiving this name, for it marks the beginning of His sufferings in obedience to the will of His eternal Father. After this, He shall ascend triumphantly to the celestial Jerusalem and open the portals of heaven."*

Thus, in the sacred stillness of that cave, amid divine light and angelic splendor, the humble birth of the Savior was celebrated - a miracle that would forever alter the fate of humankind.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PRESENTATION

Joseph, genuflecting before the babe cradled in Mary's arms, left the cave in a state of humble adoration. He stepped out into the cool evening, making his way into the bustling village. Soon he returned accompanied by a priest, and in a small, modest ceremony, the rite of circumcision was performed on the child. Throughout the rite, Mary held her son close, her eyes filled with a serene resolve as the sacred ritual unfolded.

The Son of Mary offered up to the Eternal Father three sacrifices of inestimable worth. **First**, though innocent and the Son of the true God, He assumed the condition of a sinner by submitting to a rite devised as a remedy for original sin - a law that did not bind Him. **Second**, He willingly endured the pains of circumcision, experiencing them as a true and perfect man. **Third**, He demonstrated the most ardent love by beginning to shed His blood for the human race, all the while giving thanks to the Eternal Father for granting Him a human nature capable of suffering for His exaltation and glory.

When the priest asked, "*What name do you give the child?*" both Mary and Joseph answered in unison, "*Jesus is His name.*" The priest carefully inscribed the name on a tablet and continued, "*I am convinced that this child is to be a great prophet of the Lord. Have care in raising Him.*" With that solemn charge, and after receiving gifts of candles and other modest tokens from well-wishers, the priest departed, leaving the Holy Family to their quiet reverence.

As the sun sank low, painting the sky in deep hues of orange and purple, the shadowy outline of a caravan appeared on the horizon, moving steadily eastward.

They followed the guidance of a single, radiant star, a star that burned brighter than all others, fixed unwaveringly above the place where the child had been born.

The next day, three wise kings, each a ruler of great renown, arrived at the cave with their entourage of servants. The servants chattered and marveled at the strange, holy scene before them, but the kings carried themselves with quiet reverence. They stepped forward, their robes trailing behind them, and entered the cave with solemn grace. Without hesitation, they knelt before Mary, their heads bowed in humility. One by one, they reached out to kiss her hand in a gesture of deep respect. But Mary, with a gentle yet firm motion, withdrew her hand and instead extended the tiny hand of her newborn son. In that simple act, she offered them not her own honor, but the sacred gift of the Christ Child, the one they had traveled so far to worship. *"My spirit rejoices in the Lord, and my soul blesses and extols Him,"* Mary said softly. *"For among all the nations, He has called and chosen you to behold that which many kings and prophets have longed in vain to see."* The Magi congratulated her with words of admiration before departing, their faces alight with wonder - a stark contrast to the confusion of their servants, who had not witnessed the miraculous scene. They went on to take lodging in the town, their hearts stirred by what they had witnessed.

Later that day, gathered around a table in a modest room at an inn, the three kings shared their thoughts. One mused, *"What is this feeling? A deeper love for a king I have never known - what moves us so profoundly?"* Another replied, *"His greatness is veiled beneath poverty and humility, a mystery beyond mortal comprehension."* A third added, *"Oh, that all might share in this joy so freely!"* The first king concluded, *"They are in need of comfort; let us send our servants back with gifts that will ease their burdens."*

Outside, near the cave, the Magi's servants delivered supplies to Joseph, who accepted them with quiet gratitude. The following day, the wise kings returned to bid farewell to the new King. They

presented the traditional gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh and even offered precious gems meant for a princess.

Yet Mary, with gentle firmness, declined the gems, and instead bestowed upon each of them the most valuable gift she could offer - a small garment that had graced the tender skin of her infant son.

"To each of you, I give this garment of clothing, a treasure that has touched the skin of the Infant God," she said. One King marveled, "More precious than gold or silver, this cloth will bind me in service to His Kingship for all my days." Another King suggested, "Let us provide you with property that can house you more suitably." The third King countered, "Or perhaps we should build a dwelling worthy of your holy family." Mary smiled warmly and replied, "Thank you, most kind and generous men, but our needs are few and met by our Lord. To seek more would be to challenge His wisdom. Your deeds will not go unnoticed." Joseph added, "It is a pity you cannot stay longer; we must present the child at the temple the day after tomorrow. May your journey back be safe, and your paths be richly rewarded."

The night before the presentation of the baby at the temple, Mary knelt in fervent prayer. *"My Lord," she whispered, "tomorrow shall be a festive day for both heaven and earth. You have given Him to me as God, and I return Him to You as both God and man. Pour forth Your mercies upon humanity - pardon the sinners, console the afflicted, help the needy, enrich the poor, succor the weak, enlighten the blind, and embrace those who have strayed. I ask this on behalf of Your Only Begotten, who by Your will is also my Son."* A halo of light surrounded the young mother as she petitioned God on behalf of all humankind.

The next day, as the Holy Family and bands of angels approached the temple gates, Mary joined the company of devoted women while Joseph walked with the gathered men. Approaching them was Simeon, the high priest, guided by the Holy Spirit, along with Anne, Mary's revered teacher. They advanced toward the couple, and Mary gently handed the infant to Simeon. Lifting the child, Simeon raised his eyes heavenward and proclaimed, *"Now, O*

Lord, You have prepared and placed before all mortals Your divine light so that it may shine upon the world, granting guidance and salvation to all who seek it.

This is the light revealed even to the Gentiles, for the glory of Your chosen people, Israel! Behold, this Child is destined for both downfall and resurrection among many in Israel, and His presence is a sign that will be met with contradiction.

Moreover, a sword shall pierce your soul, Mary, so that the hearts of many may be laid bare."

In that moment, Mary's eyes were filled with sorrow as she beheld visions of her son's life - from infancy to manhood, of the suffering and humiliation he would endure, and ultimately, of His death upon the cross. Silent tears traced down her cheeks, yet when Simeon returned the child to her, a faint smile of acceptance graced her face. Deep within, the infant spoke to her in an inner communion:

"Dearest Mother, though you must suffer much on my behalf, take heart; my love - God's love for you - is greater than the universe itself. Together, we shall atone for the sins of humanity, and together we will guide those who seek refuge into the open arms of Our Father." After the ceremony, Anne, the prophetess, addressed the assembled crowd, declaring, *"Behold this Child, for He is the Light of the World, the promised Messiah who has come to fulfill God's promise of salvation."*

Later, in the quiet of the cave, Mary spoke softly to Joseph, who cradled Jesus in his arms. *"I wish to make a novena for the next nine days at the temple,"* she said. Joseph, ever pragmatic, replied, *"After that, we should return to our home in Nazareth. I wonder, my most holy spouse, am I to teach Him my trade of carpentry? How can such precious hand hold rough wood and sharp tools?"* Mary smiled gently and replied, *"He will learn, my beloved. He will know rough wood, just as you have."*

In the temple on the morning of the fifth day, Mary, the infant, and Anne were deep in prayer. Suddenly, a look of fear crossed

Mary's face.

"What is it that troubles you?" Anne asked. "We cannot complete this fifth day of our novena," Mary whispered. "We must leave immediately."

Anne consoled her, *"Go, return to your dwelling. I will prepare supplies for your journey. I need not ask where or when you depart, for the message in your eyes is clear and most disturbing."* Clutching her child close, Mary left the temple with haste.

Outside on the path, as Mary hurried along with the infant tightly held, a worried Joseph intercepted her midway urging her with his words. *"We must prepare to leave immediately, An angel appeared to me with a frightening message: Herod has learned of Jesus' birth and, fearing for his own kingship, has ordered that all male children under the age of two be slaughtered."* Mary replied, her voice tinged with sorrow, *"I too have received this message. How many innocents will perish! They fear the Son of God, not knowing that He is also the Son of man."*

Joseph pressed on, *"We must flee to Egypt and remain there until it is safe to return. We depart tonight - it will be a long journey, my beloved. Tell me, what can I do to ease your burden?"*

Mary, with quiet determination, said, *"Our journey will not be without comfort, Joseph, for you provide so much solace. Whatever discomfort we encounter, we will embrace it, as we share in the grief of mothers who suffer much."*

Thus, with hearts heavy yet resolute, they prepared to embark on a long and uncertain journey, trusting in the guidance and protection of the Divine.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JOURNEY TO EGYPT

Under the faint light of a crescent moon in the dark sky, the figures of the Holy Family could barely be discerned as they set out on their long journey. Mary, tenderly carrying the infant in her arms atop a mule, and Joseph, steadfastly leading them away from the shelter of the cave. Their silhouettes merged with the quiet night as they began the arduous trek ahead.

After several days on the road, their travels brought them to the outskirts of Gaza. There, amid the dusty streets and the weary clamor of travel, Mary observed Joseph stumbling from sheer fatigue. The mule, too, had grown tired and stubbornly refused to move any further. Gently, Mary addressed him, "*Joseph, you are in need of rest, and this poor beast of burden will not make another day without the same consideration.*

Let us stop here in Gaza for a day or two. We would be welcomed at the home of my cousin Elisabeth's old friend, Merta. She is alone now that her husband has left her a widow; she tends the ill in the village, and I could assist her while you rest."

Their temporary sojourn led them to the modest dwelling of Merta, an elderly woman whose kindly hands had long cared for the sick. In one of her cramped chambers, two very ill children lay on a narrow cot, their faces deathly pale and their labored breaths barely audible. Merta consoled the distraught parents, saying, "*There is nothing more that can be done. Keep them comfortable with this herb - it will ease their cough and help them breathe without pain.*" While Merta spoke, Mary knelt at the bedside of the ailing children. Drawing a cloth from the sash of her robe, she dipped it into a nearby basin of water. With tender care, she wiped the lips and foreheads of each child, then took their small hands and gently pressed them to her cheek as she murmured silent prayers.

Gradually, the color began to return to their cheeks, and their ragged breathing quieted. In the midst of their relief, the father cried out in despair, *"They breathe no longer!"* while the mother lamented, *"My children, my children."* Mary reassured them softly, *"No, come, look. They have not left you. They responded well to the remedy. Children, open your eyes - show your worried parents that you feel better."* Then, beckoning Merta, she added, *"Let us leave this happy moment for we have yet more to see."* Merta, her expression a mixture of pleasure and confusion, responded, *"Yes, more to see."*

Tucking the bottle of medicine back into her apron pocket, Merta then offered, *"Perhaps you do not need this after all. Come, Mary, I have someone who cannot move her limbs to walk. You could rub some salve on them."* And with that, the pair left to continue the day's labor.

Soon, Mary and Merta found themselves at the home of another patient - a middle-aged woman named Helen, crippled from birth, with withered, useless legs. In a small, cluttered, and unclean hut, Helen lay upon a worn mat. Merta cautioned, *"Mind you; do not take a deep breath in here, for I do not know what disease floats about. I come once a week to see that she has clean clothes, at least."*

Producing a bundle of freshly laundered garments from her satchel, Merta set about helping Helen. Mary joined her at the woman's side. From her own apron, Mary withdrew a small bottle, removed its lid, and poured a measured amount of liquid into her cupped hands. With gentle strokes, she caressed the woman's face and then massaged the liquid into Helen's withered legs. Miraculously, as if touched by divine grace, the limbs slowly regained their shape and strength.

Overwhelmed, Merta fell to her knees in wonder, exclaiming, *"Who art thou, blessed woman? What powers God has given you!"* Mary replied softly, *"What faith He has granted you, that you might be permitted to see that which is hidden. Remain quiet, dear Merta, for my family is here but for a day. It would not be right to spread these wonders too widely."*

Merta promised, *"I will stay and help this one clean up her hut. Now that she can walk, she can assist me in caring for the others. You must return to your family."* With heartfelt gratitude, Mary excused herself, and as she left, the healed woman knelt and repeatedly kissed Mary's hands.

Not long after, Mary's journey led her to the steps of a nearby temple. Outside, beside a crumbling wall, several homeless people gathered in desperate supplication for food. Unafraid of their plight, Mary found herself encircled by the poor and hungry. A begging man pleaded, *"Please, my child has had no food for two days now - do you have something to spare?"* A small, tearful voice joined him: *"Food, papa, food."* A woman nearby lamented, *"Our neighbors are nothing but rats that scavenge from the barrels of grain. Please, spare something for the little ones."*

One of the men watching cautioned, *"Be wary; they might just bite your hand!"* The group laughed, and a small child, undeterred, rushed forward to hug the man, only to be shooed away by a shaking leg. Mary knelt down beside the child, scooped her up, and comforted her tenderly. Turning the child toward the men, she spoke in a gentle yet insistent tone, *"Look into her eyes - see the hunger there. Place your hand upon her, feel the fragility of her small frame. If your own son were this hungry and you could not feed him, would you not pray for another's kindness?"*

The food you cast aside each meal is more than this child has seen in an entire week. What keeps her from your table? I see compassion in your eyes. Now is the time, kind sir - now is the time." Moved by her words, one man offered a few coins from his pouch, and another wrapped his arm around a destitute parent, urging them to follow him. With that, Mary set the child down, knelt before the parents, and blessed their hands in gratitude.

After several days of healing and humble service, the Holy Family prepared to resume their journey. At Merta's modest home, Mary mounted the mule once more as Joseph handed her the infant, saying gratefully. *"Thank you, again, Merta, for your kindness. Though I mostly slept these last few days, I am thankful that my beloved had a wise and caring companion."*

Merta smiled warmly, *"Oh, it is I who am most thankful. Now, be safe in the desert."*

"Where are you headed, did you say?" Mary replied, *"Not far, Merta, and Joseph was right, your wisdom has been a true blessing on this short visit. God be with you."* Merta answered, *"And with you, my blessed friend,"* and with that, they parted ways.

The Holy Family pressed onward into the vast, unyielding expanse of the Desert of Bersabe in Palestine. February's chill gripped the air, and the desert stretched endlessly before them, a sea of barren sands offering no refuge, no solace. The wind howled like a wild beast, its furious gusts whipping through the emptiness, drowning out even the voices of Joseph and Mary as they tried to speak. The storm seemed alive, its whispers carrying the eerie weight of the void. Then, through the swirling chaos, a small foothill emerged in the distance, a faint promise of shelter. Joseph's voice cut through the tempest, urgent and determined: "There! Over there! We'll find cover!"

The infant's cries pierced the air, fragile yet insistent, as Mary fought to shield her child from the relentless, stinging winds. She dismounted the mule, its weary steps faltering under Joseph's lead, and pressed forward on foot. One arm cradled her newborn, the other stretched ahead, fingers clawing through the storm as if to part its fury. Step by step, they pushed toward the hillside, the wind's roar growing muffled as they neared the shelter. Finally, they reached the lee of the hill, and the tempest's rage softened to a murmur.

Mary sank to the ground, her body trembling but her hands steady as she soothed her child. *“Hush now, my little one,”* she whispered, her voice a tender balm against the chaos. The baby’s cries quieted, replaced by the soft sounds of nursing. A faint smile touched Mary’s lips as she gazed down at him. *“How hungry you were, my poor lamb,”* she murmured. She turned to Joseph, her voice gentle but firm. *“Sleep, Joseph. I’ll keep watch.”*

Joseph, his strength spent, nodded weakly and slumped against the hillside. His head rested on their meager bundle of belongings, his breathing slow and heavy. Mary watched him for a moment, then turned her gaze back to her child, now peaceful in slumber. Her heart ached with the weight of their journey, yet it also swelled with a quiet, unyielding hope. The desert stretched endlessly around them, but in that moment, within the shelter of the hill, there was a fragile peace. As the Holy Family pressed deeper into their journey to Egypt, they trudged over one hundred grueling miles across the merciless Desert of Bersabe. Each day stretched endlessly, the sun blazing overhead and the nights offering little respite. Mary and Joseph sustained themselves with nothing more than a single meager meal, eaten late at night after hours of exhausting travel. The elements showed no pity, and one night, a savage storm descended upon them with unrelenting fury. Rain lashed down in sheets, and the wind howled like a vengeful spirit, tearing at their already battered spirits.

Mary, though steadfast in her faith, could not shield her child from the storm’s wrath without invoking divine power. The rain soaked through her garments, clinging to her skin like a second, icy layer. Her arms trembled as she cradled the infant, his tiny body wrapped in drenched swaddling cloth. He shivered violently, his cries piercing the night, sharp and desperate at first, then growing faint, as if his strength were ebbing away. Mary’s heart clenched with terror as she felt the chill seeping into his fragile form. She gazed down at his pale face, her own tears mingling with the rain, and a fierce, maternal defiance surged within her.

Lifting her eyes to the raging heavens, her voice rose above the storm, raw and commanding: *“I command you, wind and rain! Do not afflict my child, the Only Begotten Son of God! If you must unleash your fury, turn it upon me, for I am unworthy beside Him!”* Her words rang out, a desperate plea wrapped in the authority of a mother’s love. The storm seemed to hesitate, its fury momentarily stilled, as if the very elements had paused to heed her cry. Mary clutched her child closer, her body trembling not from the cold but from the weight of her sacrifice. In that moment, she was both vulnerable and unyielding, a beacon of devotion in the face of nature’s wrath. In response to her plea, a luminous globe of light encircled the child in her arms. So moved by His Mother’s love, Jesus requested that the army of angels accompanying them enlarge the globe of light to encompass both Mary and Joseph. This miracle sustained the Holy Family through many trials on their long, treacherous journey to Egypt.

At long last, the Holy Family arrived in Egypt, their weary steps carrying them into a land shadowed by darkness. Many of its people were ensnared, their souls bound by the sinister grip of Lucifer and his malevolent ministers. Yet, as Mary and Joseph entered the towns, a quiet but profound power stirred within their midst. The infant Jesus, cradled in His Mother’s arms, lifted His tiny eyes and hands toward the heavens, His gaze fixed on His Heavenly Father. Though no words passed His lips, His silent plea resonated with divine urgency, a call for mercy, for deliverance, for the salvation of those trapped in despair. Mary, ever attuned to her Son’s sacred mission, joined Him in this unspoken prayer. Her heart, heavy with compassion, beat in unison with His as she offered her own supplication.

Together, their silent cries rose like a beacon of light, piercing the veil of darkness that hung over the land. In that moment, the air itself seemed to tremble with the weight of their devotion, as if heaven itself leaned closer to hear their plea. The infant's tiny hands, raised in innocence and power, became a symbol of hope, a promise that even in the bleakest of places, the light of salvation could not be extinguished. The dark Egyptian skies soon roiled with storm clouds, lightning thrashing and evil spirits being cast from the bodies of the downtrodden. Idols shattered, altars crumbled, and temples fell into ruin as the divine power swept through the land. The Egyptian people, astonished by these inexplicable happenings, began to rebuild their towns.

Amid the chaos, the strangers - the Holy Family - stepped forward to help. As they labored alongside the locals, Mary began to speak of the prophecies of Isaiah: *"Was it not foretold that the Messiah, King of the Jews, would come, and that the idol temples would be destroyed?"*

There is but one true God, the Creator of all life's mysteries. Look upon your son - do you not marvel at his perfection? So young, yet full of reason and strength. And you, mistress, when you wash your clothes in the river, do you not wonder at the life-giving flow that sustains your family? He, the one and only Creator of heaven and earth, fashioned all with beauty and purpose, out of love for you all."

Crowds gathered to hear her speak and to witness the miracles - the cleansing of demons from idols and possessed bodies, the curing of grievous illnesses, all aided by the fervent prayers of her Son. At last, their arduous journey came to an end when the family settled in the town of Heliopolis. They made their home in a humble three-room abode: one room became a sanctuary for the Infant Jesus under Mary's care, another was reserved as Joseph's sleeping chamber, and the last served as his modest carpentry workshop.

During these trying times, Joseph found work scarce and often faced rejection, while Mary, gifted as a seamstress, gathered sewing work from house to house. In their small home, from the break of dawn until nightfall, Mary labored not only for their daily needs but also attended tenderly to Jesus and supported Joseph. In quiet moments in the nursery, Mary knelt in prayer, a soft light radiating from her heart and that of her Son - a sacred communion soon joined by a third light from above, as the God of All spoke with them.

Thus, amid hardship and divine wonder, the Holy Family's journey continued - a testament to faith, resilience, and the transformative power of love that would forever change the course of human destiny.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE BOY JESUS

In a quiet workroom of their dwelling, the toddler Jesus, with olive-toned soft skin, dark curly hair, and deep brown eyes was cradled in Mary's loving arms. He spoke to Joseph for the very first time. His small yet clear voice carried the weight of heavenly purpose as he addressed his earthly father:

"My father, I came from heaven to be the light of the world and to rescue it from darkness. I have come to be a good Shepherd, to teach them the way of heaven and to open its gates, which have been closed by their sins. I desire that you be a child of the Light, which you have so close at hand."

Overwhelmed by the divine words and the gentle authority of his son, Joseph fell to his knees, his heart soaring with humility beyond measure. With trembling awe, he replied, *"That you, my Lord and Savior, have called me your humble servant moves my heart to such heights that words escape my tongue to express my truest feelings."*

Later, in the serene sanctuary of the child's room, Jesus sought out His mother. Mary, kneeling in quiet prayer, felt the soft touch of His small hand as it gently caressed her face.

With a tender, yet resolute tone, He said:

"My Mother, enter and remain with Me always, so that you may imitate Me in all my works. I wish for you to embody and exhibit the high perfection that I desire in all souls. I have chosen you as the vessel of all perfection and bestow upon you the treasures of my right hand - treasures that the rest of humanity have lost or abused."

At these sacred words, Mary, filled with profound love and reverence, softly kissed her child's hand, a gesture that sealed the intimate bond between them and affirmed her role as the chosen vessel of divine grace.

On the banks of a gentle, winding river, the afternoon sun cast a warm, golden glow upon the rippling water and the soft, earthen bank. There, among the murmur of flowing water and the distant chatter of the village, a small group of children of varying ages gathered in playful abandonment. Their laughter mingled with the rhythmic clatter of mothers busy at work - washing clothing in the cool, clear water, their hands moving in a practiced dance that spoke of tradition and care.

Among these children, three-year-old Jesus stood out with an unassuming quietness. In the midst of their frolic, as splashes and joyful shouts filled the air, He suddenly paused his play. With the serene composure of one far beyond His tender years, He walked over to a

smooth, sun-warmed rock by the water's edge and sat down. One by one, the other children abandoned their games and clustered around Him, settling in a circle at His feet. Their bright eyes shone with curiosity and admiration as they listened intently to the soft, gentle words that poured forth from their little teacher.

Jesus spoke in simple words but with an earnestness that belied His age - a message of hope, love, and wonder that resonated deeply within the hearts of His young audience. He described in simple yet profound language the beauty of the world around them, the power of kindness, and the secret of sharing joy even in the smallest gestures. His words, tender and sincere, wove a tapestry of understanding that reached out to every eager ear, capturing the imaginations of His friends and inspiring them to dream of a brighter tomorrow.

From a short distance away, Mary watched the scene unfold. Leaning against a nearby tree, her eyes were soft with love, and a knowing smile graced her face. In that quiet moment, she felt an indescribable mix of joy and awe, a deep, maternal pride in the gentle wisdom that shone from her child. As she observed the simplicity and purity of His interaction with the other children, Mary's heart swelled with gratitude.

She recognized in Him the spark of divine light that promised to one day illuminate the darkest corners of the world. tender and sincere, wove a tapestry of understanding that reached out to every eager ear, capturing the imaginations of His friends and inspiring them to dream of a brighter tomorrow.

From a short distance away, Mary watched the scene unfold. Leaning against a nearby tree, her eyes were soft with love, and a knowing smile graced her face. In that quiet moment, she felt an indescribable mix of joy and awe, a deep, maternal pride in the gentle wisdom that shone from her child. As she observed the simplicity and purity of His interaction with the other children, Mary's heart swelled with gratitude. She recognized in Him the spark of divine light that promised to one day illuminate the darkest corners of the world.

The gentle murmur of the river and the soft rustling of the leaves above provided a serene backdrop to this intimate scene of childhood wonder. In that tranquil space, time seemed to slow, and every detail - the sparkle in the children's eyes, the delicate cadence of Jesus' words, and the compassionate smile on Mary's face - contributed to a moment of perfect harmony.

It was a simple gathering on the riverbank, yet it carried the weight of promise and hope, hinting at the profound destiny that lay ahead for the Child of God.

This scene would play over many times over the next years, as Mary would take the family's garments to wash at the river as did the continued rituals of prayer in their home.

In the quiet of their house, the air was heavy with both sorrow and sacred anticipation. In a small, sunlit room, the now five-year-old Jesus lay on the floor in a posture that evoked the symbolism of the Cross. His tiny body was pale, and from His brow, beads of blood trickled slowly down His face - a sight that filled the room with a deep, ineffable sorrow.

At His side, Mary, radiant even in her grief, was caught in a state of prayerful ecstasy. Overwhelmed by the vision of her child's pain, she fell to her knees and gently wiped the red streaks from His forehead. Tears streamed silently down her cheeks as she held back the wrenching pain in her heart, her love for Him, a tender balm against the emerging sorrow.

The following year, six-year-old Jesus joined Joseph in his work room. With a look of quiet determination, Jesus clutched a small tool, and Joseph, ever patient and loving, guided His hands as they worked together on a piece of wood. The rhythmic sound of their labor blended with soft words of instruction and encouragement, creating a moment of intimate bonding between father and son, a silent lesson in craft, care, and the beauty of creation.

In another part of the humble dwelling, Mary busied herself in the kitchen. With graceful attentiveness, she arranged a plate of food for their noon meal. Her every gesture was infused with a deep sense of duty and affection, a constant, nurturing presence that spoke of the love and commitment binding the family together.

As evening fell, the family emerged into the cool twilight. Outside on the lively street, they walked together toward the temple, their laughter mingling with the sounds of daily life. The joy of being together was palpable, a welcome reprieve from the struggles of each day, as they strolled along, their hearts light and hopeful.

Inside Jesus' small, simple room, now that He had grown to seven years old, a divine message was delivered. Mary and the young Jesus listened intently as a gentle, unseen voice conveyed that it was time for the family to return to Nazareth. There was a solemn resolve in the air as they prepared themselves for the next stage of their journey, a homecoming that resonated with destiny and promise.

That night, in the quiet solitude of Joseph's room, he too received the sacred message. In a vision that unfolded before his eyes, he saw his family packing their few possessions and mounting mules to leave once more, venturing back into the desert. The vision, imbued with divine purpose, soon became reality, and the Holy Family found themselves arriving at their home in Nazareth. There, they were greeted warmly by a dear female cousin, Martha, who had taken charge of the old house that once belonged to Mary's parents.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

Inside the restored home, the shutters were flung open, and streams of light poured in, filling the dwelling with warmth and a sense of welcome. Martha greeted them with heartfelt joy. *"Welcome home, dear cousins, and look, your son, Joseph, I heard from Elisabeth that he is called Jesus. Such a sweet face, and if he is anything like his father, a sweet temperament as well!"*

Mary replied gratefully, *"Much thanks to you, Martha, for taking such good care of the former house of my parents."*

Joseph added softly, *"Yes, our gratitude is felt deeply."*

In a touching display of youthful generosity, young Jesus carefully unwrapped a small bundle he had carried with him. From it, he revealed two delicately carved wooden birds. With a shy smile and trembling hands, he offered them to Martha. *"This is for you, thank you for caring for my parents' house,"* he said. Martha marveled, exclaiming, *"Look at this! Joseph, you have become quite skilled. Why, they are doves."* Joseph, with a twinkle in his eye, replied, *"They were not carved by these hands, but by these."* In that moment, Joseph stepped behind Jesus and wrapped his arms around him, taking the boy's small hands into his own and extending them toward Martha. Touched beyond measure by this loving gesture, Jesus leaned back against Joseph, his eyes shining with the pure, unspoken bond of family and faith. In the soft glow of a late afternoon, Joseph and young Jesus set about restoring order in the woodshed behind their modest home. Together they opened the creaking doors, peering inside at the mix of well-worn, old tools and newer implements brought from Egypt.

With patient care, they straightened the scattered implements and gathered what they needed for their next task - a cot for Jesus to sleep on. Working side by side, the father and son crafted the cot with simple, loving precision. When they finished, they attempted to carry it inside the house. In their shared laughter, the cot was bulky and awkward - became lodged in the doorway, and as they struggled to maneuver it, Mary's gentle laughter joined theirs. When at last it was in the Blessed Mother made attempts at setting up a room for Jesus."

Inside Jesus' small room, Mary took to arranging the furnishings with quiet devotion. She placed a small table, a stool, and neatly folded bedding upon the freshly built cot. When she stepped out briefly and then returned, she discovered with a rueful laugh that everything, except the cot itself, had accidentally been left outside the door. The King of Kings took no time in practicing humility and discomfort felt by so many of the children of God.

Later, on a bright morning, Joseph and Jesus set out together through the bustling streets of their village. Pushing a sturdy cart laden with a yoke and a basin, they made their way to the home of a kindly man who had lent Joseph a mule eight years earlier. The man sat on his creaking stoop and greeted them with good-natured banter. *"Well, I will be! Joseph, you finally are paying for the old mule. I bet she died quicker than it took to make these fine pieces of woodwork,"* he teased. With a warm smile, Joseph replied, *"On the contrary, my compassionate friend, the beast, lasted nearly four years."* The man chuckled and then inquired about the boy at his side. *"And who might this fine young lad be?"* Jesus, with the earnest politeness of a child who already carried a hint of wisdom, extended his hand and said, *"My name is Jesus; I am this very good carpenter's son. Thank you, sir, for letting my Mother and I ride on your mule. We journeyed many, many leagues, and I even helped my father make this basin. Let me fill it for you."*

Obediently, the boy dashed off to a nearby well, pumping water into the basin.

The kindly man, watching Jesus at work, sighed, *"You are a lucky man with such a son. My own child is very ill, each day he worsens, and nothing seems to cure him."* Pausing in his task, Jesus lifted his head and, with a knowing look, cupped his hand beneath the well's spout to let the cool water flow over it, filling the basin steadily. Carefully carrying the basin back to the man's doorstep, he announced, *"Let me bring this inside for you. The water is nice and cold; it will be good for drinking."* The man replied with a note of gentle humor, *"If you wish, my wife is tending my son. You will be a sight for her sad eyes."*

Inside the house, a teenage boy lay weakly on a cot while his mother sat vigil by his bedside. Jesus set the basin down, spotted a wooden cup on a table, and filled it with water. Kneeling beside the boy, he raised the cup to the teen's lips. After a few sips, the boy grasped Jesus' hand, opened his eyes, and smiled, a fragile sign of hope as color slowly returned to his pallid face. Tenderly, Jesus kissed the teen's hand before leaving.

He returned to Joseph and the boy's father and the two prepared to leave the man asked, *"Was my wife bending your ear? Did she tell you about our poor son? I was telling your father it won't be long before his suffering ends."* Jesus simply replied, *"Why, he seemed fine when I offered him some water. He drank nearly a whole cup."* With that, the man, still a bit confused, hurried back inside as Jesus smiled at his father, and the two of them strolling back down the street towards home.

At home, as the years wove their gentle tapestry of growth and learning, Jesus, now ten years old, sat patiently as Mary lovingly fitted him with a new pair of cloth coverings for his feet. She placed them on, removed them, and then carefully readjusted them, all the while ensuring that her beloved son was not left to wander barefoot on the hard, dusty ground.

"My Son and my Lord," Mary chided softly yet affectionately, *"thy Mother has not the heart to allow you to go barefoot upon the ground at such a tender age; permit me, my love, to provide some kind of covering to protect them."* With the calm wisdom of youth, Jesus replied, *"Mother, I will permit a slight and ordinary covering for my feet until the time of my public preaching shall come, for this I must go barefooted."* Then, with a shy smile and a loving kiss upon her cheek, he accepted the footwear, a small symbol of both protection and the humble path he was destined to walk.

CHAPTER TWENTY

PREACHING AT THE TEMPLE

Now just past his twelfth year, Jesus was not the typical lanky youth. Although tall, he was sturdy and strong, no doubt from the daily work with his father. The family joined a lively procession on the road. Jesus accompanied his family and many friends, laden with bundles and pulled carts, as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. Amid the festive chatter and the bustling energy of the crowd, Jesus inquired, *"Father, will I be allowed to be with the men this year?"* Joseph replied with a knowing grin, *"I would say that is a good possibility. What does your good Mother say?"* With a mischievous sparkle in his eye, Jesus answered, *"Oh, she always says whatever you say is best."* From behind, Mary, walking with a group of women, paused and joined her family briefly.

"You two walk faster than all the women put together," she teased gently, *"and for that reason, should we not select a location to meet after the feast ends, in case we do not leave the city together? Of course, my dearest Son, you will be either with your father or with me, yes?"* Joseph concurred, *"A good idea! There is a great tree about a day's walk outside the city, a cluster of stone to the right of it. I will point it out when we come to it. That is where we will meet."*

As they continued on their way, the very next day, Mary, walking among the other women, caught sight of the designated meeting spot and waved to Joseph. Meanwhile, Jesus, strolling with a group of other children, turned back and pointed excitedly at the tree and stone, a silent affirmation of the family's plans and the joy of shared journeys. The city of Jerusalem sprawled before them, a breathtaking panorama of ancient grandeur and sacred devotion. The golden light of the setting sun bathed its towering walls and narrow alleyways, casting long, reverent shadows upon streets alive with purpose.

Every stone seemed to whisper stories of prophets and kings, and every doorway hummed with the echoes of fervent prayers. As dusk deepened, the city pulsed with life. The majestic facades of the temples glowed beneath the twilight, their towering columns kissed by the last embers of daylight. Some temples thronged with solemn, bearded men, their voices rising and falling in rhythmic chants, while others sheltered groups of veiled women, their whispered prayers weaving like a soft melody through the sacred air.

Later that evening, the city transformed into a sensory feast. The warm, yeasty aroma of freshly baked unleavened bread mingled with the rich, earthy scent of spices and fragrant oils, wafting through the bustling courtyards. Families gathered beneath the open sky, their laughter and song spilling into the streets as the grand feast commenced, a celebration of faith and freedom that stretched over seven nights of reverence, storytelling, and joyous abandonment.

From the humble villages of Nazareth to the farthest reaches of Judea, pilgrims had come, their hearts alight with the spirit of devotion and festivity, dancing beneath the stars as the sacred festival united them in an unbreakable bond of faith and tradition.

On the final day of the feast, as the first light of morning broke through and families began their journey home, the once-crowded streets gradually emptied. In the thinning crowd, Joseph's eyes scanned the familiar cluster of stones and the great tree that had been their agreed meeting spot. He looked about anxiously for Mary and their son, Jesus. Suddenly, Mary's worried gaze met his, only she was alone, and Jesus was nowhere in sight. In a flurry of concern, they moved among the remaining crowd, asking every passerby if they had seen their son.

"Have you seen Jesus?" Mary asked a nearby woman with gentle urgency.

"Why yes, he is quite handsome, Mary. Did he enjoy the feast?" the woman replied warmly.

"Yes, I am sure he did. I mean, since we left, have you or your families seen him?" Mary pressed.

The woman shook her head, *"No, not since the other day."*

Joseph then made his way from one group to another, his eyes darting over the thinning throng and then toward the familiar tree, desperately hoping that the boy would suddenly appear. At length, he spotted Mary standing by the spot, her face etched with worry. Rushing to her side, he exclaimed, *"He is nowhere to be found. I thought he was with you. Forgive me, I truly thought he was with you."*

Mary replied softly, *"And I thought he was with you. We must return to Jerusalem at once."* With hearts heavy but resolute, the two hurriedly wove their way through the departing crowd toward the city.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, Jesus, was begging in the crowded streets for alms. He approached a compassionate woman, who, moved by his humble appearance, offered him a small portion of what she had. Carefully, he tucked the modest gift into his satchel and continued on, seeking help from several others. Yet, he neither ate nor adorned himself with anything offered. As the day faded into evening, the boy made his way toward the part of the city where the homeless gathered for shelter. There, with quiet dignity, he emptied his collected alms and shared them generously among those in need.

Later still, as twilight deepened into a somber night, Joseph and Mary returned to the city, each gripped by anxiety. They decided to split up, desperate to find their missing son.

In a moment of quiet despair, Mary fell to her knees in a secluded corner and lifted her face to the heavens. *"Why is he hidden from my heart? Until this moment, I have always seen him, even when he was not in my sight. Celestial companions lead me to him. Show me the way, that I may run to him and be relieved of this sorrow,"* she prayed fervently. Though no vision came to her that night, the pain in her eyes was as clear as the stars above. With a trembling sigh, she rose from her knees and began to move rapidly in the direction her intuition urged her.

At dawn the following morning, as the sun's first rays began to chase away the darkness, Joseph and Mary resumed their frantic search. On the crowded streets, Mary stopped a woman and described her missing son, she quickly replied. *"Yes, a child with those looks came up to me yesterday asking for alms, adding softly. I gave him some, a child so gracious in his need tugs at my heart."*

As Joseph and Mary continued their search, people confirmed that many had seen Jesus. Again, he was witnessed begging from the people, gathering what little he received and, with a quiet resolve, giving it away. In the afternoon, he was spotted inside a modest hospital for the indigent, where he moved among the afflicted, laying his small hands on those in pain, offering comfort and, in subtle miracles, causing cures and gentle recoveries.

For three long days, Joseph and Mary scoured the city without rest, neither eating nor sleeping. Mary, in her anguish, had at one point thought that Jesus had sought refuge in the cave of the Nativity, but the angels assured her he was not far away. She even wondered if he might be wandering with John in the desert, yet once again, the celestial messengers denied this notion. Through it all, the most holy Queen suffered as any mother would - her tears flowed freely, yet she never allowed anger or bitterness to darken her spirit.

Then, on the third day, within the vast and echoing halls of a great temple, an astonishing scene unfolded. Jesus, stood among the learned men who debated the prophecies of the coming Messiah. With quiet confidence, he stepped forward and joined their circle. One by one, the learned men, along with many parents gathered to help in the search turned their attentive faces toward him. In awe, they sat around him, listening intently to the insights and gentle arguments of this young sage. Mary and Joseph, having finally located the gathering, entered the temple and observed his final discussion with the elders. In the midst of the assembly, Mary stepped forward, her voice filled with both sorrow and love, and said, "*Son, why have You done this to us? Your father and I have been searching for You with heavy hearts.*"

Jesus, calm yet firm, replied, "*Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be doing My Father's work?*"

Mary spoke softly, her heart heavy with emotion. "*Let me express my sorrow, my son, so that my heart does not break from the pain while I still have a purpose in serving You.*" Jesus gazed at His mother with deep love, offering her comfort through His presence. Until the time came for His greater mission, He remained by her side, guiding and accompanying her. With their hearts reunited, the Holy Family set out for Nazareth. The young Jesus, full of humility and obedience, honored His parents in a way that even the angels marveled at. Mary, blessed beyond measure, was so pure and virtuous that the Son of God willingly placed.

Himself under her care. With Joseph's guidance, she nurtured and raised Him as her own, leading with wisdom and love.

Striving always to reflect His goodness, her deep holiness touched the heart of Christ, binding them together in an unbreakable love.

Thus, in the midst of Jerusalem's ancient splendor, where faith and festivity filled the air, the Holy Family experienced both joy and sorrow, a journey marked by hope, loss, and divine wisdom. Their story, etched into the sacred walls of the temple, would live on in the hearts of all who would one day hear it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

JESUS FROM TEEN TO MAN

In the humble town of Nazareth, time passed in gentle, unmistakable rhythms, marked by the growth of Jesus and the quiet transformation of his chosen parents. In those early years, the workshop rang with the sounds of saws and hammers as Jesus and Joseph worked side by side on various carpentry projects. Under Joseph's careful guidance, Jesus learned the art of shaping wood, his hands growing sure and steady as he joined his father in crafting simple household items. There were days when Jesus would carry large, heavy containers of water from the public - fountains back to their modest home - a task that not only built his strength but also instilled in him the discipline of service and the dignity of hard work.

As the sun dipped low each evening, Mary and Jesus would often walk along the bank of the nearby river. In the soft glow of sunset, the water shimmered like liquid gold, and the pair would talk in quiet whispers - a silent, intimate communion that seemed to pass between them as much as it did through the gentle play of light. At home, the family gathered for meals, the modest table a place where love and conversation intermingled with laughter and quiet gratitude. In quieter moments, when words were few, a subtle radiance would pass between Mary and her son - a soft, shimmering light that spoke of divine communion, a silent transmission of hope and understanding.

In the stillness of their private spaces, both Jesus and Mary sought solace in prayer. In his room, the young Jesus would sometimes lie prostrate on the floor, his body arranged in a posture reminiscent of the Cross. In a parallel devotion, Mary, too, would fall to her knees in her own room, her silent supplications filled with both maternal love and an abiding faith in the unfolding mystery of life.

As the years passed, Jesus grew into a young man, his once-childish features sharpening into the quiet strength of adulthood. His olive-toned skin, bronzed by the Judean sun, bore the mark of days spent in labor, while his dark, wavy hair framed a face both gentle and resolute. His eyes, deep and knowing, held a quiet intensity, reflecting wisdom far beyond his years.

Each day, his hands, calloused yet steady, shaped wood with skill and purpose, molded by the trade of his earthly father. The strength in his frame was not one of mere power, but of endurance, the natural result of work that demanded both patience and precision. Though he moved with the quiet confidence of a craftsman, there was something unspoken yet undeniable about him, a presence that drew others in, a calm assurance that hinted at a greater purpose.

With each passing season, the weight of divine wisdom settled upon him, emerging not in grand gestures but in the gentle grace of his actions and the depth of his thoughts. He labored, he learned, and he reflected, his spirit growing ever stronger as he prepared for the path ahead.

Joseph, meanwhile, began to show the inevitable signs of age. Once vigorous and tireless, he now struggled with tasks that had long been second nature. One afternoon, as he attempted to lift a particularly cumbersome piece of wood, his hands trembled with fatigue. Seeing his father falter, Jesus immediately stepped in, easing the burden by taking the weight from Joseph's weakened arms and guiding him to a nearby stool. Though Joseph still occasionally joined his son in the carpentry work that had defined his life, more often he would sit and watch, his eyes shining with pride as he saw in Jesus the continuation of a sacred craft and a legacy of love.

Time continued its steady march until Jesus reached the age of twenty-five - a young man who now bore the mark of maturity, both in his physical presence and in the thoughtful depths of his spirit.

In contrast, Joseph, the steadfast pillar of the family, was now near death; his once-robust frame lay frail and diminished, the years having left their quiet imprint upon him. Mary, who was forty-one, remained the radiant heart of the family. Since her own youthful bloom at the age of thirty-three, she had carried herself with an enduring beauty and grace that seemed almost timeless, a luminous testament to the strength and love of a mother.

Thus, in the quiet cadence of everyday life in Nazareth, from the hum of the workshop and the soft murmur of the river to the heartfelt prayers shared in solitude, the passage of time wove a tapestry of growth, perseverance, and quiet transformation. The Holy Family's days, filled with labor, love, and loss, bore witness to a legacy that would one day echo far beyond the narrow streets of their small town, heralding the promise of redemption and the enduring power of faith.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

In the quiet stillness of Joseph's sleeping chamber, as the twilight deepened into solemn night, Mary and Jesus stood together in a moment heavy with foreknowledge and tender grief. Mary's eyes, filled with both sorrow and steadfast faith, fell upon her beloved husband and earthly father, Joseph, whose life was nearing its final hour. In a voice trembling with both love and resignation, she spoke softly to Jesus:

"I see that the time of Joseph's passing is near, as You have planned for Your servant. Let his death be as precious to You as his life, for he was my husband and the earthly father You chose to honor."

Jesus, in the quiet moments of impending loss, replied with gentle assurance, *"I will assist and assign him a place among the princes of my people, so exalted that he shall become the admiration of angels and cause all men to break forth in the highest praise."* His words, calm yet filled with divine promise, seemed to bridge the gap between mortal sorrow and heavenly hope.

For several long, poignant days, Mary and Jesus remained by his side, tending to him with tender care. The chamber, dimly lit by a single flickering candle, bore silent witness to whispered prayers and the soft murmur of farewell. Joseph, frail and yet dignified, summoned the strength to speak his final words.

"Blessed art Thou among all women and elect of all the creatures. May angels and men from every generation come to praise and exalt Thy dignity. I hope to behold Thy glorious countenance in the heavenly fatherland."

Mary, tears glistening in her eyes, tenderly took his hand and kissed it as if to seal their lifelong bond. Then, stepping back with both sorrow and resolve, she allowed Jesus to draw near. With a profound mixture of love and filial duty, Jesus gathered his weakened father into his arms. As Joseph reclined his head, their eyes met, a silent conversation of gratitude, hope, and farewell passed between them.

Joseph's voice was faint; each word filled with deep reverence. *"Forgive and bless Your servant, the work of Your hands. I praise You and give thanks forever for choosing me to be the husband of Your Mother. Let Your greatness and glory be my eternal gratitude."*

His voice, imbued with quiet ecstasy, seemed to echo in the small room as he surrendered himself to the inevitable.

Moved beyond measure, Jesus spoke with a clarity that resonated with both mortal love and divine authority, *"My father, rest in peace and in the grace of our eternal Father and mine; and to the Prophets and Saints awaiting thee in limbo, bring the joyful news of the approach of their redemption."* At these sacred words, Joseph's entire being was suddenly engulfed in a magnificent, radiant light. His face, once etched with the lines of earthly toil and tender love, now shone with an ecstasy that transcended mortal sorrow. In that blinding splendor, Joseph's spirit departed, leaving behind a silence that was as profound as it was beautiful.

Jesus, with gentle care, closed his father's eyes and pressed a soft kiss to his lips, while tears - silent and unceasing, flowed freely from both Mary's and his own eyes.

And so, in the quiet sanctity of their small chamber in Nazareth, the legacy of Joseph was mourned and exalted. His earthly departure was not an end but a prelude to a new chapter - a chapter in which his memory, like a gentle guiding star, would forever illuminate the path of faith for his beloved family.

Mary, radiant with both sorrow and grace, and Jesus, now a man fully aware of his destiny, continued to honor Joseph's legacy through every act of love, every word of prayer, and every humble labor in the days that stretched forward into eternity.

Thus passed the earthly life of Joseph, and in the ensuing years, a deep and transformative change settled over Nazareth. For the remaining six years, Mary and Jesus carried on in a quiet rhythm of daily life, each day a prayer, each moment an act of remembrance. Their home, though touched by the sorrow of loss, shone with the abiding light of faith and the subtle assurance of divine promise.

In a humble chamber later, Jesus knelt in earnest prayer before Mary. With his arms outstretched in the sign of the Cross, he lifted his voice in a heartfelt supplication:

"O blessed Cross! When will your arms hold mine? When will I rest upon you, my hands nailed, open to embrace all sinners? Come, children of Adam for I call you all. I am the way, the truth, and the life, and I will not refuse anyone who seeks me. My eternal Father, these are the works of Your hands; do not turn them away. I will offer myself as a sacrifice upon the Cross to bring them back to justice and freedom. If they are willing, I will lead them to Your heavenly kingdom, where Your name will be glorified."

As Jesus prayed, Mary watched over him with a heart both proud and pained. On his face, beads of blood began to form once again - a reminder of both sacrifice and sorrow.

This time, Mary did not wipe away her tears.

Instead, with the raw sorrow of a mother's heart, she spoke in a soft, pleading voice:

"O children of men, do you not see how deeply the Lord values His image within you? If only I could unite your hearts with mine, so that you might love and obey Him! Blessed are those who remain faithful to their Father, honored by His right hand."

O Eternal God, how can mortals turn away from such a perfect love? If only I could give my life to save them from their blindness! Let them turn their cruelty upon me, insult and afflict me as they wish, but give to my beloved Lord what is rightfully His."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

HIS PUBLIC LIFE DRAWS NEAR

In the quiet solitude of the woodshed, Jesus sat alone at a workbench worn smooth by years of honest labor. The interior was filled with the familiar scents of freshly hewn wood and the tang of metal from his well-used tools. Dust motes danced in the slanting rays of sunlight that filtered through a small, window. His hands, steady and determined, traced gentle patterns in the grain of a piece of cedar as he carved intricate designs into the wood, a silent conversation with the craft and with his own emerging destiny.

At that moment, the heavy silence of focused work was broken by the soft creak of the shed door. Mary entered, her face radiant with both maternal love and quiet pride. In her hand she carried a single, perfectly ripe piece of fruit, a vibrant apple that glowed like a gem in the subdued light. With a tender smile, she approached her son, placing the fruit gently on the worn workbench beside him. “*Eat, my son,*” she whispered, her voice as warm and gentle as the fading sunlight. For a moment, the steady rhythm of his carving paused as he looked up into his mother’s caring eyes, a silent exchange of love passing between them before he reached out and accepted the offering.

The day slowly faded into the golden hues of late afternoon, and now Jesus walked alone along the banks of the quietly flowing river. His footsteps followed a gentle, meandering path beside the shimmering current. Lost in thought, he wandered slowly, each step measured as if pondering the mysteries of life. Eventually, he came upon a venerable old tree standing in quiet solitude. Resting his weight against its rough bark, he allowed himself a moment of reflection. The soft murmuring of the water and the whisper of leaves created a peaceful symphony, and in that tranquil pause, his eyes closed as he delved deep into his inner world, a meditation on hope, on duty, and on the destiny that lay ahead.

Later, within the welcoming embrace of their humble home, Mary and Jesus gathered around a simple wooden table. The room was softly lit by the gentle glow of oil lamps, their light dancing upon the worn surfaces and casting long, comforting shadows. A modest meal had been prepared with care, a humble assortment of bread, fresh vegetables, and a small dish of stewed lentils. As they shared the food, there was a quiet intimacy in their conversation. Mary listened with tender attention as her son recounted the thoughts that had crossed his mind by the river; his words, filled with both wonder and the subtle weight of divine purpose, mingled with her own soft murmurs of encouragement and reflection.

Between bites and shared smiles, a silent, luminous connection passed between them, an unspoken communion that spoke of love, learning, and the unfolding of a higher plan.

The narrative of their days continued to expand beyond the confines of their home. In a small, crowded room in a village clinic, Mary and Jesus were seen together once more, this time in the service of others. They moved quietly among the sick, offering gentle care and compassionate words. Mary, with her healing touch and warm presence, soothed those in distress, likewise Jesus, his eyes bright with empathy and quiet authority helped to heal and dress wounds and comfort the ailing. Their combined efforts filled the humble space with hope, as neighbors and strangers alike found solace in their kindness.

The soft murmur of their prayers and the tender ministrations they offered were a testament to the enduring spirit of love and service that had always defined their lives.

Thus, from the solitary work of carving in the woodshed to the reflective walks along the river, and from sharing a simple meal to tending the sick in the village, the passage of time in Nazareth was marked by moments of quiet grace and profound significance.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

In the quiet solitude of her private chamber, Mary knelt in earnest prayer, her face illuminated by the soft glow of a single candle. The room was hushed, the only sound the steady beating of her heart and the gentle rustle of her garments. Suddenly, in the midst of her devotion, a voice as clear and commanding as the dawn itself filled the air:

"Mary, my Daughter, and Spouse, it is time offer to Me thy only begotten Son in sacrifice."

At that moment, Mary's eyes widened in sudden, intense pain - not merely of the flesh but of a deep, soul-wrenching grief. In an instant, she was flooded with memories and visions: she saw, as if before her very eyes, the solemn presentation of her newborn at the temple, the sight of the priest Simeon lifting her precious child, and the haunting vision of her son upon the Cross. These images, both beautiful and agonizing, converged within her heart.

With trembling voice and tear-filled eyes, Mary responded, *"What can I offer You, Most High, that is not already Yours? I acknowledge, my King, that You formed Him in my womb and granted me the honor of bringing Him into the world, of nursing Him, and protecting Him from the harshness of life. From Him, I have received immeasurable blessings, He is the strength of my strength, the essence of my soul, the very joy of my existence. To give up my Son to satisfy the demands of His cruel enemies is the greatest sacrifice, a sorrow beyond words. Yet, let it not be my will, but Yours. Let humanity be redeemed, let Your boundless love be revealed, and let Your name be glorified among all creation. Before all, I place Him in Your hands, that He may pay the debt not of His own making, but of Adam's children, and so that in His death, He may fulfill all that the holy prophets, inspired by You, have foretold."*

A profound silence followed, as if the very air awaited God's reply. Then the voice returned, gentle yet powerful:

"Your sacrifice is the greatest and most acceptable that has been given and received since creation; and none, except that of Our Son, will ever be known until the end of time. For this, my Beloved, you shall be rewarded."

In that very moment, as if responding to the divine proclamation, a vast globe of shimmering light appeared before the grief-stricken Mary. The radiance grew, enveloping her in its warmth and clarity, and within it, a vision unfolded, a glimpse into a future so distant yet so certain. Before her eyes, she saw a renewed Earth, reclaimed and transformed by God's command:

crystal-clear waters flowed freely, and the land was uninhabited by sorrow. Animals roamed in joyous abundance, and birds soared in skies unclouded and blue. As the vision drew nearer, Mary perceived thousands upon thousands of children - of all shapes, sizes, and colors - clad in light, pale robes of various hues. Among them moved adults, young and old, all united in their happiness. The gentle laughter of the children filled the air as they encircled a figure clothed in brilliant white, whose very presence emitted a shimmering, transcendent light. Forming a great circle of life and unity, they exemplified peace and love. Then, as though acknowledging her gaze, the central figure lifted His head, looked directly at Mary, and smiled, smile that was unmistakably the gentle, loving smile of her precious son, Jesus.

The vision, though brief, touched Mary's heart deeply, easing her overwhelming grief with a measure of divine peace. Her wounded posture straightened ever so slightly, and she closed her eyes for a long, quiet moment, absorbing the promise of redemption and the future joy that lay ahead.

Later, the day had grown somber as the time for farewell drew near. In the dim light of an early evening, Jesus, now a man of gentle resolve, stood before Mary. His eyes, full of quiet determination and compassion, met hers.

Softly, he spoke: *"Our time of rest has ended. I must leave your loving presence and begin the work of man's redemption, the mission you first set in motion. Though I now walk this path alone, I will always rely on you as my companion and helper in preparing for my Passion and Death on the Cross. My blessing, my love, and my protection will remain with you until I return."*

With those solemn words, Jesus stepped forward and embraced his mother. Mary, overwhelmed with both sorrow and pride, fell to her knees before Him. Her voice, trembling yet resolute, broke the silence:

"My Lord, You are truly my Son. I would count my own life as nothing if it could save Yours, I would give it up again and again for You. Yet, I willingly offer my Son as a sacrifice for the fulfillment of Your will. With a heart both joyful and sorrowful, I ask that You allow me to share in Your work and in the burden of Your Cross."

In that poignant moment, Mary presented to Him a satchel that she had lovingly prepared. But Jesus, in a tender yet decisive gesture, shook His head and did not take it. His path lay before Him, and though he cherished his mother's presence, he knew the time had come to leave. With a final embrace, Jesus departed from the house. As the door closed softly behind Him, Mary leaned against it, her face a portrait of heart-felt sorrow, tears streaming silently down her cheeks.

In the quiet sanctity of Mary's room, where divine met human sorrow, a mother's sacrifice was offered with both grief and unwavering faith.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

BAPTISM OF JESUS

Along the shimmering banks of the River Jordan, early morning light danced upon the gentle ripples as John the Baptist performed the sacred rite of baptism. Clad in a rough garment and exuding a fervent, wild grace, John dipped his hands into the cool, flowing water and carefully anointed Jesus with a solemn blessing. The sound of the water mingled with soft murmurs of prayer, and as the ritual reached its profound climax, something miraculous occurred.

In that hushed, sacred moment, a brilliant streak of light descended from the heavens. The radiant beam took the graceful shape of a dove, hovering serenely above Jesus' head, a divine symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. The dove's luminous presence bathed the scene in ethereal splendor, an unmistakable sign of God's favor and the fulfillment of ancient prophecy. Every onlooker must have felt the awe of that moment, as nature itself appeared to testify to the sanctity of the event.

Miles away, in the familiar, sun-washed streets of Nazareth, Mary found herself lost in a reverie. At that very moment, her mind's eye was graced with the vivid image of that divine occurrence, the light streak, the graceful dove descending over her Son. In her heart, joy erupted like a blossoming flower. A broad smile spread across her face, softening every feature with radiant maternal pride. A deep, contented sigh escaped her lips, as if the weight of the world had been lifted by the assurance of God's presence. Her step grew light and buoyant as she walked along the dusty path, a jug of water from the village fountain cradled in her arms, a simple yet cherished reminder of life's essential grace.

In that instant, the world of Nazareth seemed transformed: the sacred beauty of the baptism on the River Jordan and the tender, joyful response of a mother intertwined in a single, timeless moment. Mary's inner vision, filled with hope and divine affirmation, resonated with the simple, unspoken language of love and faith. It was as if, in that moment, the heavens themselves smiled upon her and blessed her journey, assuring her that the light of God would always guide both her and her Son.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Beneath the scorching sun, in the endless, desolate stretch of the wilderness, Jesus walked alone, His silhouette stark against the golden sands. Each step pressed into the earth with quiet resolve, the weight of His mission resting upon His shoulders. The desert stretched infinitely in all directions, its silence vast and unyielding, wrapping around Him like a solemn veil. Only the faint crunch of shifting grains beneath His feet and the low sigh of the wind disturbed the stillness.

The relentless sun cast a fierce glow upon His face, highlighting the quiet strength in His eyes, a fire not of suffering, but of unwavering purpose. Though hunger would gnaw at His body, His spirit stood unshaken. Here, in the solitude of the wilderness, where the earth met the heavens in a raw, unbroken expanse, He prepared for the trial to come, embracing both the silence and the struggle with a faith that would not waver.

Meanwhile, in the cool sanctuary of Mary's oratory, a small, humble room filled with the scent of incense and the quiet murmur of prayer, She entered with the same reverence and solemnity that had always marked her devotion. As she stepped across the worn stone floor, her eyes met those of her Son, and together they assumed the posture of prayer, moving in harmonious unity as if guided by a single, divine spirit. Outside, the desert sky bore witness to the passage of time: the sun rose and set thirty-five times, each cycle a silent testament to their shared vigil.

Then, in a sudden and jarring contrast to the serene discipline of their fasting, the heavens darkened with an ominous presence. From the vast expanse above, Lucifer appeared before Christ in the guise of a man, a dark, seductive figure who carried with him the promise of earthly delights.

With a mocking grin, Lucifer taunted, "If Thou be the Son of God, command these stones be made bread." His voice dripped with scorn as he offered food and drink, tempting Jesus to abandon His spiritual hunger.

Jesus, unwavering in His resolve, replied calmly, "*Not in bread alone does man live...*" His words trailed off, and in the quiet of Mary's oratory, her gentle voice completed the thought with a reverence that resonated in the sacred space, "*...but in every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" In that moment, both Mother and Son reaffirmed their commitment to the divine truth, their united voices pushing back against the darkness.

As time passed, Mary was given a powerful vision, a glimpse of the next battle between her Son and the forces of evil. In it, she saw Jesus allowing Himself to be carried by Lucifer and his demons to Jerusalem. There, they placed Him at the highest point of the temple, setting the stage for a great spiritual confrontation.

Amid the turmoil, the voices of Jesus and Mary rose together in unity: "*Father, I face the enemy to break his power and humble his pride, for the sake of the souls I love.*" Their words, filled with both strength and love, echoed like a sacred anthem, announcing the battle that was about to unfold.

In the harsh light of the desert, as swiftly as He had been taken to the temple, Jesus was transported by Lucifer and his demons to the peak of a high mount. The struggle was palpable - the forces of darkness wrestled to assert their dominion, yet amid the tumult, Lucifer hissed, "*All these lands I will give to you, if you will fall down and adore me.*" At that moment, Mary's steadfast voice rose, clear and unyielding: "*You cannot give what God alone created.*" The sound of her proclamation startled Lucifer, piercing through the clamor of malevolent forces.

With authority and clarity, Jesus then declared, "*Be gone, Satan, for it is written...*" At once, in perfect unison, Mary and Jesus proclaimed, "*The Lord God you shall adore, and only He shall you serve!*" Their voices, resolute and triumphant.

In that instant, the power of their faith proved irresistible. Lucifer and his demons were hurled into the deepest abyss of Hell, their dark forms crushed and buried in the unyielding caverns, immobile for three long, silent days.

As the dust of battle settled, the scene faded into the warm, peaceful light of Mary's oratory. There, in the quiet aftermath of victory, Mary began to compose hymns of praise and glory, her pen dancing upon parchment as she recorded the triumph of her Son over the forces of darkness. In a nearby sanctuary, Jesus joined with a multitude of angels to sing triumphal songs, melodies of hope and deliverance that ascended to the heavens, echoing the eternal promise that only the divine could bestow.

Thus, amid the harsh solitude of the desert and the sacred intimacy of prayer, the battle between light and darkness was waged and won. In the unity of their hearts and the power of their faith, Mary and Jesus demonstrated that no force could prevail against the enduring love of God, a truth that would resound through eternity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The gathering of the Disciples began on a bright morning by the Jordan River, where Jesus returned and was met by John the Baptist. Standing at the water's edge, John was busy baptizing a throng of faithful souls when his eyes lifted, and there in the distance, he saw Jesus approaching.

With awe and fervor, John proclaimed, "*Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.*" As Jesus drew near and passed by, a small group of men, drawn by the magnetism of His presence - began to follow Him, walking in quiet, determined formation behind and beside their new Teacher.

It started with John and his brother Andrew, followed by Peter and Philip, and then Nathaniel, among others. These early followers, filled with a deep yearning, implored the Lord for the honor of meeting His Mother. In her heart, the Blessed Mother, already aware of this fated encounter, began to prepare her home for the coming guests, arranging spaces and gathering what little she had to offer in hospitality.

In the humble interior of her house, Mary busied herself with preparations. She tenderly prepared food and arranged simple cots for the guests who would soon arrive. When the group finally approached, Mary opened the door with a gentle smile and a quiet dignity. As the men stepped inside, their voices low with reverence, Mary fell to her knees before Jesus and kissed His hand, a gesture of profound humility and love. Jesus, in turn, took her hand and helped her rise, as if to remind her that even in her own service, she was His constant companion and strength. For when the humble and blessed Queen served her Son, she demonstrated the utmost reverence, teaching the gathered Apostles about the Majesty of their Teacher and Redeemer, and instructing them in the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE PUBLIC MIRACLES OF CHRIST

The public miracles so destined, would be the downfall of our beloved Christ. This is what drew the attention of those who would call for his death.

The wedding at Cana was a joyous occasion, a celebration of love and unity, attended by family, friends, and the people of the village. Among the guests were Jesus, His mother Mary, and His disciples.

During the festivities, an issue arose that threatened to bring embarrassment to the hosts, the wine had run out. Noticing the predicament, Mary approached Jesus with a quiet but urgent request, saying, "*They have no more wine.*" Jesus responded, "*Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come.*" Yet, Mary, with unwavering faith in her Son, turned to the servants and instructed them, "*Do whatever He tells you.*"

Jesus then directed the servants to fill six stone water jars, each capable of holding twenty to thirty gallons, with water. Once they had done so, He told them, "*Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.*" The servants obeyed, and as the master of the banquet tasted what had been drawn, he was astonished. The water had turned into the finest wine.

Unaware of the miracle that had just taken place, the master of the banquet called the bridegroom and remarked, "*Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink, but you have saved the best till now.*"

The wedding at Cana stands as a testament to the abundant grace and provision of Christ, demonstrating that He transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary through His divine presence.

One day, as Jesus traveled from town a large crowd followed Him as He left. They had seen Him heal the sick and heard His words of truth and grace, and they wanted to hear more. Their hunger for His teaching led them to a remote place near the Sea of Galilee. As the sun began to set, more than five thousand men, along with women and children, realized they had nothing to eat.

Seeing this, Jesus, full of compassion, turned to His disciple Philip and asked, *"Where can we buy bread for these people?"* Philip, looking at the vast crowd, was overwhelmed. *"Even eight months' wages wouldn't be enough for each person to have a little,"* he replied. Then Andrew, another disciple, hesitantly spoke up. *"There is a boy here with five barley loaves and two small fish, but what is that for so many?"*

Jesus smiled and said, *"Have the people sit down."* The disciples arranged the crowd on the grassy hillside. Then, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, lifted His eyes to heaven, and gave thanks. He broke the bread and fish and handed them to His disciples to distribute.

As the food was passed from one person to another, a miracle took place, the bread and fish never ran out. No matter how many hands reached out, there was always more to give. The people ate until they were full. When everyone had finished, Jesus told His disciples, *"Gather the leftovers so that nothing is wasted."* They collected twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish.

The crowd was amazed and whispered among themselves, *"Surely this is the Prophet who was promised to come!"*

This miracle was more than just feeding the hungry, it was a sign of Jesus' power to provide, to multiply, and to sustain. He took a small offering and turned it into an abundant feast, just as He would later offer Himself as the Bread of Life for all who believe in Him. The feeding of the five thousand showed the limitless generosity of God, who nourishes both body and soul.

The town of Bethany lay quiet in the afternoon sun, its people unaware that a great miracle was about to take place. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, had been dead for four days, sealed in a tomb by a heavy stone. The sisters had sent word to Jesus, hoping He would come in time to save him, but Jesus had waited two more days before beginning His journey. His disciples were confused by the delay. *“Lord, if he is sick, shouldn’t we go to him?”* they asked.

Jesus answered, *“This sickness will not end in death but will glorify God. Lazarus has fallen asleep, and I must awaken him.”*

Still not understanding, the disciples hesitated until Jesus said plainly, *“Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. Let us go to him.”*

By the time they reached Bethany, the town was in mourning. Friends and family had gathered to console Mary and Martha, who were grief-stricken. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she ran to meet Him, tears streaming down her face.

“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that God will grant whatever You ask.”

Jesus looked at her with deep compassion. *“Your brother will rise again.”*

Martha, thinking He meant in the resurrection at the end of time, nodded. *“I know he will rise again in the resurrection.”*

Jesus then spoke the words that would echo through time: *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies. Do you believe this?”*

Through her sorrow, Martha declared, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are Christ, the Son of God.”*

Her sister Mary soon approached Jesus, falling at His feet. Her voice trembled with grief. *“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

Seeing the sorrow of Mary and those around her, Jesus wept.

He walked to Lazarus's tomb, where the weight of the moment hung heavy in the air. "*Take away the stone,*" He commanded.

Martha hesitated. "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be strong." Jesus gently reminded her, "*Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?*"

At His word, the stone was rolled away. The crowd stood silent, their hearts pounding in anticipation. Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven.

"Father, I thank You for hearing Me. I say this so those standing here may believe that You sent Me."

Then, with a voice of divine authority, He called out: "*Lazarus, come out!*"

A hush fell over the crowd. Then, from the darkness of the tomb, Lazarus, still wrapped in burial cloths, but alive appeared.

Gasps and cries of astonishment rippled through the crowd. Some fell to their knees, others whispered in awe.

Jesus turned to them and said, "*Unbind him and let him go.*"

Mary and Martha rushed forward, embracing their brother in tearful joy. The whispers of wonder turned to shouts of praise, for they had witnessed a miracle unlike any other. But not all rejoiced. News of what had happened quickly spread to the Pharisees and religious leaders. Their awe turned to fear, and from that moment on, they plotted to take Jesus' life, unaware that He held power even over death itself.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

GROWING MINISTRY

As Jesus continued His teachings, crowds grew larger. Many followed Him not only for His miracles but for the truth and grace in His words. Among them were women who had been healed of illnesses and freed from demonic possession, standing in reverence toward both Jesus and His Mother.

One evening, Mary was seen carrying heavy vessels to the town's well, assisted by Peter and John. Later, as they shared a simple meal, Mary spoke softly, her words filled with wisdom. The disciples listened intently, cherishing her guidance. All but one sought counsel from Our Queen and Her Son.

Yes, one of them struggled. Though Judas followed Jesus, his pride resisted grace. Despite the special kindness of Mary and her Son, he grumbled and sought to place himself above the others.

One night, Mary walked beside Judas, gently taking his hands in hers and pressing a tender kiss upon them. Her voice was soft and filled with love. *"Think carefully about your intentions, my dear. You will falter, but my Son will always offer you mercy, if you are willing to accept it."*

But Judas's heart hardened. Later, in frustration, he sought reassurance from Jesus, kneeling before Him. Jesus looked at him with sorrowful understanding. *"Do you truly know what you seek? Do not chase after honors that may lead to your downfall."*

Judas insisted, *"Master, I desire to serve You, for I am more suited than the others."*

And with that, his fate was sealed, for while many embraced the light, his heart turned toward betrayal.



CHAPTER THIRTY THE TRANSFIGURATION

Before His Passion, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. As they reached the summit, the air grew still. Before their eyes, two great figures appeared - Moses and Elijah.

Then, something even more extraordinary happened. Mary herself was carried by angels to the mountaintop, drawn by heaven's call.

In a breathtaking vision, Mary saw her Son transform before her eyes. His face shone like the sun, His garments turned brilliant white, and His entire being radiated divine glory. It was a glimpse of His true nature, a revelation that He was not only man but God Himself.

The disciples fell to the ground in awe, unable to look upon the radiance before them. And as the moment faded, a voice from heaven declared:

“This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him.”

Mary watched, her heart swelling with both joy and sorrow. She knew this glimpse of His divine glory was a foreshadow, for before His ultimate victory, He would first walk the path of suffering.

The time was drawing near. The days of quiet teachings and small miracles were fading. Soon, the world would soon witness the greatest sacrifice of all.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE LAST SUPPER

The early morning revealed the tender glow of sunrise, that filtered into the humble interior of their dwelling in Nazareth on Thursday morning, the day of the Last Supper. Jesus and Mary sat alone, enveloped by a solemn intimacy that was both joyful and heart-wrenching. As Mary, overcome with emotion, began to fall to her knees before her Son, Jesus gently stopped her, lifting her to a standing position. In the soft, tender tones of His voice, He said, *"Mother, the hour appointed by my Father has come. He sent Me to suffer, so that I may save the lost children of Adam. Now, you must offer Me willingly, for this is what I ask of you. Give me your blessing to enter into my suffering and death."*

Mary's grief was palpable; tears streamed down her face, and her posture spoke of a deep, aching longing to collapse at her Son's feet. Yet, His firm and compassionate support kept her upright. With a voice trembling with both sorrow and love, she responded, *"Lord, my God, and Creator of all, though You are the Son of my womb, I am Your humble servant. The greatest sacrifice I bear is that I cannot die with You. My only comfort is knowing that Your suffering will bring salvation to humanity. I ask but one thing, let me be Your disciple and companion, sharing in Your Passion and Cross, so that the eternal Father may accept the sacrifice of Your Mother alongside Yours."*

Therefore, by her request and Our Lord's gracious agreement, the Queen of Heaven became the Co-redemptrix in the salvation of humankind. And with those sacred words, the moment was sealed. That evening in a room in Jerusalem, Jesus sat at the center of His Apostles. He placed a chalice and a plate in front of Himself. He then called for the unleavened bread and wine, pouring the wine into the chalice with solemn reverence.

Christ took into His venerable hands the bread and chalice. He internally asked the permission and co-operation of the Eternal Father, that He should become present in both in the form of His body and blood.

As this sacred ceremony unfolded, the spirits of Enoch and Elias appeared to the left of Christ, their presence a testament to the divine significance of the moment. Behind Jesus stood the angel Gabriel, his form radiant with celestial light. To the right of her Son, Mary was present, surrounded by her angels, her face a mixture of sorrow and profound understanding.

Jesus lifted His arms, holding the bread and chalice high, His eyes raised toward heaven with an expression of divine majesty. A radiant light encircled the bread and chalice, transforming them by the power of His blessing. He lowered the gifts and knelt deeply, offering thanks to God for His favor.

Mary and the other Patriarchs understood that within the bread was His body, and within the wine was His blood. Because of the union of His soul with His body and blood, the living Christ was truly present. In that moment, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were united, and the Holy Eucharist held the perfect humanity of the Lord along with the presence of the three divine Persons of the Godhead.

Jesus broke off a piece of the bread and ate it, then drank from the chalice. He broke off another piece and handed it to Gabriel, who delivered it to the Blessed Mother.

Mary received it with reverence, and it was deposited in her breast, above her heart, where it would remain until the Resurrection. Jesus then gave communion to Enoch and Elias, who bowed before Him before evaporating into nothingness, their faces filled with wonderment and gratitude.

As communion was given to the apostles and other disciples, Jesus spoke the sacred words:

"Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

Then, taking the chalice, He said,

"Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

One by one, the apostles and disciples received the Holy Eucharist, their hearts filled with reverence and wonder. The weight of the moment settled upon them as they partook in the first sacrament of the new covenant, though they did not yet fully grasp its significance.

As the evening ended, Jesus and His followers rose and began their solemn walk to the Garden of Gethsemane, where the night of sorrow was about to begin.

At this time Judas took leave of Jesus and the Apostles and unknowingly met with Lucifer. Lucifer had transformed into a man known to Judas, his voice filled with a strange unease. *"Judas,"* he said, his tone almost pleading, *"I say again, I think that His deeds are not as wicked as they say. You cannot want the coin that badly now, can you?"*

Judas's face hardened, his voice bitter. *"You say this now, you who have goaded me all along. Now, death is not suitable for Him?"* Lucifer's expression grew anxious. *"He might free Himself when chained. You and I have both seen His miracles! What will happen then, to you who did Him in?"*

Judas pushed him aside, his resolve unshaken. *"And you did not?"* Lucifer's expression grew anxious. *"He might free Himself when chained. You and I have both seen His miracles! What will happen then, to you who did Him in?"*

Judas pushed him aside, his resolve unshaken. *"And you did not?"* he retorted, continuing toward the house of the priest. Lucifer, now revealed in his true form, disappeared, his fear palpable.



CHAPTER THIRTY- TWO

MARY'S SORROW

In the cenacle, Mary and the holy women who had followed Jesus for nearly three years, including Mary Magdalene, Martha, and her sister Mary, gathered together. At the moment when Christ was turned over, Mary revealed her anguish to them. *“My soul is sorrowful,”* she said, her voice trembling, *“because my beloved Son is about to suffer and die, and it is not permitted for me to suffer and die of His torments. Pray, my friends, in order that you may not be overcome by temptation.”*

Mary left them for short intervals, retreating to her private chambers. There, she wept alone, her suffering so profound that beads of blood formed on her forehead. The archangel Gabriel appeared to her, his presence a comfort. *“Take heart, my Queen,”* he said gently. *“Your loyal servant Michael is with your beloved Son as He prays alone in the garden.”*

Mary nodded, her voice filled with sorrow. *“I see this, Gabriel. As I will see that soon my beloved will be given over by way of a kiss.”*

In the House of Annas, the high priest, Jesus was bound tightly, chains placed on His hands from behind. He was surrounded by soldiers, as well as Lucifer and his demons, who took human form to provoke and incite the crowd. They struck Him repeatedly, their cruelty unrelenting. The sounds of His muted screams echoed through the room.

In the cenacle, Mary lay prostrate, weeping openly as she spoke to her Eternal Father. *“Most kind and gracious Lord, though I cannot give my life in His place, I accept Your will. But as His beloved Mother, I ask for Your mercy. Let me share in His suffering and feel the pain they inflict upon His sacred body. While You are in Heaven and cannot be with Him, allow me to stand by His side in these coming hours. Do not let our*

Son suffer alone.”

And because He could not deny Her, the fragile body of the Most Holy Virgin Mary began to suffer the agony of the Passion. She would not incur death, but the Almighty God allowed that Her body, heart, and soul feel all that Christ would feel. Therefore, the two, Mother and Son, suffered willingly for the sins of humanity and for its Redemption.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE ROAD TO CALVARY

Along the road to Calvary, where Jesus prepared to carry His Cross, Mary and the others waited, their hearts breaking as they witnessed His suffering. For it was time for the Son of God to carry His beloved Cross. His pure and perfect body had been struck 5,115 times. Every fraction of His body was wounded, bleeding, and exposed. Yet, when He looked upon the Cross, those present could not comprehend- save Mary-the look of love and longing on His face. Especially confused and becoming increasingly frightened by Jesus' demeanor was Lucifer and his followers.

For also on the road leading to Calvary, was Lucifer and hundreds of his minions who incited the crowd, their voices filled with malice. Those untouched by demons looked on with agony, their hearts heavy with sorrow for the innocent man before them. Mary, her face veiled, watched in silence. God's voice spoke to her, gentle yet commanding. *"My Beloved, in this thy greatest moment of sorrow, call upon thy strength. It is time that the greatest enemy of the children of Adam knows your power."*

Mary stopped walking, her mind's eye seeing Lucifer and his ministers illuminated by a glowing red light. She spoke with authority, her voice echoing in their minds. *"I command you to remain where you are, creatures that spread evil in the hearts of God's children. You will stay and walk beside Him as He carries the Cross. You will witness as they nail His broken body to it. You will hear His bones crack, see His thirst, and listen to His words of mercy and forgiveness. Then, by the power given to me, I will cast you into the deepest depths of the abyss."* The demons cringed, frozen in place, their fear palpable as Mary's words echoed with divine authority, the weight of her command lingering in the air.

With Mary's command, the beings from hell marched like condemned prisoners to the crucifixion of Christ. They stood affixed with an unseen tether to the foot of the cross, where Jesus hung, His body broken and bleeding. He lifted His eyes to heaven, His voice trembling as He spoke His final words: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Christ and Mary heard God's words. *"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise. Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother."*

In human angst Jesus cried out. *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? I thirst. It is finished. Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."* Then, with one last breath, His head fell to His chest. A cry of sorrow rose from His followers, their grief merging with the roar of thunder as lightning tore across the sky. Darkness engulfed the land, and the earth began to shake, splitting open beneath them. As foretold, Lucifer and his demons were dragged into the depths of the earth, their screams fading into the abyss.

The sky remained dark, the sun absent, yet silhouetted against it was the cross and the body of Christ. At the foot of the cross stood Mary, her body trembling in agony, her arm reaching up to touch the feet of her Son. Surrounding her were her companions, both mortal and celestial, their faces filled with sorrow and reverence. The weight of the moment lingering in the air.

Later inside the house in Nazareth, the Apostles Peter, John, and the others gathered, their faces heavy with grief. Mary moved slowly about the room, Her body, heart and soul ached, but She had to prepare for the burial of her Son. John approached her, his voice filled with concern.

"Mother," he said gently, kissing her hands, *"You must take nourishment. Please, allow us to do for you at this time. You have not eaten in days. I could not bear for you to leave us as well."*

Mary looked at him, her eyes filled with a quiet strength. *“My rest and consolation will be to see my Son and Lord arisen from the dead. My dearest friends, stay and console one another while I retire alone with my Son.”*

Mary retreated to her cenacle, lying on her cot and closing her eyes. Before her, the world of Limbo took shape. She saw her beloved parents, Anne and Joachim, as well as Joseph, the prophets Enoch and Elias, Moses, and the thousands of souls awaiting release. Their faces were filled with hope, their long wait made possible by her greatest sorrow. Then, her face lit up with joy as she saw her Son. Jesus greeted those who had waited so long, and they fell to their knees in gratitude.

By Mary’s command, the angels restored the broken body of her Son to its perfection. Then, with the same magnificent light of His original birth, the Son of God and Mary was resurrected. He took form before them as a translucent being, the shroud on the bier still glowing from the divine transformation that had taken place within it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE RESURRECTION

In her cenacle, Mary rose from her cot, her face radiant with joy. Before her appeared the translucent vision of her Son. She fell prostrate before Him, but He raised her up, drawing her to Him. The light of His divinity flowed from Him into her, lifting her upward.

"My Beloved," Jesus said, His voice filled with love, *"ascend higher!"*

Three days later on the dawn of Sunday. John looked in on Mary, finding her kneeling in prayer, her face glowing with a divine light. She smiled at him, and his expression revealed that he knew Christ had risen. He closed the door, leaving Mary alone. The voices of God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus were heard, their words filled with reverence and love.

"This is the Queen of all creation, in heaven and on earth," they proclaimed. *"She is the Protector of the Church, the Lady of all creatures, the Mother of mercy, the Advocate for sinners, and the Intercessor for the faithful. She is the Mother of love and holy hope, holding within her the mysteries of Our power for the salvation of humanity. Whatever She asks of Us will be granted, and those who seek Her intercession will find the path to eternal life."*

As they spoke, Mary was elevated off the ground by the angels, her form bathed in a celestial light. She remained the promise of her eternal intercession and the hope of salvation for all who sought her aid.

The hall where the Last Supper had taken place was now filled with the presence of Mary, the eleven apostles, the three Mary's, Martha, Lazarus, other disciples, and pious women, totaling one hundred and twenty souls. Christ, illuminated with divine light, stood before them, His voice gentle yet filled with authority.

“My sweetest children, I am about to ascend to my Father, from whose bosom I descended in order to rescue and save men. I leave with you, in my place, my Mother. In Her, those who seek Me shall always find Me. Peter, you I leave as the supreme head of the Church. Obey him as my Vicar, the chief high priest. John, you shall hold the place as the son of my Mother, as I so appointed you on the Cross. Now, walk with me, my devoted disciples; walk with me to the place of my Ascension.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The sky above Mount Olivet blazed with a heavenly brilliance, its golden light stretching across the horizon as if creation itself rejoiced in the moment. At the mountain's peak, Christ stood in majestic stillness, His hands gently folded at His chest, His face aglow with divine radiance. His very presence seemed to command both earth and sky, a bridge between the mortal world and the eternal kingdom beyond.

As He began to ascend, His footprints remained etched in the earth, a sacred imprint of His time among men, a silent yet powerful testament that He had truly walked among them. The air shimmered with the presence of celestial beings, their forms glowing with the light of heaven as He beckoned them to rise with Him. A symphony of angels soared upward, their voices lifting in a chorus of praise that echoed across the vast expanse.

Even as He ascended, His heart remained with His Mother, speaking to her in a language beyond words, a final message of love and reassurance before stepping fully into His eternal glory.

"Mother," He said, His voice filled with love, *"I desire your company as I ascend to my Father."*

The spirit of Mary left her earthly body, unseen by those who stood watching the Ascension. As her spirit ascended with Christ, the voice of God echoed through the heavens. *"Ascend higher, my beloved, return my Son to me."*

They rose into the Empyrean heavens, where three magnificent thrones awaited. God, the Creator of all, sat on the throne to the furthest left. Behind Him were thousands of holy fathers and saints who had been in Limbo, their faces filled with joy. Beams of radiant colors gleamed, angels rejoiced, and trumpets sounded. Christ took His place on the middle throne and extended His right hand, pointing to the throne next to Him.

“Mother,” He said, His voice filled with reverence, “rise up and take possession of the place, which I owe Thee for having followed and imitated Me.”

Mary approached the throne and sat down, her form glowing with divine light. God spoke; His voice filled with love. *“My Spouse and Beloved, come to my eternal embraces. For this is your place, to sit at the right hand of My Son, who sits at My right hand. It is yours for all eternity. It is yours to choose now, or when thou so desire.”*

Mary looked around her, her gaze resting on her Son before she stood and knelt before God. *“Eternal and almighty God,” she said, her voice trembling with humility, “To accept this reward now would bring me rest, but I must return to the world and continue my work for the children of Adam and the faithful of the Church. Lord and Master of my soul, receive this sacrifice, and let Your divine strength sustain me in the mission entrusted to me. I offer myself once more, dedicating all that I am to Your glory and the salvation of souls, for as long as I am able.”*

God looked to Christ and nodded His head. Christ spoke; His voice filled with both sorrow and admiration. *“I accept Thy sacrifice, Mother, but ask that Thou stay at my side for a short while, for I will suffer the absence of Thy presence.”*

Before the Mother of God returned to earth, She was told of the time and date of the anticipated earthly visit of the Holy Spirit, who would instruct them all in the teachings of their Lord.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE PENTECOST

It was early morning in the Cenacle; the air was thick with the fervor of prayer. Mary, the apostles, and a gathering of disciples, men and women numbering one hundred and twenty - were united in devotion. The room was silent save for the whispered pleas and praises rising to heaven. Suddenly, a tremendous roar of thunder shattered the stillness, and a violent wind swept through the air. Outside, the sky seemed to split as a bright fire, like lightning, descended upon the house, enveloping it in a radiant light that poured through the roof.

Villagers in the distance stopped in their tracks, gazing in awe at the dwelling now aglow with divine brilliance. Inside, the gathered faithful, felt the presence of something extraordinary. Over each person's head, a flame appeared, flickering with intensity. The apostles' flames burned brighter than the rest, with John and Peter's shining the most radiant of all. But above Mary, the flame was the greatest, a testament to her unique grace. For several seconds, the room was filled with the sound of angelic choirs, their voices harmonizing in celestial praise. Then, a voice - deep, resonant, and unmistakably divine, spoke. It was the Holy Spirit, addressing them all. "I infuse you with the habits of the seven gifts: Wisdom, Understanding, Science, Piety, Counsel, Fortitude, and Fear." Turning to the apostles and Mary, the voice continued, "In you, I infuse My grace in portioned abundance for your ministry that you will hold in the holy Church."

As the light faded, the scene shifted to the bustling streets of Jerusalem. Thousands of people filled the city, and the apostles moved among them, each speaking to large crowds. Remarkably, as the apostles spoke, their words were understood by all, regardless of language.

Faces lit up with amazement, a young, pretty girl in the crowd stared in wonder. Meanwhile, the other holy men and women tended to the sick and dying, performing miraculous healings and casting out demons from the possessed.

The next day, by the banks of the river, thousands gathered to be baptized, their hearts transformed by the power of the divine Word.

Back in the Cenacle, Mary watched this vision unfold, a gentle smile gracing her lips.

Time passed, and the apostles spread out across Jerusalem, Palestine, Lydda, and Jaffa. Some traveled in pairs, others alone, but all were united in their mission: preaching, healing, and growing the new Church of Christ. Yet, their work was not without opposition. Lucifer, the common enemy of all, sought to hinder their efforts at every turn. He sent his minions to tempt, insult, and attack the apostles, desperate to thwart the spread of the divine Word.

But Mary, ever watchful from her heavenly vantage, was their protector. When she did not intervene herself, she dispatched armies of angels to shield her beloved apostles. This enraged Lucifer, who turned his malice toward the weak and defenseless, his thirst for souls unquenched.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE BATTLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

The sun had set over the city of Jerusalem, casting long shadows across its narrow streets. The pretty young girl, one of the many who had been converted during the first days of Pentecost, walked alone, her heart still aglow with the words of love and forgiveness she had heard from the apostles. But as she wandered, a figure emerged from the darkness, an old woman, hunched and frail, her eyes sharp and calculating. It was Lucifer, cloaked in disguise. The old woman approached the girl, her voice dripping with false concern. *"I saw you with those men in robes the other day. What they told you were lies,"* she hissed.

The girl hesitated, her faith wavering for a moment. *"What they said was beautiful. They spoke of love and forgiveness. They said if we obey God, when we die, we will live with Him forever."*

The old woman scoffed. *"Obey? Why should you have to obey anyone? You look like a smart girl to me. You should do what you want. Don't you desire laughter and the pleasures of a man?"*

The girl's voice trembled. *"Yes, but... I saw what they did. They healed many who were afflicted. The people understood their words in all languages when they spoke."*

The old woman leaned closer, her tone growing more insistent. *"Denounce them, and I will promise you a peaceful, full life."* The girl hesitated again, her mind clouded with doubt. *"But what of the gentle woman who was with them? Her words were kind and loving, more so than all the others."*

The old woman's face twisted in disdain. *"That one is worse than them all. Shun her. Withdraw from her snares."*

Before the girl could respond, the old woman's form shifted and contorted, revealing the true, horrifying visage of Lucifer. In an instant, he entered her body, leaving her trembling and broken.

Several days later, in the girl's sleeping quarters, she lay gravely ill, her family gathered around her, their faces etched with worry. In the Cenacle, Mary saw the girl's suffering and sent first two angels to aid her. But neither could rid the girl of Lucifer's spirit. She writhed in agony, her body and soul tormented. Through the bustling streets of Jerusalem, Mary walked alone, her angels surrounding her in silent vigil. Her steps were swift, her heart drawn toward the one who desperately needed her aid. *"Why do you delay me from reaching her?"* she asked, her voice filled with urgency. One of the angels replied, *"There is no need for you to walk through the city when we can carry you there with greater ease."*

At once, Mary was lifted by her angels, carried effortlessly through the air. In an instant, she appeared within the girl's room, her presence radiant and undeniable. The lingering evil spirits scattered like bursts of fleeing light, vanishing in fear at the sight of the Holy Mother.

Mary approached the girl, her voice soft but firm. *"What was said to you?"*

The girl, weak and trembling, whispered, *"They persuaded me to believe that the disciples of Jesus were deceiving me."*

Mary's eyes filled with compassion. *"Look what those beliefs have done to your young body. You are very near death. What is it that you wish to believe?"*

The girl's voice was barely audible. *"That I am loved. That I will have peace."*

Mary leaned closer, her words a balm to the girl's troubled soul. *"You will, if you cast out the thoughts planted in your mind by the one who only wished to deceive you. Believe my word, child. Jesus awaits you, if you believe my words."*

Then Mary took the girl into her arms. The girl's final words were a whisper of faith: *"It is God whom I love, and Jesus who for my sins gave His life. Forgive me, Lord."* With that, she died peacefully in Mary's embrace.

No soul was unimportant to the Queen of love and mercy. She kept her promise to save souls, even as her beloved apostles began to suffer at the hands of Lucifer.

Despite the protection of angels, persecution against the apostles grew fiercer. The first to be seized was Stephen, dragged away and thrown into prison.

Chained to the cold stone wall, Stephen lifted his gaze, and before him appeared Mary, radiant and solemn. Her voice was both gentle and powerful.

"Stephen, you shall be the first-born of the martyrs, chosen by my Son to follow the path of His own sacrifice."

Stephen's voice was unwavering, his heart steadfast. *"I will follow Him, a privileged disciple walking in His footsteps."*

Mary's words carried both comfort and purpose. *"You will stand as a fearless soldier, leading the army of martyrs to come, bearing the banner of the Cross."*

Stephen was taken from his cell and led to the center of a courtyard. His hands were bound as his accusers encircled him. The first stone flew, then another, and another. Each strike landed with crushing force, but Stephen did not waver. Instead, he fell to his knees, his face illuminated as the heavens opened before him. *"Behold, I see the heavens opened and its glory, and in it, I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God!"* he cried.

His executioners, enraged, covered their ears, refusing to hear what they called blasphemy. The mob surged forward, dragging him violently across the ground as the stones continued to fall.

In the Cenacle, Mary watched in sorrow, her heart breaking as she witnessed Stephen's final moments. Turning to one of her angels, she commanded, "*Stay with him until the end, then carry his soul to my Son.*"

As Stephen breathed his last, his spirit was lifted into heaven, the first martyr welcomed into eternal glory. But even as heaven rejoiced, Mary's heart ached, knowing that this was only the beginning of the trials to come.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THE APOSTLES CREED

Several months had passed since that fateful day, and in the quiet, hallowed room where the Last Supper had once taken place, Mary gathered the remaining apostles. The chamber, filled with both sorrow and hope, seemed to hold its breath as Peter rose to speak. His voice resonated with determination:

"We have been more fortunate than our brother Stephen, escaping the wrath of the chief priest as we spread the word of Christ in the nearby cities. Yet, at His command, we must soon go forth and preach to the world. Now, He will guide us with His divine Spirit, helping us to understand and establish, in His name and by an unchanging decree, the truths that will form the foundation of His holy Church, one that will endure until the end of time."

Mary's eyes shone with both maternal love and resolute purpose as she addressed the gathered apostles. *"During this time, I instruct you all to listen to the internal words of my Son, for He will enlighten your hearts to speak and define the mysteries."*

Then, with a calm authority, Peter began the sacred declaration, and one by one, his fellow apostles joined in the creed. *"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, and Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into death and arose from the dead on the third day. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, From there, He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit. In one Catholic Apostolic Church, the Communion of saints, the Forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."*

With their faith firmly proclaimed, the apostles soon set out on their journeys. At a humble house in Nazareth, each of them was given a tunic reminiscent of the one Jesus had worn, a woven garment in hues of brown and ash gray. Mary had also fashioned for each a cross, carefully made to match their individual heights, and she pressed into their hands a small, precious parcel. Looking upon them with tender resolve, she said, *"I give you these to carry until the end of your days. I send you forth with no food, for you will depend on the kindness of strangers for your nourishment. To each of you, I entrust a relic of my Son, more precious to me than all the treasures of the earth. Know, my sons, that you do not go alone. Call upon me even once, and either one of my angels or I myself will be there."*

As the apostles set out on their divine missions, events were unfolding elsewhere. In the grand hall of the high priest, a man named Saul, consumed by zeal and driven by darker influences, sought permission to hunt down the growing followers of Christ.

With arrogance and determination, he addressed the high priest. *"Commissioner, grant me the honor of restoring order to your city. These heretics are spreading blasphemies across the land. Let me capture them for you, or, for a slightly greater reward, kill them where they stand."*

The high priest, his gaze cold and calculating, silently nodded his approval with a dismissive wave of his hand. Saul bowed, then turned sharply on his heel, setting out toward Damascus with several hundred-armed men, unaware that his journey would soon change the course of history.

Back in her own sacred space, Mary watched with heavy heart as an army moved forth to silence the voices of the evangelists. In the stillness of her cenacle, she lifted her voice in prayer, beseeching her Son with urgency:

"See the one, Saul; he is the one chosen by you to be one of your greatest. I beseech you, make haste with your plan for his conversion, for Lucifer has sent him on a great mission." Her words, imbued with divine intent, traveled on unseen wings until they reached the ears of Christ. A voice answered from the realm of light, proclaiming, *"My Mother, chosen among all creatures, let thy will be done without delay."*

As Saul and his troops advanced along the dusty road, a sudden and overwhelming brilliance descended upon him. The light burst forth with such force that it threw him from his horse and rendered him blind. In that tumultuous moment, a commanding voice resonated through the chaos: *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"* Trembling, Saul cried out, *"Who art Thou?"* The radiant voice replied, *"I am Jesus whom you persecute; it is hard to kick against the gird of My omnipotence."* Overwhelmed yet yearning for guidance, Saul pleaded, *"Lord, what do You command and desire to do with me?"*

From his darkness, he grew into great light and by Mary he was given the name Paul. His image was transformed from that of a demon to one of the highest and most ardent seraphim. The soldiers who witnessed the event stood in awe at the voice of Christ and the wonder of Saul's conversion. By Mary's intercession, the enemy force was diminished that day by several hundred souls.

As time passed, the apostles' teachings spread across distant lands, and their followers grew in number. Yet, with this growth came great trials. Mary would later recall, at the forefront of this persecution stands Herod, the son of the ruler who once ordered the slaughter of infants at the time of Jesus' birth.

Our Blessed Mother watched over the apostles with unwavering care. Through the divine gifts bestowed upon her by God, she always knew when one of them was suffering on their journey, spreading the message of her Son. Even from afar, her heart remained with them, guiding them in their mission as the years passed.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE DEATH OF JAMES

In the grim confines of Herod's court, several men and women were led in bound in chains, each facing a swift death decreed by the ruler's cold command. Among them was James the Apostle, bound by a rope around his neck. Without a trace of mercy, Herod commanded, *"Remove his head. Cut out his tongue so that he should not utter such filth even after his death."* As James knelt before the executioner, his tear-filled eyes suddenly beheld a vision of Mary, surrounded by a host of angels, her presence radiating divine grace. His heart swelled with awe, and he opened his mouth to speak, but before he could utter a word, an angel stepped forward, whispering urgently,

"James, keep these sacred feelings in your heart. Do not reveal the presence of our Queen to these wicked men. They are neither worthy nor capable of knowing her, and their hardened hearts will only deepen in hatred."

In that final, holy moment, James closed his eyes and offered his soul with unwavering devotion:

"Mother of my Lord Jesus Christ, my Mistress and Protector, present the sacrifice of my life to Your Son, the Redeemer of the world. Into Your hands, and through them into the hands of my Creator, I commend my spirit."

With those last words, the blade fell, and James was beheaded. True to her promise, Mary was there, her presence gentle and radiant as she guided his soul into the loving embrace of her Son, welcoming him into the eternal kingdom.



CHAPTER FORTY

FREEING OF PETER

In the dim, cold dungeon, Peter lay bound in heavy chains, awaiting his fate. Far away, in Mary's private cenacle, she wept tears of blood. Collapsing to the floor, she prostrated herself in the sign of the cross. In that sacred moment, a brilliant, splendorous light filled the room as Christ appeared. He knelt beside her, gently lifting her to her knees, and spoke in a voice that echoed with divine authority.

"Mother, ease your sorrow and ask whatever you desire; for I will grant it all, and you shall always find favor in my eyes."

Mary's voice trembled with both determination and grief as she replied, *"Grant me knowledge and strength to save thy church."*

Encouraged by His words, Mary stood firm and declared, *"Since You have strengthened me and reaffirmed the power You have given me, I now command Lucifer and all his wicked servants to descend into the abyss and remain silent until Your divine will allows them to return."*

Beyond the walls of Jerusalem, a brilliant light swelled in the sky, pushing back the darkness as a great shadow was cast down into the depths of the earth. The air trembled with power as Mary continued,

"Now, my Son, if it is Your will, let one of the heavenly spirits present go and free Peter from his prison."

Inside Peter's cell, while he lay in a state of deep sleep, a gentle, radiant angel appeared at his bedside. The celestial being whispered softly to him before escorting him silently past his slumbering guards, guiding him toward freedom. Later, with sorrow heavy in her heart, Mary's voice resonated with anguish and compassion as she questioned the path before her.

"And now, my Lord, with deepest sorrow, I ask, must I also pass judgment upon a creature made in Your image? Since the beginning, I have never sought vengeance against them; instead, my heart longs for the salvation of even the most wicked."

Christ replied with measured gravity, *"Herod is among those foreknown, and in his hardened heart, he remains unmoved by any guidance. He will not seek instruction or accept the grace of salvation, no matter your efforts. Your mercy must be reserved for those who are willing to receive it and seek your powerful intercession."*

Tears mingled with resolve as Mary continued, *"Many times would I suffer death to rescue this soul of Herod, but by the most equitable God, I condemn him to the death he has merited, so that he may not incur greater torments by executing the evil he has planned."*

In the somber chambers of Herod, the inevitable came to pass. Stricken suddenly, Herod fell ill and died.

The death of Herod filled the Queen with profound sorrow, for she knew that no one should ever be called upon to pronounce such a sentence again.

Afterward, Christ departed from His Mother, leaving her to weep over the weight of her actions and the burdens of divine judgment.

Time passed, and in the quiet sanctum of her oratory in Ephesus, Mary sat with John as he read aloud a letter from Peter. The gentle murmur of parchment and whispered prayers filled the space as he recited: *"To Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, Among the faithful, some doubts and disagreements have arisen regarding the doctrine of Your Son, whether the ancient law of Moses must still be observed alongside His teachings. They seek guidance from us so that we may declare what we heard directly from the divine Teacher Himself."*

I am now journeying to Jerusalem, as others are also arriving from various cities. With Your assistance, we will establish what is best for the holy faith and the perfection of the law of grace. Your servant in Christ, Peter."

Mary's eyes shone with resolve as she responded softly, *"It is right that we arrange to depart for this meeting. It is also right and proper to obey the head of the Church."*

Later, in the hall of the Last Supper. The Queen and other devoted women labored to clean and decorate the sacred space in preparation for the anticipated Mass. The altar was set meticulously, and Mary herself polished the sacred chalice until it sparkled with holy light. As the apostles and faithful began to gather, the room filled with a sense of reverence and anticipation. Peter approached Mary, finding her kneeling in quiet devotion.

With heartfelt sincerity, Mary said, *"Your blessing upon me, Vicar of the Church of my Son."*

Peter made the sign of the cross over her and gently helped her to stand. *"It pleases my heart to see you, Mother. I trust you have sought council with your Son, as have I. Let us celebrate in His holy name, in the manner in which He taught us. Together, we shall pray for the divine wisdom of the Trinity to inspire us with their eternal grace."*

As the Mass was celebrated, the presence of the Holy Spirit became manifest. A majestic light filled Mary's heart, and in that divine illumination, She felt the affirmation of her petitions and prayers - prayers she had offered so fervently for the Church. In that moment, it seemed that the very decrees of Divine Will were being fulfilled, ensuring that the faith of the Gospel and His entire holy law would be established in the world.

The angels and apostles, overcome with awe at the radiant display, joined their voices in exaltation. *"Holy, holy, holy and powerful art thou, Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory!"* They proclaimed in unison, their exultant cries echoing throughout the hallowed hall.

Thus, amidst the interplay of sorrow and divine mercy, judgment and redemption, the heavenly plan unfolded, each moment a testament to the unwavering power and mystery of faith.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE GOSPELS

In the quiet sanctum of Mary's cenacle, before the other apostles had gathered, Mary addressed Peter with quiet authority. *"As High Priest and Head of Church, thou shall assign four for the recording of the works and teachings of the Savior of the world."* At that moment, the other apostles entered, their faces reflecting both reverence and resolve.

Peter then declared, *"Matthew, our beloved brother, shall immediately begin to write his Gospel in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Mark shall write the second, and Luke the third. Our beloved brother John shall be the fourth and last to write the mysteries of our Savior and Teacher."*

Sometime later, in the modest room where Matthew labored, the apostle found himself wrestling with his thoughts. He rose from his seat, pacing the space in restless agitation before eventually sitting again with a loud sigh. His work had stalled, and in his moment of despair, Mary appeared before him. With earnest eyes, Matthew looked up and said,

"You have heard my prayers, Most Holy Mother. I seek your wisdom in how I should write about you. I pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance, yet I have not written a single word."

Mary's voice was gentle as she offered her guidance.

"It is good that you seek wisdom from the One most worthy to give it. However, regarding me, you must write only what is necessary to reveal the Incarnation, the mysteries of the Word made flesh, and the foundation of His Church. Once this faith is established, the Almighty will choose others, in His time, to reveal to the faithful the wonders and blessings He has worked in me."

Thus, in the year 42 A.D., the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew, preserving the truth of Christ for generations to come.

On a gentle hill in Palestine, Apostle Mark sat absorbed in his writing. As he worked, he also struggled with what he should write about the Most Holy Mother, when suddenly a great light shone upon him, and he instinctively knelt, his face alight with joy. The instructions of Her most significant role were given at this time to him. Mark acquiesced and wrote his Gospel in Hebrew while in Palestine and later composed a shorter version in Latin for the Evangelization of Rome.

Four years had passed since Matthew's work, and two years later Mark completed his task, the year was 48 AD and the Virgin herself had reached her sixty-third year of natural life.

In a quiet chamber, Apostle Luke paused in his writing and fell into a reverent prostration. Mary appeared to him in that solemn moment. *"Virgin Mother of my Lord,"* Luke humbly asked, *"having heard your guidance on mentioning you in my writings, I seek permission to speak more freely, to describe the manner of the Incarnation and your role as the Mother of Christ."*

With gentle yet firm wisdom, Mary replied, *"Use words that remain true to the purpose of your Gospel. If the Holy Spirit inspires you to write with a particular grace, then follow His guidance, my son."*

Luke, writing in Greek, preserved the image of his heavenly Mother in his Gospel, a vision of beauty that continued to inspire him even as he later lived in Achaia.

Later, within the familiar walls of her cenacle, Mary spoke to John, who had had been instructed by Christ to remain with her after His death. She spoke with honor and deference, *"This being the anniversary of Our Lord's Passion, I seek your approval for observing it from Thursday - the time of His Last Supper with us, until Sunday, when He arose from the dead."* John responded with quiet resolve, *"I will see that you are not disturbed during this time, Mother."*

Retiring to her private room, Mary then immersed herself in remembrance, reliving every movement, every act, every suffering of her divine Son as the Passion unfolded in her heart. When the moment of the Ascension came, choirs of angels encircled her, their glorious hymns of praise echoing the magnificence of that sacred farewell.

On the second day Mary knelt on the floor of her humble dwelling, diligently sewing ornate vestments for the apostles and priests - garments unlike any worn in their everyday lives. The rhythmic sound of her needle and thread filled the quiet room. As John entered, he marveled, "*These are magnificent. What king do you create these for?*" Mary replied with a gentle smile, "*These will be the vestments worn when you and the other priests celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass.*"

Mary had labored on these vestments with her own hands, refusing even the assistance of her angels in this most sacred task. She had purchased the materials collected from the alms, rich linens and silks, and worked tirelessly, remaining on her knees in deference to the holy duty. When she finished, she kissed each vestment as a final blessing.

Ten years later John would complete the sacred task given to write of the holy story of His Redeemer and King and His Mother. He wrote his Gospel in Greek, completing it in the year 58 A.D. while residing in Asia Minor, after the death and Assumption of Mary.

Humiliated and defeated by these sacred truths, Lucifer soon unleashed heresy to distort the Word of God. In response, John's Gospel stood as a powerful defense, its words directed firmly against the errors the devil sought to spread.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

THE DEATH OF OUR BELOVED

In Mary's private room, she lay prostrate in prayer, immersed in the silence of her devotions. Suddenly, the familiar strains of angelic music filled the air, drawing her to her knees in awe. In that radiant moment, Gabriel appeared before her, his handsome countenance as striking as it had been at the time of her own conception. His voice, imbued with celestial authority, declared,

"Our Empress and Lady, the Omnipotent and the Holy of Holies sends us from His heavenly court to announce to Thee in His name the most happy end of thy pilgrimage and banishment upon earth in mortal life. In exactly three years from this date, you will be reunited with your precious Son, our Lord, who longs for your presence." Mary's heart swelled with joy and surrender as she replied, *"I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done according to thy word."* At these words, a host of angels encircled her. Their luminous forms lifted her gently from the ground, spinning her in a graceful dance as her soul rejoiced in the promise of reunion with her beloved Son.

Three years later, in the quiet solitude of the garden at her house, Mary was seen alone amidst the blooming flora. The Holy Mother never ceased her sacred work, tending to the ill and the dying, offering comfort and solace, and praying fervently for souls struggling to find the way to her Son. As her earthly journey neared its close, Mary began to send messages through angels to her beloved apostles scattered across distant lands.

A week before her death, Mary offered a prayer of profound thanksgiving: *"Almighty Father, I acknowledge You as the one true Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. Of the goods of this world, I have nothing to leave behind, for I have never possessed nor loved anything but You. I give thanks to the heavens, the stars, the planets, and all of creation, for they have sustained me beyond my own merit."*

I pray that they continue to serve and glorify You as they were made to do, and that humankind may cherish them with the same care and love that I have.

The merits and treasures I have gained through Your grace, by my works and efforts, I leave to Your holy Church. With Your blessing, I offer them, hoping they may be multiplied. I dedicate them to the Apostles and all priests, both now and in future generations, so that by them, they may become true ministers, worthy of their calling, filled with wisdom, virtue, and holiness, to guide and sanctify the souls redeemed by Your blood.

This, my Lord, is my final offering, though always subject to Your divine will." A gentle, authoritative voice answered her prayer: "Let it be done as thou wish and ordain."

On the morning of her passing, the apostles gathered in her room. They had arrived the previous night, John greeting them first, with Luke arriving under the escort of an angel, and Peter coming from distant lands. In that sacred space, Mary knelt before each of them. One by one, they blessed her, leaning down to kiss her hands while tears of both sorrow and reverence fell freely. With a voice full of tenderness and finality, Mary addressed them:

"My dearest children and beloved masters, you have always been in my soul and written upon my heart. I have loved you with the tender love and charity given to me by my divine Son, for in you, His chosen friends, I have seen Him.

My children love the Church and love one another with the same bond of charity that your Master has placed within you. To you, Peter, holy Pontiff, I entrust my son John and all the rest."

At that moment, a choir of angels began to sing, their harmonious voices intoning, *"Hail Mary, full of grace, blessed is thy name."* Mary reclined upon her cot, placing her hands together, clasped firmly over her heart.

As she did so, a radiant, glowing light enveloped her entire being. The oratory filled with a celestial symphony - sounds more glorious than any mortal ears could ever fathom. Around her, the apostles wept openly, their faces a tapestry of wonder, sorrow, and rapturous awe. reclined upon her cot, placing her hands together, clasped firmly over her heart. As she did so, a radiant, glowing light enveloped her entire being. The oratory filled with a celestial symphony - sounds more glorious than any mortal ears could ever fathom. Around her, the apostles wept openly, their faces a tapestry of wonder, sorrow, and rapturous awe.

Outside, the house itself became bathed in that same brilliant light, while the music of the angels swelled to an ecstatic crescendo. Mary slowly opened her eyes, and before her appeared the gentle, loving face of her Son. His voice, soft and inviting, spoke:

"Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, come, the winter has passed." With serene acceptance, Mary replied, *"Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."*

And with those final words, Mary closed her eyes forever. Her soul ascended from her body toward the luminous face of her Son, as globes of light drifted upward, leaving the room in a state of transcendental splendor. Her earthly form, now guarded by a thousand angels, remained as a beacon of illuminant glory.

Peter then led the gathering out of the room. Soon, in an adjacent space and throughout the garden, people observed that the sacred light still shone over the house. After conferring with John, Peter approached two holy women, the two Mary's who had loyally served by the Blessed Mother's side throughout her final years. He said to them -

"You must anoint and prepare Her for burial. Use these ointments, the same as Our Queen used for Her Son, Our Lord."

He handed them bottles and small jars, while John offered winding sheets. John added,

"Use these to wrap our Mother's pure and sacred body. Use great care and regard Her with the highest modesty."

The women accepted the sacred items and returned to Mary's cenacle. The room still glowed with divine light as they moved slowly toward the center, their hands outstretched in search of the cot. Yet the brilliance proved overwhelming - so much so that their hands were lost in its radiance, and in a flurry of startled whispers, they quickly left the room.

Rushing to Peter and John in an adjacent chamber, Mary

Magdalene fell to her knees, grasping Peter's hand in despair.

"Peter, we cannot find the body of our Mistress. The light is blinding in the room. We could not even feel our way to the cot to prepare Her body as you have asked."

Peter exchanged a look with John before helping Mary Magdalene to her feet. *"John, come with me,"* he said, as they approached the door of the cenacle. The others in the room watched in hushed anticipation as John slowly opened the door, revealing a dazzling light that caused everyone to gasp in wonder. The men entered and closed the door behind them, and within the cenacle they searched in earnest, but the body remained elusive amid the radiant glow. In desperation, Peter called out to God,

"My Father, make known to us Thy Beloved's body so that we might attend to Her properly with the oils and wrapping used for Your Son, our Lord." A divine response came, gentle yet firm: *"Peter, John, let not the sacred body be either uncovered or touched. Nor shall it be looked upon."*

In that sacred moment, the soft glow above the cot deepened into a delicate rose hue, casting a heavenly warmth over the room. A hush fell upon Peter and John as they stepped forward, drawn into the gentle radiance that surrounded Mary's form, barely visible within the light. With tender reverence, they reached out, their hands trembling with devotion as they lifted her by the corners of her tunic. Her body felt weightless, as though carried upon an invisible celestial breeze, untouched by the heaviness of the world.

Moving with utmost care, they placed her upon a bier, her presence still wrapped in an otherworldly serenity.

With solemn grace, they draped a sheet over her, their gestures filled with both sorrow and awe. In that moment, a moment of profound grief yet ineffable grace, the earthly remains of the Blessed Mother were veiled in divine mystery, a final testament to her sanctity and the eternal light that would forever shine upon the Church.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

THE ASCENSION OF MARY

The streets of Jerusalem lay silent beneath the evening sky, the last traces of daylight fading into the deepening dusk. Then, one by one, tiny lights began to glow, flickering from the windows of humble homes like distant stars.

In one small dwelling, a mother cradled her fevered child, her face shadowed with worry. Beside her, a young boy clutched a candle, its flame trembling in the cool night air. With quiet determination, they stepped outside, the warm glow of the candle casting their forms in soft light.

They were not alone. From doorways and alleyways, others emerged, some crippled, some blind, each carrying a fragile flame, their flickering lights weaving through the darkness like fireflies. Their silent procession grew, a river of quiet faith flowing through the ancient streets, their soft footsteps whispering against the cobblestones.

Though they walked in suffering, they walked in hope, their candles a prayer, their journey a testament to the faith that carried them forward.

In another house, a woman tugged at her husband's arm, urging him to join the growing crowd. He resisted, his face clouded with doubt. "*Why should I go? What good will it do?*" he muttered. But his wife's determination was unwavering. "*Please,*" she pleaded, "*just come with me.*" Reluctantly, he followed his steps heavy with skepticism.

The streets filled with people, their candles casting a warm, golden light. A soft hum of a hymn rose into the night, a gentle melody that seemed to carry their prayers heavenward. The procession grew, winding its way toward the house of Mary. When they arrived, the apostles emerged, carrying her body with reverence.

They began their solemn journey to the Valley of Josaphat, the crowd following in quiet devotion. As they passed through the city, miracles unfolded. The sick were healed, the blind regained their sight, and the afflicted found peace. Hospitals and prisons seemed to tremble with divine energy as bodies, minds, and spirits were made whole. The air was thick with awe and gratitude, a testament to the power of faith.

At the tomb in Josaphat, Peter and John gently laid Mary's body to rest. Angels, unseen by most, assisted the grieving apostles, their presence a comfort in the midst of sorrow. The crowd slowly dispersed, leaving the apostles alone with their thoughts. Peter turned to John, his voice heavy with emotion. *"Let us stay with Her awhile. I cannot yet bear to be absent from Her."*

John nodded, his eyes glistening with tears. *"A friend and counselor no greater have I known than Her own Son. Her smile is etched in my heart; her gentle touch on my hand will not be lifted away."* The apostles wept openly, their grief profound. For three days, they remained at the tomb, refusing food and drink, their hearts too heavy to think of sustenance.

On the early morning of the third day, something extraordinary happened. A few of the men were asleep, but John, Peter, and Luke were startled to their feet as the sky above them seemed to split open. Swirling clouds descended, and a voice, deep, resonant, and unmistakably divine - spoke. It was Christ.

"My Mother was conceived without sin so that from Her virginal womb, I might clothe Myself in humanity. She cooperated with Me in the works of the Redemption, hence, I must raise Her, just as I rose from the dead, at the same time and hour. For I wish to make Her like Me in all things."

The clouds reached the tomb, penetrating the stone. A magnificent light burst forth, illuminating the night. The apostles fell to their knees; their faces filled with awe. From within the tomb emerged the Blessed Virgin Mary, radiant and glorious, holding the hand of Christ. Their bodies radiated light, a brilliance that seemed to touch every corner of the earth. Together, they ascended into the sky, and the voice of God the Father echoed through the heavens.

“Ascend higher, My beloved. Ascend and return to Me.”

The apostles watched, their hearts swelling with a mixture of joy and sorrow, as Christ escorted His Mother to Her throne in heaven. There, He placed a crown upon Her head, a crown of unmatched splendor, its gems and points radiating beams of light. Jesus spoke; His voice filled with love and authority.

“To My true and natural Mother belong all the creatures, which were created and redeemed by Me. And of all things over which I am King, She too shall be the legitimate and supreme Queen for all eternity.”

God’s voice resounded once more. *“My Beloved, Our Kingdom is Thine. Let Thy peace reign.”*

The heavens erupted with music, a symphony that filled the universe. From the earth, the view of the heavens was breathtaking, a reminder of the divine love that had touched their lives.

The Blessed Virgin, Queen Mother of all, our Queen of Peace, died on August 13th in the year 54 of Our Lord. Her death did not, nor will it ever, end Her love for Her children on earth. She will visit us in times of need, protecting us as only a mother can. She will continue to gather souls for Her Lord. She will be our greatest warrior in battle with Lucifer.

For in the final century of the first thousand years, he will return to earth one last time to gather souls. He chose this time knowing that humankind would be mentally and technically advanced, yet full of self-love. He will return, but unbeknown to him, so too will the One more powerful than he will be gathering souls - the One chosen from Her inception to crush the head of the serpent, the one known as Mary. *Blessed is Her Name.*



NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

Our Beloved Mother's first recorded appearance was in 40 A.D. to Apostle James as he was evangelizing outside of Saragoza, Spain. It was seven years after the death of Christ; however, he was afraid and feeling unworthy and incapable of doing what was asked of him. He called out our Savior's name - begging him to return, that he needed him, but it is Mary who appeared to comfort him. For as was told to them when Christ was ascending that it would be Our Beloved Mother who would be the one to intercede as his equal for those in need. I did not know that, and would never have known, had the following not occurred.

In April 1998, I was ending my first year at NYU's Tisch School of Art's Graduate Writing Musical Theater Program. For my *faculty approved thesis* project I began adapting a stage dramady *about my life* called "Sing A Song of Sixpence". However, everything changed in May, while running on the beach praying the rosary. I heard a loud, commanding voice so real I thought someone was behind me. I spun around but I was alone. The command was this: "*You must write about Marian Apparitions.*"

The voice haunted me day and night. I began researching, but after several attempts to follow this strange command, I became overwhelmed. Feeling angry, unworthy, and frustrated, I stormed out of my writing room and went for another run, this time without my rosary beads.

Upon returning home, I opened the door of my writing room and stood still in disbelief - the room was filled with the unmistakable scent of roses. I went immediately to my computer to search out the meaning of this and when the words filled the screen I was astounded.

I looked upward toward the heaven and said to our Beloved Mother “Alright, I’ll do it but don’t leave me because I don’t know what I’m doing.” And so, I began.

I submitted the very first draft of my *new and faculty approved thesis* project in the fall of 1998; it was called – ***The Mother of God***. I said “yes” to our Beloved Mother. And yes, I was laughed at, and many eyes rolled, but I forged on. I included five of the thousands of the recorded Marian apparitions.

The events that occurred in 1917 in a small region of Portugal known as Fatima was one of them. By January the Fatima story was the only one that remained.

Modeling Our Queen

As I adapt the screenplay into a narrative I wonder - would I give up heaven to labor for the salvation of souls? This is what Our Queen did, for all humanity - She gave up Heaven. I thought back on my twenty-five years of work and study of the 1917 events of Fatima that resulted in a musical for stage. I thought of little Jacinta Marto, (now Saint Jacinta) and what she did two years after Our Lady first appeared to her, and her brother Francisco and cousin Lucia on May 13, 1917. The following year she and Francisco became severely ill from Spanish influenza, suffering for over one year.

In 1919, at Francisco’s deathbed their Beautiful Lady from heaven appeared in their room. She came to carry her dearest Francisco in Her arms to heaven. She smiled lovingly at Jacinta saying to the gravely ill child, “You may come now too.”

Jacinta asked solemnly, “*But if I stay will there be more suffering for me?*” The Mother of God, as Our Lady of Fatima nodded yes and then told the child the details of what she would face if she remained on earth.

“Yes, my child. You will have to leave your family for treatment on your lung, you will require surgery, for which there will no remedy to lessen the pain, and you will die alone.”

This precious child shook her head saying - *“Then I will stay, for that would mean many more souls can go to heaven.”*

Every word imparted to Jacinta that day came true. Ten months later she developed an abscess on her lung which would require surgery. She was sent to an orphanage in Lisbon - it was sixty miles from her home but close to a hospital. Because of the effects of the war, anesthesia was saved for men that had served in the military and so they drained the abscess without it - a very painful procedure.

Jacinta gave up heaven so that the souls of others might reap the gift of eternal life sooner than she. Jacinta Marto was nine years old. Could I be that brave, that selfless? Could you? At such a tender age she modeled Our Queen in an act of selfless love for humanity. How miserably I fail at such.

In closing, I am to share with all those who will read or listen to Our Beloved's journey on this earth - you do not need to be afraid - She is with you - always. You are not alone; Her arms are opened wide to gather you...all of you in. Her love for us is endless. Call out to Her and She will protect and guide you to Her Son. She will keep Her promise that was so designed by God when He created Her. It is the same promise made to the children of Fatima on Her July 13th, 1917, visit - *“In the end my immaculate heart will triumph!”*

Blessed Is Her Name was produced by The Mother of God Studies
Copyright 2025 by Barbara Oleynick

Recorded at Sonic Sanctuary Recording Studio in
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Sound Engineer - John Ramsey

All other language translations were completed by:

Marta Maszkiewicz – Polish

Amanda da Costa Feitosa – Portuguese

Elena Mpuku – Russian

Ranjeeta Bermudez – Tagalog

Claudia Gonzáles – Spanish

Emma-louise Colas – French

Other works by Barbara Oleynick are available on our
website: www.themotherofgod.org

