

THE HERALD OF DIVINE LOVE

If I was standing in the middle of the dormitory. An older nun was approaching and, having bowed my head with the reverence prescribed by our rule,⁶ I looked up and saw before me a youth of about sixteen years of age, handsome and gracious. Young as I then was, the beauty of his form was all that I could have desired, entirely pleasing to the outward eye. Courteously and in a gentle voice (cf. Gen. 50:21) he said to me: "Soon will come your salvation, why are you so sad?"

although I knew that I was really in the place where I have said, it seemed to me that I was in the Choir, in the corner where I usually say my tepid prayers; and it was there that I heard these words: "I will save you. I will deliver you. Do not fear." With this, I saw his hand, tender and fine, holding mine, as though to plight a troth.

I looked and saw, between him and me, that is to say, on his right and on my left, a hedge of such length that I could not see the end of it, either ahead or behind. The top of this hedge was bristling with such large thorns that there seemed no way to get back to the youth. As I hesitated, burning with desire and almost fainting, suddenly he seized me and, lifting me up with the greatest ease, placed me beside him. But on the hand with which he had just given me his promise I recognized those bright jewels, his wounds, which have canceled all our debts (Col. 2:14).

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After I had received the life-giving sacrament, on returning to my place, it seemed to me as if, on the right side of the Crucified painted in the book, that is to say, on the wound in the side,⁷ a ray of sunlight with a sharp point like an arrow came forth and spread itself out for a moment and then drew back. Then it spread out again. It continued like this for a while and affected me gently but deeply. But even so my desire was not fully satisfied until the Wednesday when, after Mass, the faithful venerate the mystery of your adorable Incarnation and Annunciation.⁸ I too tried to apply myself to this devotion, but less worthily. Suddenly you appeared, inflicting a wound in my heart, and saying: "May all the affections of your heart be concentrated here: all pleasure, hope, joy, sorrow, fear, and the rest; may they all be fixed in my love."⁹

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I was trying to give my poor services in assisting at the divine birth when, like a star shedding its ray, the Virgin brought forth her son,¹⁰ true God and true man.¹¹ In an instant I knew what it was that I was being offered and what it was that I received, as it were, into the heart of my soul: a tender newborn babe. In him was hidden the supreme gift of perfection, truly the very best of gifts. And while I held him within my soul, suddenly I saw myself entirely transformed into the color of the heavenly babe—if it is possible to describe as color that which cannot be compared with any visible form. Then I received in my soul intelligence of those sweetest and most ineffable words: "God shall be all in all" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28). I rejoiced that I was not denied the welcome presence and delightful caresses of my Spouse. With insatiable avidity, therefore, I drank in, like deep draughts from a cup of nectar,¹² divinely inspired words such as these: "As I am the figure of the substance of the Father (Heb. 1:3) through my divine nature, in the same way, you shall be the figure of my substance through my human nature, receiving in your deified soul the brightness of my divinity, as the air receives the sun's rays and, penetrated to the very marrow by this unifying light, you will become capable of an ever closer union with me."¹³

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The invisible things of God are manifested to the intelligence by the exterior things of creation,¹⁴ as I have said already. The Lord appeared to me, and I saw that that part of his sacred breast to which he had taken my soul on the day of the Purification and held it like wax being carefully melted at the fire was now moist with perspiration and breaking out violently in beads of sweat, as though the wax of which I had formerly had sight were melting in the intense heat of the hidden fire which was burning there.¹⁵ And yet this divine treasury (Eph. 3:8), with marvellous and ineffable power, absorbed these drops in an indescribable way. Who could doubt the mighty power of the boundless love stored up therein, disclosing a mystery so great and so unfathomable?

O eternal solstice,¹⁶ happy fields where joy securely dwells, containing all manner of delights, paradise of bliss that never cloy's, where flows a stream of inestimable pleasure! Blossoms and spring flowers of every kind and hue gladden the sight; one is moved softly by sweet harmonies, sweetly influenced, rather, by the melodies of spiritual songs and music; revived by the aromatic odors of life-enhancing perfumes; intoxicated by sweet savors interiorly tasted; one is wonderfully changed by gentle and secret embraces!¹⁷

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