

Anderson, D.M.  
A life of Our Lady  
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# A LIFE OF OUR LADY For CHILDREN

★ By D. M. ANDERSON



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## Chapter I

# The Birthday

It was a birthday morning! The September sun shone over the golden cornfields, a type of peace and plenty; and warmed the purple grapes that later on would make the wine for the Sacrifice.

Surely the harvest month was well fitted to be the second most beautiful birthday in the world! The most beautiful birthday of all was in snow and cold, but this one was in the month of plenty.

And God meant it so, because He loved the little Baby so dearly, and knew that in years to come She would be the Mother of His Son. So He picked out Her birthday month specially, that it should be in the most beautiful month of all, to show that Her coming began the season of spiritual harvest.

We don't know very much about the birthday itself. There is enough told us, however, to make us think, and if we think long enough we shall lose our hearts once and for all to the Baby, like the angels did, because—but we'll come to that in a minute.

The Baby's Mother, St. Anne, was a lovely mother, but she had been so sad. She had longed to have a child, and so had her husband, St. Joachim. They had just ached like we do when we feel we want something dreadfully, a new book or bicycle, or when we want someone to play with.

And St. Anne and St. Joachim had prayed ever so hard and God did not seem to take any notice. He does that with people He likes specially. He seems not to hear them and they go on praying, and then He gives them something far nicer than they asked for.

That happened to St. Anne. She prayed and prayed ever so hard, and then at last God sent her a little baby. St. Anne could have cried for joy when she held the Baby in her arms. It was so beautiful. She looked at It as if she could never stop looking at It, and St. Joachim came and put his arms round her, and together they watched the Baby.

Except for Its special loveliness, outwardly It was like any other Baby ever born, but inwardly It was far and away the most beautiful, and the most beautiful ever to be born except the Baby's Son.

That Baby was Mary, who was to become the Mother of God. Her soul was white and shining, it had no stain of sin on it like we



have until we have been baptized. It was glorious and pure.

Then all the angels came flocking down from Heaven and bowed in homage before the Baby, for She was their queen, and the most beautiful angel of all took charge of Her, for God had sent him as Her guardian angel.

We all know that we have a guardian angel. He does much for us that we shall not know about until we get to Heaven. But the saints tell us that Our Blessed Lady used to talk to the angels, and they used to come and visit Her. Of course we are not bound to believe this, but the saints knew about such things much better than we do, and it is a help sometimes to think how the angels would come and talk with the little child Mary, and how She would love talking to them of God and things in heaven.

All that we are told of Our Lady as a little girl is founded on tradition. Tradition means facts told to the Apostles and early Christians and passed on one to another.

We are told very decidedly that after Our Lady was three years old She was taken to the Temple by her parents and offered to God. This was a pious custom among the Jews who loved God very much. They made an offering of their child to Him, and the little boy or girl was brought up in the Temple. There was a part set aside for these children, one for the boys and one for the girls, and the little girls were taught by holy women living in the Temple too. It was something like a school.

St. Anne and St. Joachim must have felt very sad parting with their little daughter, for Mary was the sweetest, most lovable little girl who ever lived. But they knew that God had something very great for Her to do, and that they couldn't put her in a better place than the Temple.

She was quite small, only three years old, but She walked up the long flight of steps to the Temple where the High Priest was waiting to receive Her, and her parents stood at the bottom watching Her go.

With Her going ended Her homelife, for Her parents were old and they both died while She was still in the Temple.

Though we do not know much of Our Lady's life while She was growing up, we do know that She must have been a great joy to all around her. She did not talk very much. She was thinking of God.

Because she was thinking of Him, she was always happy. She had a kind smile and look for everyone.

Mary was busy while She thought and prayed, for She learned the wonderful embroidery and spinning that were used in making the hangings for the Temple, and we are told that She did these wonderfully well. She also learned the Scriptures and knew all the wonderful prophecies about the coming of the Saviour.

So the years passed and Our Lady grew into a beautiful girl and the time came when the priests and those in charge of Her had to look for a husband for Her. She was so good, holy, and so young, for She was only about fourteen or fifteen,—though Jewish girls grew up faster than we do,—that great care was taken in finding Her a husband.

At last one was found, a carpenter and a relative, a kind holy man, who would take great care of his Spouse. He was much older than Our Lady, and She must have felt a sense of peace and security in having so loving and careful a protector.

So Our Lady's life in the Temple came to an end. She had to leave the peace and silence that She loved so well.

Mary went out into the world, but She knew how to keep the peace and quiet of the Temple in her own soul.

## Chapter II

# A Message From God

After Our Lady left the Temple She went to live in Nazareth, in the little house we know and reverence as the Holy House. We can picture Her going about very gently, doing the sweeping and cleaning, cooking the meals, and doing perfectly all the little home duties. But when Her work was done She used to devote Herself to prayer. That was Her greatest joy, to talk with God.

One night when She was praying in Her room, everything was very still outside. It was nearly midnight. She was so filled with the love of God that She did not feel sleepy or long for bed. Quite suddenly a beautiful angel stood before Her. He was St. Gabriel, one of the great archangels and God had sent him with a message. The message is the beginning of the prayer we say so often and love so well. The angel bowed and said:

“Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”

And then we are told that Our Lady was troubled and afraid. And why? Because the angel had told Her that She was full of grace, and She was so humble that She was troubled. We should have been pleased and proud if an angel had greeted us like that. But Our Lady was so humble that She thought only of God’s holiness and not of Her own.

The angel was so sorry at Her trouble and distress, for angels are very loving and sympathetic, that he said gently:

“Fear not Mary!”

Our Lady felt quite calm, for the messenger came from God, and God sends peace.

Then the angel looked very solemn and beautiful. This was one of the most wonderful moments in the history of the world. Very gently he told Her that God was going to send a little Child into the world, the Holy One, the Son of God. He asked Mary if She would consent to be His Mother.

Our Lady never did anything without thought, and She considered this message from God very seriously. She knew from Her life in the Temple and Her study of the Scriptures, that the Baby was to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

And while She thought the angel waited. There must have been a great hush over all the world for God was waiting too. And



all the Court of Heaven was waiting for Mary's answer.

Then very gently and quietly it came :

“Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!”

Our Lady accepted the trust. She would do just what God wanted. And God did not wait any longer. It was the twenty-fifth of March and His birthday would not be until December, but He found a way to come and dwell among us. Our Lady bowed Her head, and then God came down to earth and into Mary's Heart, and He lived there something like He comes to us in Holy Communion, only He never left Her during those months like He leaves us.

And Our Lady crossed Her hands on Her Breast and knelt quite still, while the angel bowed very low for God was there, and then flew back to Heaven.

Our Lady remained very quiet with Her eyes shut, She was, as the Gospels tell us, overshadowed by God. She was sinking into the love God surrounded Her with as a drop of water sinks into the ocean. Or as when our father picks us up and holds us tight, and we just let ourselves be held by him.

And yet Our Lady knew that She had God within Her. Sometimes after Holy Communion Our Lord lets us feel that He is there. We can't quite put it into words, but we all know what it is like; it is like a great big hug.

Our Lady was like that, only ever so much more, because She was so holy that She could feel more than we can. And She was like that, not just for ten minutes or half an hour, but always, every minute, until the Summer and Autumn has passed and Winter brought Christmas Day.

We would like to know just how Our Lady behaved, and all sorts of little details the Gospels do not tell us, but I think we can guess. She got up the next morning after the Angel had visited her and very quietly and gently did Her work. She acted just as if nothing had happened, except that She was even more sweet and beautiful than before. And She was busy thinking of other people too.

The angel had told Her something else that made Her very happy. He told Her that Her cousin St. Elizabeth was going to have a little son. Our Lady was ever so pleased, and immediately made up Her mind to go and see if She could help Her cousin.

She knew that there were all sorts of things to be done for a new baby, the baths to be got, the hot towels, and lots of things,

and St. Elizabeth was quite old. So She made up Her mind to go and see at once if the baby had come yet.

Mary was going to be the Mother of God. But She did not want to be waited on. She was only in a hurry to go and wait on Her cousin. So She went through the hill country with haste. It is the only time that we are told of Our Lady hurrying. It shows how much She valued an act of charity.

When Mary came in sight of St. Elizabeth's house her cousin saw Her and came to meet Her. Then God whispered in St. Elizabeth's heart, and told her that it was His own dear Mother that had come to see her.

Our Lady had not told anyone about the visit of the angel. She felt that it was God's secret, but when St. Elizabeth saw Her she cried out:

"Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me!"

Then Our Lady knew that God Himself had told her cousin. We can imagine with what joy they talked together, and how Our Lady must have felt it almost a relief to speak of the wonderful things that God had done to Her, and how She broke into that wonderful song, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Ever since then the Church uses it everyday, and especially in times of great joy.

We are told that Mary stayed with St. Elizabeth for three months, and we can picture Her doing little things about the house, quite forgetful of Her own dignity as Mother of God. And then St. Elizabeth had a little son. He was named John. Later he came to be known as John the Baptist. John was to be the Precursor of Our Lord. That means he was to tell the people all about Him before Our Lord began His public life. So it was fitting that Our Lady should be there before he was born, for She would have held him in her arms and blessed him. Then She returned to Her own home in Nazareth.

St. Joseph was so glad to have Her back. Life was quite weary without Her company. And She was so happy to be home, to cook his meals, to keep the house spotlessly clean, and to make him as comfortable as their poverty would allow Her.

And all the time She knew that God lived inside Her, like He lives in the tiny white Host in the Ciborium.

We approach the Tabernacle with much reverence, and She was the Tabernacle of God, and moved about among the people of Nazareth and they knew nothing about it. But She knew and She

worshipped God within Her. St. Joseph knew too, and he added his worship to Hers.

How wonderful it must have been when they sat together after the day's work was done, and knew that God was with them, making the third, though they could not see Him.

And so the months passed, and winter came. Then came news that made St. Joseph worry about Our Lady. The Emperor had ordered that each one must go to the town that his family had come from. The Emperor wished the Jewish nation counted.

St. Joseph and Our Lady were of the royal family of David and must go to Bethlehem. It would take several days to get there. It was cold weather and rough travelling for Her, but there was no way out of it, and St. Joseph got ready and they set out for Bethlehem.



## Chapter III

# Christmas Night

It was a cold night. The wind cut through the clothes of the poor couple as Joseph and Mary made their way up the road. Soon they saw the lights of Bethlehem gleaming before them.

St. Joseph laid his hand more firmly on the donkey's neck, and the animal feeling that he was nearing a stable hurried his steps. St. Joseph looked up anxiously into Our Lady's face. She looked calm and sweet, but oh! so tired. He could see the white of her cheek just shaded by Her veil. He felt sad to see Her so weary, but the lights of Bethlehem shone before them and he would soon get Her rest and shelter.

And Our Lady. She was tired. Yes! But very happy. She knew that She had God within Her. And no way would be too hard when She had Him.

St. Joseph led the donkey to the Inn. He left Our Lady sitting on it while he went to ask for a room. He didn't worry anymore. The journey was over. But like a knife through his heart came the answer to his question: "There was no room in the Inn!"

Sorrowfully he went back to Mary. She saw his sad face and guessed the truth. But She only smiled at him gently, as they turned away to seek lodging elsewhere.

Everywhere it was all the same. There was no room for them, no room for God and His Mother. But if people had no room for Him, God's animals would give Him welcome, and coming to a stable St. Joseph led Our Lady inside. It was cold and dark, but at least there was a roof over them.

The night was very cold and silent. Now and again a sheep bleated away on the hillside, and so the hours slipped by until midnight came.

Our Lady was praying quite calmly and peacefully, but Her whole soul went out in one great act of longing, "Come Lord!"

The silence grew deeper, and then God came into this world. His Mother saw Him for the first time, and Her whole soul bowed down in one great act of worship.

Then She took Him in Her arms. He was very small and helpless. Just like any other baby, but far more beautiful. She knelt



there holding Him and He lay quite still, His head resting in the crook of Her arm, while He smiled up into Her face.

Mary slipped the end of Her veil around Him to keep the cold wind from the tiny limbs. She knelt very still, Her whole soul sunk in peace, for She held the God of peace in Her arms.

And She watched Him. Watched the eyelashes that shaded the eyes, and the curve of the lips, and the little chest that rose and fell as He breathed, and She knew that He was God.

The God that lay in Her arms was the God that had made Her and all the world, and kept all things alive. The God that knew everything that had happened and would happen, and She felt the little Heart beating under Her hand, the great Heart of God. And She knew that He Who had made all things was a helpless baby and needed Her for everything.

Then St. Joseph came and knelt beside them, and the great soul of the saint was still in adoration before the Baby God.

And She wrapped up Her First born Son in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Our Lady was just as much a mother as our own mothers, and She had to look after Her Baby like any other Jewish mother, so She wrapped Him up as was the custom in the East to keep His little limbs straight.

She didn't have anything to lay Him in, no cradle made pretty with lace and ribbons, no pillows, no nice eiderdown and fluffy blankets. So sorrowfully She laid Him in the only resting place there was, the manger where the hay was put for the animals to eat. And the ox and the ass drew near and bent their heads so that their warm breath might warm the poor little Baby.

So Little Jesus began His life of suffering for us. There was no room for Him and His Mother, and it has been so often since.

Away in the hills the shepherds were watching their sheep. It was very quiet and still. Suddenly a great glory shone in the sky, and the shepherds rose in amazement. Then an angel appeared bringing them a message from God.

"Fear not," he said to them, "for I bring you tidings of great joy for to-day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord in the City of David. And this shall be a sign to you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

Then the sky was filled with an army of angels singing:

"Glory be to God on High, and on earth peace to men of good will."

As the shepherds stood in awe, the angels' voices grew fainter, the glory faded, and the quiet hush of night lay over the hills once more.

For a moment they stood silent, then the meaning of the message became plain to them, and leaving their sheep, they hastened down the hillside. They were simple, honest men, who feared God, they took the message quite simply, and made their way through the night.

Our Lady was still kneeling by the manger adoring the Baby God, and St. Joseph was near Her when they heard footsteps outside. St. Joseph went to receive Our Lord's first visitors and we can imagine his smile of welcome.

Gently the shepherds came near to the manger and knelt down. Their faith was firm, God had told them through His angel that the Infant lying on the straw was the Saviour, so they knelt in adoration, their eyes fixed on the lovely little face.

After they had knelt in silence for a little while, their eyes passed wistfully to the tranquil beautiful face of the young Mother and Our Lady knew what they wanted. Rising to Her feet She bent over the manger and lifting up the Baby held Him in Her arms. Then She bent a little so that each kneeling shepherd could kiss the tiny Hand.

This was the first homage to the Lamb that would be slain for us all, and it was paid by poor shepherds who had to care for the sheep and their lambs. Then very quietly they left the cave and went back to their flocks, leaving the Child in the arms of His Mother.

## Chapter IV

# The Sword

Swiftly the days passed. St. Joseph found a little house, and there He took Our Lady and the Holy Child. It was a poor, small, little place, but it gave them shelter and freedom from curious visitors, and there they remained.

Our Lady went about Her duties serenely and peacefully. She was not over anxious about the great charge given to Her, for neither She nor St. Joseph trusted in themselves. All their trust was in God. He could show them how to guard their treasures.

And the Baby. No words can tell us what He was like. We are just quiet when we think of Him, but all the same we can make little pictures in our minds. We can see Him lying as His Mother put Him, His eyes watching Her as She moves about gently, getting His little garments ready. And then as She stoops over Him to lift Him up, He smiles up at Her and then nestles in Her arms.

She looks down at Him very reverently, for She knows that She holds God in Her arms.

The Baby for Whom She warms the water to bathe, is God Who made all the seas and rivers.

The Baby Whose little clothes She washes, is God Who made all the wonderful earth, the fields and trees, and animals.

And as She takes Him in Her arms and sings Him to sleep, She knows too that He is God, Who made all the heavens, the sky, the sun, the moon, and all the twinkling stars.

And then She held Him quite close and was silent, because Her heart was full. Dear St. Joseph came and stood by them both, quiet and protecting, the earthly shadow of God the Father.

And so the week passed and the eighth day came, the day on which the Holy Child would first suffer pain and shed His Blood for us. Almighty God had ordered that all the children born during the time of the Old Law should be circumcised on the eighth day after their birthday, that is a cut was made on the child's flesh to mark them as belonging to the people of God, and they were given their name.

The poor little babies used to cry with the pain, because their skin was so tender that they felt pain more than grown-ups, and the Holy Child would have felt it more than other children because



He was God, and so more perfect than we are. But He loved us so much that He was happy to shed His Blood for our sakes.

But His poor Holy Mother must have suffered much more than if She had born the pain for Him. She would have endured any pain to save Him, but She knew it was His will to suffer for us. It was what He came on earth for.

The Holy Family stayed at Bethlehem for forty days, and then it was time for the Child Jesus to be taken to Jerusalem to be offered to God in the Temple. This was another custom of the Jews. They were supposed to offer their eldest son to God, and then they gave an offering of a lamb, or for poor people two turtle doves or young pigeons, to be offered in sacrifice.

God received this sacrifice instead, and left the Boy to His parents. So at the end of forty days St. Joseph set out for Jerusalem with Our Lady carrying the Holy Child.

Though Our Lord was a baby and as such was carried to the Temple, He was, of course, God. He was the Son of God being taken in His Human Body to His Father's House. The Temple then was the House of God like our churches are today.

What must the Holy Child have thought as His Mother held Him in her arms, and each step that She took brought Him nearer and nearer to the Holy City?

This was far more than the offering of a boy baby to God. It meant much to us, because this official dedication to His Father in the Temple, was, as it were, the dedication of His Life to redeem us.

It was God's Will that the tiny Baby in Our Lady's arms should grow up, and then after working to save sinners, should be ill-treated, hurt, and killed to make up to God for all our sins against Him. And also to open the gates of heaven for us, that we might all some day go and live happily in the beautiful land beyond the stars.

The Baby Jesus would have felt all this, and His little Heart would have beaten quickly, because He longed so much to save us. He would perhaps have opened His Eyes wide, and looked up into His dear Mother's face. She would have guessed all that He felt and have stooped down to kiss Him gently, a soft loving kiss that would have made Him feel how well She understood. Then He would have snuggled down in Her arms, and leaned His cheek against Her, just where Her heart was beating with love for Him, while She gently smoothed His hair.



So the journey passed, and presently St. Joseph was guiding Our Lady and the Holy Child through the crowded streets of Jerusalem. The people hurried to and fro, jostling them, and never dreaming that the Child asleep in His Mother's arms, was the great God, Whose very Name was too sacred to be spoken.

There was an old man living in the Holy City, he was very holy, and had only one desire in life, which was to see the Saviour that God had promised to send. The Holy Ghost had promised Him that he should see this Redeemer before he died, and that morning he felt in his heart a longing to go to the Temple. It was the Holy Ghost whispering to him. So he went.

When he got there he saw a middle-aged man, with a young Mother carrying Her Baby. Simeon, the old man, heard the Holy Ghost whispering once more in his heart. He was told that this was the Saviour he was waiting to see. Coming forward he bent over the Baby, then he held out his arms and Our Lady laid Her Baby in them.

Just think of Simeon's feelings! Suppose you suddenly saw a lovely Baby in the Sacred Host the priest was holding, and the priest bent down and laid the Baby in your arms! You would have known that it was the Baby Jesus. And wouldn't you have felt happy? You would have held Him very gently and reverently, but just as tightly as you could.

Simeon would have felt all this and more, because he was grown-up, and grown-ups understand things better, so they feel more. Simeon was so happy that he made up a song, and we sing it still, as a good-night prayer to God Our Father.

And as Our Lady and St. Joseph stood and wondered at Simeon's song, he turned and blessed them, and looking at the Mother he said:

"Behold this Child is set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

One of Our Lady's titles is Mother of Sorrows, and this was the first time that this title was spoken of. But at the moment She probably did not have time to think of all that Simeon's words meant, for an old widow, a very holy prophetess called Anna, came into the Temple praising God. The Holy Ghost had whispered in her heart too that this Baby was God.

Our Lady and St. Joseph then went with the Holy Child to

perform the ceremonies in the Temple, giving the offering of the poor, two young pigeons, and after the rites were finished they started once more for Bethlehem. No one in Jerusalem but Simeon and Anna knew that the Messiah that the Jews had been praying for so long, had at last visited His Temple. They were too taken up with their own concerns to think of God.

What must Our Lady's feelings have been when She arrived home with Her Child? When it was bedtime and She took Him in Her arms, wouldn't everything have seemed changed? The sword that Simeon spoke of had pierced her Heart now, and we know what this sword was, it was the knowledge of the terrible sufferings in store for Her Son.

Think of all it meant to Her! How She did everything for Him, because though He was God, it was His pleasure to be a helpless Baby, and His Mother had to look after Him like any other Mother. And as She knelt by Him that night, before She took Him into Her arms to do all the loving little cares that were necessary, she looked down at Him, and don't you think that the sword must have pierced Her heart then?

She knew that She had to supply all His needs herself, to do all in Her power to make Him grow well and strong. Why? To be crucified. Didn't it cost Her an agony of suffering to guard and tend that little Body, so that It must suffer?

When She washed His little Hands and Feet, She knew that one day these Hands and Feet would be pierced and torn with nails. She would smooth back the hair from His Forehead that would be pierced by the Crown of Thorns. The Eyes that looked at Her so lovingly, would one day look at Her through a mist of Blood. The Lips that pressed Hers would one day be bruised by the mailed fists of the soldiers. And it was Her mission to help Him grow up for this. Must not She have knelt there in an agony, Her Heart nearly broken with pain?

But there was another thought. He willed it. He longed to shed His Blood to make up for our sins against His Father, to redeem us. His pain was also His joy, His greatest joy. His Mother's Heart was one with His. So because it was His joy, it was Hers too, as with Her whole Soul torn with sorrow and joys, She stooped down to lift Him in Her arms. It was as if She plunged the sword deep into Her heart. Very gently taking Him in Her arms, She laid His face against Hers, holding Him against Her Immaculate Heart.

## Chapter V

# The Flight

It was evening when a party of travellers riding on camels with their servants about them, entered Jerusalem. They were evidently people of importance, but they seemed a little perplexed as if looking for something. Not finding what they sought they questioned the Jews saying:

“Where is He that is called King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and have come to adore Him.” For these were Wise Men knowing much about stars.

Herod was the King, and he was always afraid of someone coming to steal his throne from him, so when the story reached him that some Wise Men had come from the East and were asking where the King of the Jews was born, his fears increased.

He was a very wicked man, so he laid a plot by which he might save himself. First he sent for the Scribes and asked them where this Child would be born. They told him in Bethlehem. He sent for the Wise Men, asking them many questions about this wonderful star. Then he told them to go to Bethlehem and when they had found the Child to bring him word so that he too might go and adore Him.

The Wise Men were very holy as well as very wise, but they did not know what a wicked king Herod was, so they promised to come back. Herod never meant to adore the Child, he wanted to kill Him to save his own throne.

When the Magi left Jerusalem they saw the star again. It was like meeting an old friend. It went on before them and presently after it had reached Bethlehem, it stayed quite still over a little house.

The Wise Men's hearts were full, for the end of their long weary journey had come, and they would see their Lord. Very gently and reverently they entered the house, and there in the arms of His Mother was the loveliest Baby they had ever seen. They knelt down before Him very quietly. It was enough to be with Him. His Mother understood, and She just let them kneel before Her Son.

Have you ever stood on a cliff in the evening with the sun



setting over the sea, and everything very still? You feel just drowned in the loveliness of it all. Why? Because it is God's work, and one comes very near to God in His creation. The Wise Men felt like this only much deeper, for they were in the Presence of God Himself, and that Presence flooded their souls.

Presently they felt that they must do something to show their love. They offered Him the gifts they had brought all the long journey from the East; gold, frankincense and myrrh.

God the Father was watching over His Son, and when the Wise Men were fast asleep that night, He sent an angel who whispered to them not to return to Herod.

The following morning they came to say good-bye to the Holy Child and His parents. They came to the little house as they had come the previous day, with their camels and servants, a gorgeous procession that must have made a stir in the city. They knelt once more before the Baby God, they kissed His hands and then with their hearts full of peace and joy they started on their homeward journey.

There was a jingling of harness and bells, a bustle for a minute, then the patter of camels' feet, and silence. The Wise Men had come for a day into the Child's life, and vanished, but the thought of Him never left them. But they were careful to do as the angel told them and to return home another way.

After the Wise Men had departed an angel came to St. Joseph when he was asleep, and told him to take the Holy Child and Our Lady and fly into Egypt and to remain there until he was told to return, because Herod was seeking to destroy the Little Child.

St. Joseph did not hesitate a minute. It was quite overwhelming to be suddenly told to take a long journey to a strange land with a young girl and a tiny Baby. St. Joseph however was quite peaceful. God had told him what to do, so everything would come right in the end.

He woke up Our Lady and told Her the message he had received. She too was very quiet and peaceful. It was the sword piercing Her heart once more, for She felt what suffering the long journey would bring to Her Little Child. She made what preparations She could, but they would only have the donkey to ride on so they could not take much with them. Whispering a prayer to the Heavenly Father for strength and guidance She bent down and took the Child in Her arms, and drawing Her mantle round Him went out into the night.



Outside St. Joseph was waiting with the donkey. He helped Our Lady to mount and then taking the animal by the bridle led it away towards the desert. It was still night and cold, but the Holy Family had to hasten for Herod might even now be sending his soldiers.

How every sound filled Our Lady and St. Joseph with fear! They listened for the sound of horses' hoofs on the road, for the cries of soldiers but all was silent, and the miles slipped by until at last they reached the desert.

The way was long, rough and very dangerous and the travellers had a weary journey. St. Joseph must have suffered much as he looked from the Burden in Our Lady's arms to Her white tired face. He longed to give the Infant the most loving care, the best of everything. Nothing was good enough for Him. But all he could do was to give Him this weary journey with every discomfort.

Our Lady understood and by Her loving ways sympathized with him. There was a great responsibility on St. Joseph, but he had complete trust in Almighty God.

Sometimes Our Lady gave St. Joseph the Holy Child to carry. She would gladly have carried Him herself for ever, but she loved to give Her spouse that pleasure, and the look of peace and contentment on his face as he looked down at the Child lying in his arms was ample reward.

There are several beautiful legends about the Flight into Egypt, but there is one hard fact. It was a time of intense suffering for the Three, borne cheerfully and lovingly for us and this thought should make us love them intensely in return.

At last the three travellers reached Egypt and settled down there. St. Joseph earned a living to keep them in the necessities of life.

The Holy Child began to grow up. He learned to talk and walk, His Mother standing by Him while He hung on to Her hand or her dress. With what delight and awe His parents watched the first steps of the Infant God, and heard His first word, heard Him speak His heavenly Father's name for the first time with human lips.

But they were told to remain in Egypt only for a short time. After they had been there a few years Herod died, and the angel came to St. Joseph again—as he had promised—telling him to return home. He took Jesus and His Mother to the poor quiet village of Nazareth.

## Chapter VI

# Childhood

Nazareth is a little village in the North of the Holy Land and it is hated among the Jews. They said that no one of any consequence would settle down in such an out of the way place. And it was this that made St. Joseph choose it for the home of the Holy Family.

The hard journey from Egypt was over and the three settled down to everyday life in their own land. It must have been an intense relief because, however kind the Egyptians may have been, Our Lady and St. Joseph would have felt themselves strangers, and it must have been very lonely.

Now they were home once more, in the little house where the angel had come to Our Lady as She knelt in prayer, telling Her that She was chosen to be the Mother of God. Now as She walked over the threshold She led Her Son by the hand, the Son of God.

We do not know any little details about the everyday life of the Holy Child, and we are sorry because every detail would have been a joy to us. But still we know deep in our hearts what it was like. The little Boy was the sunshine and the center of the home, with His loving ways, and He shed an atmosphere of peace and happiness about Him and a sense of rest, because He was God.

And what must Our Lady's life have been like? Every moment was lived for Him, to make the home as nice as She could for Him and St. Joseph. She kept the little house clean and sweet, cooked the food, and as She moved about soft steps would come pattering beside Her, and She would look down at a little smiling Face.

Sometimes when She was resting, sitting for a moment, thinking of Her Son, a little Hand would steal into Hers. Then She would lift Him on Her lap, while she rested His head against Her shoulder. With Her arms tightly round Him the sword would pierce Her Soul once more. She was pouring all Her love and care on Him, doing everything She could for Him. He was growing into a very lovely Boy.

Mary knew that She was deliberately preparing His Body to be killed, and She could hardly bear it. Then two Arms would steal round Her neck, a little Face would be pressed against Hers, and



there was infinite comfort in the caress. It was God's Will, and He was God, so once more She whispered her own prayer, "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord".

So the time passed until the Child Jesus was twelve years old. Every year Our Lady and St. Joseph had gone up to Jerusalem for the great feast, and when the Child was twelve years old He was allowed to go too. They went with other Jews from Nazareth, the men in one group, the women in another, and the children were free to go with either of their parents.

After the feast was over they set out on the return journey, and were one day's journey from Jerusalem. Our Lady was with the other women, believing that the Holy Child was with St. Joseph. But presently St. Joseph came to Her and he was alone. At Her question he told Her that he had not seen the Holy Child all day. He thought He was with Her. The truth broke on them, the Holy Child was lost.

In quietness of grief too deep for words Our Lady and St. Joseph said good-bye to their friends, and made their way back to Jerusalem. There was nothing to be said, they had lost their only Treasure, a Treasure infinitely precious to God and entrusted by Him to their care. Carefully they searched Jerusalem, they asked for news of Him, but all in vain. The Holy Child had vanished.

For two days they searched, Our Lady becoming whiter each hour, her face calm but agonized, so that St. Joseph could hardly bear to see Her pain. He, too, was bent with sorrow and fatigue.

Then at last they came to the Temple. As they passed under a portico a voice reached them, a well-known, well-loved voice. The colour came into Our Lady's face, and She hurried forward. There in the midst of a group of doctors of the law was a Boy. It was Her Son.

He was standing in the center of the group, "hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers."

We should have loved to know the details of His meeting with His Blessed Mother, whether He came to meet Her, whether She went to Him, or if they waited until His interview with the doctors was over. But the Gospel does not tell us. All it does tell us is that Our Lady said:

"Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

And He said to them: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business"?

This is the first public occasion that Our Lord went about His Father's business. He had of course been doing it all the while. It was to do His Father's business that He had been born in a stable, and grew up as a real human boy. But now for the first time He had actually taught, though His teaching was in the form of a Child's questions.

We are not told much more, except that Our Lord returned to Nazareth with Our Lady and St. Joseph, and was subject to them. He lived like any other boy, doing what His parents wished, helping His foster-father in his work as a carpenter, growing up just like the other boys at Nazareth.

His Mother still looked after Him, after His food and His clothes, doing everything to make the little cottage as clean and as spotless as possible for the God who lived there.

All through the years that were to come She kept the memory of the events of Her Son's Childhood in Her Heart, pondering over them, and waiting for the future when He would really set about His Father's work.



## Chapter VII

### Good-bye

It was a peaceful evening, quiet, with the little sounds that fill the air near a village. Cries of children playing in the fields, the barking of a dog, the crowing of cocks, little intimate friendly sounds.

Our Lady stood by the cottage door, looking down the road at the Figure that was walking away towards the sunset. The head was a little bent as if in distress of mind, but the step was steady and purposeful. At the bend of the road the Figure turned. It was Jesus. He raised His hand in a farewell gesture, then the turning in the road hid Him from sight.

For a moment Our Lady stood looking at the empty road, then She turned and entered the cottage shutting the door very quietly. She was alone!

It was thirty years now since She had first held Her Son in Her arms that cold Christmas night. Thirty years since She has taken Him to the Temple, since She fled with Him through the desert to Egypt, after the visit of the Wise Men. She had lost Him for Three days in Jerusalem, but since then He had been all Her own, living in the closest intimacy with Her. And now He had gone about His Father's business. He had said good-bye, and set forth on His mission. She would see Him now and again, She would always be as near Him as possible, but the home life was over.

St. Joseph too had left Her. He had died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. His work was done, but Our Lady's was not nearly finished. There was no bitterness in the ache that was in Her heart. Her very life seemed to have been taken away from Her, but Her prayer was ever the same: "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord."

We know very little about Our Lady during the next three years. She was always humble and would have remained in the background, ministering to Our Lord when She could with the other holy women. And we may be sure too that Our Lord did all He could to look after His Holy Mother, but God's Will came first, so He had to leave Her. We know too that the apostles loved Her dearly, and that She did all She could to help them, but we are not told any of these things.

Our Lord and Our Lady met sometimes, as at the marriage feast of Cana. Our Lady was there, evidently as a friend of the bride and bridegroom, and Our Lord and His apostles were invited too. Half way through the feast the wine failed. Our Lady noticed this and Her kind heart was full of sympathy. This should be the happiest day in the lives of the young people, but it would be spoilt by the disgrace of not having enough wine. They would have felt as we would if there were not enough cakes at a birthday party.

Mary knew what to do, and whispered to Our Lord what was the matter. He told Her that His hour for performing miracles had not yet come. But She knew Her Son's Heart and that He would never leave anyone in distress if He could help them. She told the waiters to do just what He told them. Jesus had them fill the water pots with water, and carry them to the chief steward of the feast. But when he tasted the water he found it better wine than they had been drinking. Our Lord had performed His first miracle—changed the water into wine—at His Mother's request.

These meetings, for there must have been many of them, though we are not told about them, must have been a great joy to Our Lady amid all Her anxiety. She heard much of the talk about Her Son, how the people went after Him, drawn by His miracles and teachings. She knew the priests were jealous of Him and that their pride would not stand His rebukes of their wickedness, and they planned and plotted against Him. His Mother knew all these things and Her heart was torn with anxiety and pain, but it was the will of God, and She did not lose Her serenity, for was She not still "the Handmaid of the Lord"?

## Chapter VIII

### The Pasch

It was very quiet in the room next to the Upper room where Our Blessed Lady waited with St. Mary Magdalene and the holy women, while Our Lord kept the Pasch with His disciples that first Holy Thursday.

“With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer,” He told His disciples; and His Mother, in the room adjoining, knew well how deep that desire had been in His Heart. Even in the days when He had lain in Her arms, a tiny Baby, She had felt His Sacred Heart throb as She held Him. The desire was in His Heart then, the longing to shed every drop of His Blood for His Father’s Glory, and our salvation.

And now the night had come, this night so long desired. Did Our Lady know all that was in Her Son’s mind? That this Supper was to be the First Mass, before He suffered? We do not know, but we cannot imagine that Our Lord kept any secrets from His Mother.

We are not sure where She was, but many people love to think that She was in the next room, joining in spirit in that first Holy Mass. Somehow Her mind kept going back to Bethlehem, and further back to the quiet little room at Nazareth. He came to Her then, at the Annunciation, and He would come to Her again, for though we know nothing for certain about Our Lady’s First Communion, we love to think that She made it that first Holy Thursday.

Some thoughts are too sacred to be put into words, and Our Lady’s First Communion is like that. She and Her Son were once more ever so close. It was like when we cuddle down in our father’s arms without a word.

She would have waited somewhere near Him that Holy Thursday night, but somewhere in the background. She would be wanted presently but not yet. Probably Our Lord had prepared Her for the sufferings of Good Friday, and She would have prayed so hard. Prayed for Judas, but his heart was hardened. Prayed for poor St. Peter, as Her Son had prayed, and then She waited.

There was a stir. Our Lord and His apostles were leaving the Supper room. She heard their steps in the street below, and then



silence. Our Lord's hour of agony was at hand and She was not there to comfort Him. But love knows no barriers, and kneeling in prayer Our Lady joined Her heart to that of Her Son, praying in agony in the Garden of Olives.

The hours passed and out in the street the people began to stir. Presently news came to Our Lady: Jesus had been taken prisoner, He was even now before Pilate. Quietly His Mother heard the story. She had words of comfort and encouragement for all who came to Her, She who needed comfort so badly.

Is this not our chance? We can love Her with all our hearts, a love that gives sacrifices, those little things that hurt, and don't you think that perhaps Our Lord would have let Her know and that it was a comfort to Her? There is nothing that can comfort us like being loved.

And so the night passed and the day dawned. The day of our redemption. Still news came in. Peter had denied His Master, but St. John had remained faithful and had followed Our Lord to the governor's hall. Still the hours passed and She waited, and at last St. John came to Her. He looked at Her and for a moment he could not speak. Our Lady placed Her hand for comfort on his arm and he told Her all. How Jesus had been mocked and scourged and crowned, with thorns, and rejected by His people.

Our Lady listened in silence, and then taking Her mantle She said: "Come!"

## Chapter IX

# Our Birthday

It was fairly quiet in the corner of the winding street, though away towards the Governor's Hall there could be heard the shouts of the mob, coming slowly nearer. Two figures stood waiting, a woman with Her veil about Her face, and beside Her a young man. They stood very silent, listening to the approaching cries, and the young man put his hand as though in comfort on the woman's arm.

The minutes passed slowly, now the noise of armed men could be heard, jingling of armour, spurs knocking on the rough stones, the cries and jeers of the mob. Then the head of the procession came in sight. Roman soldiers, rough and brutal, and in the midst of them a well known Figure, staggering along, bruised and torn and bleeding.

His Mother raised Her veil as He passed and their eyes met. There was no word spoken. There was need of none between these two. Even through the Blood and dirt that covered Jesus' Eyes, He could manage to look at Her. His look was one of infinite love, sympathy, and pride. He was proud of Her as She stood there quite calmly, with no outward sign of grief except in the whiteness of Her face and the darkness under Her eyes. Jesus knew His Blessed Mother would be faithful and brave beyond all women. He could see the love and compassion in Her look, a love that understood completely, and that understanding was deepest comfort to the Divine Prisoner alone among His enemies.

Then He passed on. The meeting was over, but She would not leave Him now, Her place was with Him to the end. With St. John by Her side She followed the procession to Calvary. As She came near the summit sounds of hammering reached Her and She knew well what that meant. It would have been far easier to bear the nails being driven into Her own hands and feet, than to have to stand by and hear them being driven into Her Son's, Her very own Son, and Her God. Each sound of the hammer pierced Her soul, Simeon's sword was being driven deeper into Her heart now.

She stood at a little distance and watched the Cross as it was dragged into place, and pushed with an agonizing jolt into the hole prepared for it. She watched the two thieves placed on their



crosses on either side of Him. Then when all was ready and the soldiers had settled down to wait for the end, She came forward and took Her stand beneath the Cross. It was Her rightful place. She was His Mother. She had cared for Him, tended Him, reared Him all for this. She had helped to prepare the sacrifice and now She would help offer it. She would be co-redemptress with Him.

St. John stood by Her side with Mary of Cleophas, and St. Mary Magdalene crouched at the foot of the Cross. And so they waited.

Presently there was a movement from the white Figure hanging on the Cross. Jesus spoke. It was strangely quiet for a minute and His Words could be heard by all: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Was this not just like Jesus, thinking of others, never of Himself?

But the two thieves were not so quiet, one was blaspheming saying: "If Thou be the Christ save thyself and us." But the second thief had been watching and thinking. In spite of His own pain and misery, he had remarked the patience of the Man hanging beside Him, and His words had completed his conversion. Now hearing his fellow thief blaspheming, he rebuked him, then turning to Jesus he said: "Lord remember me when Thou shalt enter Thy kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Amen I say to thee, today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." What an answer to faith and prayer, to go straight from the cross to heaven!

Beneath the crosses Our Lady stood listening. A ray of comfort stole into Her heart. This was the first fruit of Her Son's sufferings, amid all His pain He had this consolation.

For a while there was silence, then another movement from the dying Figure on the Cross. Was Jesus going to speak again? He turned His head and looked down at the little group beneath Him. For a moment He looked at them, His Mother standing with the disciple He loved, St. Mary of Cleophas and His dear St. Mary Magdalene, in her old place at His Feet. Then He spoke His last words to His Mother:

"Woman, behold Thy son."

Turning to St. John he said:

"Behold thy Mother."

Up to the end He was thinking of His Mother. He was leaving Her, but He would give Her someone to love and be loved by, His own beloved disciple. But He meant far more than that, and His



brave quiet Mother standing loyally by His Cross understood. He was giving Her another family. She became His Mother in a stable thirty-three years before, now beneath His Cross He was making Her the Mother of all souls, souls which He was redeeming at so great a price.

It was as though He looked down and saw Her empty arms, the arms that had carried Him so lovingly. He could not leave Her like that, so He filled Her arms with the souls He was redeeming. He slipped them under Her mantle so that She could hold them close, and in that embrace, bought at the cost of Her pierced Heart, there would be comfort for Her. His pain then was not in vain. And in years to come Her children would slip into Her arms as She stood sorrowful beneath the Cross, and cuddling close against Her heart, in love too deep for words, would comfort Her. In becoming St. John's Mother She became our Mother too.

The Sacred eyes closed again and again there was silence. Our Lord was getting near the end now. The sweat of death was on His Face, and the loss of Blood filled Him with a terrible thirst. He did not suffer from physical thirst only. There was that longing, that thirsting for souls, that made Him shed all His Blood to save us. And from His very Heart came the cry, "I thirst."

His Mother standing beneath the Cross heard it. For a moment She could hardly bear the longing to somehow quench His thirst, to moisten His cracked Lips with cool water, to bathe His burning Forehead, to ease a trifle His intolerable agony. She went back in years to the time when He was small and helpless. Then She could do as She would with Him; now She could do nothing. Could She bear it? Could Her Mother's Heart endure the strain? But Her Son Himself had given Her that which would help Her, in Her arms He had placed His countless children, Her children too, and in relieving their thirst She would relieve His. The Handmaid of the Lord stood beneath the Cross.

The time passed slowly and now the end was at hand. He had been silent for some while now. There had been one cry of intense agony: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and then Jesus hung on His Cross, shedding His Blood drop by drop for us. Now His work was finished, the work His Father had given Him to do. He had given us all He had. He could give us no more.

"It is finished." The words were the seal on His life. There

was silence for a minute, then crying with a loud voice Our Lord said:

“Father into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” He bowed His Head and died.

For a while all was quite still. The little group stood where they had remained so faithfully all the three hours. St. Mary Magdalene crouched against the Foot of the Cross, St. John and St. Mary of Cleophas, and erect and motionless, closest of all, stood His Mother, Queen of Martyrs. Her sorrow was too deep for words. She stood alone, calm but desolate. It was the Will of God.

After a while the soldiers came over to the three crosses. The thieves were not dead so they broke their legs. Then they came to Jesus. A prayer rose up from the group. Could not Christ's Body be spared more suffering, more indignities? The soldiers paused. Jesus was dead. But to make more sure they opened His side with a spear and out came Blood and Water. Our Lord had two homes for His children now, His Mother's arms and His own wounded Side.

## Chapter X

### After

Presently there was another stir. St. John looked round in agony, for He felt Our Blessed Lady could not endure much more. But friends had come now, Our Lord's sufferings were finished.

Two Jews, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had been to Pilate asking for the Body of Jesus, and Pilate had given them leave to take it.

So bringing a store of spices and linen they came to Calvary. It was the best that these friends of Jesus could do, for they had to bury Him before the Pasch, and time was short. So as gently as possible they pulled out the nails, lowering the Body from the Cross, and below with outstretched arms Our Lady waited to receive It.

Reverently they laid the poor bruised Body back in Its first resting place on earth. What memories must have flooded Our Lady's mind, as once more She was called upon to do those services that She had performed so lovingly for the Divine Infant.

She bent over the Face that lay so still in death on Her arm. She washed from it the dirt and spittle, as She had washed the Face of the Child in years gone by. And then She kissed It. She washed and annointed the wounded hands and Feet, while the other women waited on Her.

Then St. John and the other two came forward with cool linen and wrapped the poor Body in it. The face cloth they gave to His Mother. She gave Him one lingering kiss, then wrapped the white linen round His Head. So gently and reverently the Body was taken to a near-by garden and laid in a new tomb.

It was over. Very quietly the little party went back to Jerusalem.



## Chapter XI

### Welcome

It was very early in the morning, when everything is hushed and expectant waiting for the sunrise. As the new day is dawning, there is a subdued feeling of thrill and excitement in nature. We have seen it ourselves in winter perhaps, when the sun rises later, or in early spring, and it is more beautiful then.

There is the hush of waiting, the faint pink glow in the East that grows deeper and deeper, all nature seems far away and unreal, then as the sun shows itself over the edge of the skyline a sudden chorus of song bursts from the birds, and everything is filled with joy, joy that the night is passed and day come, with its light and brightness. However often we see a sunrise, it is always fresh and new, always with expectancy—and then—joy fulfilled.

It was on just such a morning that Our Lady rising from Her long vigil went over to the window to look out. She was very calm, pale and peaceful, though the lines were still on Her face, stamped by the anguish of Good Friday.

There was a marvellous expression of peace too. She still echoed Her prayer "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord." God had given Her the most wonderful Son; He had taken Him away and left Her alone, but for all that "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord."

But as She stood there watching the dawn She was a very lonely figure. Did She know for Whom and why She watched? We cannot tell but love whispers in our hearts that She did know.

The rosy East grew deeper pink, the hush was intense, and as the sun burst forth in strength and glory, there came from the direction of the Garden of Olives the noise of a great earthquake, and then—Our Lady was no longer alone.

We are not told that Our Lord first appeared to His Blessed Mother. The Gospels are completely silent, telling only of His coming to the holy women and the Apostles. But knowing Our Lord as we do, and knowing how He loved His Mother, can we doubt that He came straight to Her when He rose from the tomb? The saints tell us so, and so do our own hearts. But as for the meaning—well we can just picture it for ourselves.

What do we feel like when mother or father comes home after a long absence? Isn't it enough just to be with them? There is not at first much to say. So we can picture Them together, very quiet, understanding each other completely. Our Lady knew and loved Her Son very much before, but She knows and loves Him immeasurably more now. Nothing brings people together like sorrow, and especially sorrow shared. Think of the anguish those two have been through together! Our Lord redeemed us with infinite pain, and His Blessed Mother had Her share in that redemption.

So now they had the companionship of a task accomplished together. It was finished, at least for Our Blessed Lord. But not for His Blessed Mother. She had to strengthen His work.

He could rest now, and She could rest for the moment in His Blessed company. She had Him, and She was satisfied. She gazed at Him, so glorious, so radiant, with those love tokens of His Passion stamped on Hands and Feet and Side, His Five Wounds.

How His Mother must have kissed them, and as She did so, memories must have been infinitely sweet. He was still Her Son, the same Baby that She held so close at Bethlehem, that She lived with for thirty years. She had brought Him up and cared for Him, and all the time She knew that He would be nailed to a Cross and die in infinite pain.

Now it was all over, He had done the work His Father had given Him to do, the shadow was gone from Our Lady's Heart, and She stayed with Her Son in utter peace and content.

We all long to know more about those wonderful forty days between Our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension but we are told very little, only enough to show us that Our Lord Risen was just the same kind thoughtful Friend. And we know too that He would have been the same kind thoughtful Son.

The days passed all too swiftly. Ascension Day dawned. We do not know if Our Lady was with Her Divine Son, but it seems natural that She should have been present. She was the first to welcome Him on Christmas night, and Her Face surely would be the last earthly face His eyes would rest upon, as the clouds hid Him from the Apostles' sight. What we do know is that the Apostles returning to Jerusalem in obedience to Our Lord's commands, spent the next ten days in Our Lady's company.

It was the first retreat, and we can picture them gathered round Our Lady. She was all that was left them of Our Lord, the

link with Him, and it was a comfort to watch Her. She was so like Him. She had His ways, His look, His smile.

She knew them all very well. St. Peter, still frightened, still sorrowful over his fall. St. James, St. Jude, St. Thomas, strong but doubting, and above all St. John. She helped each, advised, encouraged, keeping them together waiting for the Promise of the Father. Her work of Mother to the Infant Church was well begun.

So the days passed, and Whitsunday dawned. The Apostles were all gathered round Our Lady in the Upper Room, and suddenly there was a sound of a mighty wind coming. It filled the whole house. It was the Holy Spirit coming in the form of Tongues of Fire that sat on the head of each one.

Fire is the symbol of love and strength and the Holy Ghost is both. Haven't you stood by a fire on a cold day and felt the heat steadily warming your hands. The Holy Ghost was like that in the Apostles' souls. And He came into their hearts, filling them with strength and casting out all fear.

And Our Lady. What must Her Meeting with the Holy Ghost have been? She is specially beloved by Him. He would have filled Her whole being with love. She loved God before, but She loved Him more now, for He filled Her in still another way. He came to dwell in Her soul and with Him were the Father and the Son.

Her Son had left Her and gone to Heaven, and yet He came back to Her with the Holy Spirit to live in Her once more. Once more She was to keep house for Him as She kept it during the thirty years, but now the house was Her own soul. Within Her by sanctifying grace dwelt the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. She teaches us how to keep house for them, for They live in us too.



## Chapter XII

# Going Home

The years passed on slowly and Our Lady quietly continued Her work of being mother to the Infant Church. That is, She helped and advised the Apostles, comforting them in their troubles, encouraging them in their work, and above all teaching them about Her Divine Son.

The Apostles loved to hear all She could tell them about Him, and She was so like Him that the disciples who had never known Jesus, grew to know Him from Her. She had one special friend, St. Luke, who wrote one of the Gospels, and he is supposed to have written much of what She told him. One can picture them together, Our Lady telling him about the events of the Holy Childhood, and what a joy it must have been to them both.

St. John looked after Her most lovingly. He was a real son to Her, but still She longed for Her Divine Son, and even though She was peaceful in doing God's Will, Her mother's heart longed to be with Him in Heaven.

So the years rolled by, and then the Apostles realized that they would not have Our Lady with them much longer. She was not ill, but She was so full of the love of God, that Her Body was not strong enough to bear it. Of all human beings She was the only one to die of love.

Perhaps if we think we can understand a little. Sometimes something makes us realize how much we love mother or father, perhaps they are away or ill, and we are not with them. We get quite a lump in our throat when we think of them, and a pain in our heart because we love them so much. It was like that with Our Lady, She got such a pain of love in Her heart, that it could not go on beating any longer, and of course when our heart stops beating we die.

We would, of course, love to know all about Our Lady's death, but we do not really know anything. Some old stories tell us that She died with the Apostles round Her, all except St. Thomas. We can picture Her so calm and peaceful, so full of joy that at last She was to go to Her Son forever. She had no regrets on leaving the earth, for She had done the work God gave Her to do, and She would continue that work. Our Lord had placed us in Her arms on

Calvary, and She is our mother still, holding us so close, and keeping us safe.

Her breathing grew slower, and She spoke Her last words to the Apostles. Earth was slipping away from Her fast—and then—She was in the Arms of Her Divine Son for ever.

The day wore on and the body of the Mother of God had been reverently laid in the tomb, when poor St. Thomas arrived in haste to say good-bye to his Mother.

He was late once more, and again his delay was a blessing to us. Seeing his grief the Apostles opened the tomb to give St. Thomas a last look at Our Lady, and the tomb was empty. There were lilies growing in it, but Our Lady's body was gone. For a moment the Apostles gazed in wonder, then they knew what had happened. God could not leave the beautiful body of His mother in the tomb, so He took it to Heaven.

What a reception She must have had. The angels would have sung their loveliest to greet her, the saints of the Old Law would have welcomed Her, and above all her dear Father and Mother, St. Anne, and St. Joachim.

And Her Divine Son. He stood looking into Her eyes as if He could never love Her enough. Then He led Her to His Heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit hovering about Her, and there She was crowned Queen of Heaven.

She reigns now in bliss, nearest of all to God, the greatest, the most wonderful of all God's creatures. And yet—if we will, we can steal under Her mantle and cuddle up close in Her Arms.  
Miss D. M. Anderson.















