

## ARTICLE 56

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! Eve and Our Lady

##### Dom Prosper Gueranger

Today I would like to present a beautiful meditation from Dom Prosper Gueranger contrasting Eve with Our Lady. It comes from his Liturgical Year for the feast of the Annunciation.

##### The Angel of Darkness

“In the garden of delights there is a virgin and an angel; and a conversation takes place between them. At Nazareth a virgin is also addressed by an angel, and she answers him; but the angel of the earthly paradise is a spirit of darkness, and he of Nazareth a spirit of light. In both instances it is the angel that has the first word. Why,' said the serpent to Eve, 'hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise!' His question implies impatience and a sollicitation to evil; he has contempt for the frail creature to whom he addresses it, but he hates the image of God which is upon her.

##### The Angel of Light

See, on the other hand, the angel of light; see with what composure and peacefulness he approaches the Virgin of Nazareth, the new Eve; and how respectfully he bows himself down before her: 'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!' Such language is evidently of heaven: none but an angel could speak thus to Mary.

##### The Reaction of Eve

Eve imprudently listens to the tempter's words; she answers him; she enters into conversation with one that dares to ask her to question the justice of God's commands. Her curiosity urges her on. She has no mistrust in the serpent; this leads her to mistrust her Creator.

##### The Reaction of Mary

Mary hears what Gabriel has spoken to her; but this most prudent Virgin is silent. She is surprised at the praise given her by the angel. The purest and humblest of virgins has a dread of flattery; and the heavenly messenger receives no reply from her, until he has fully explained his mission by these words: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son : and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.'

##### Mary is not Tempted

What magnificent promises are these, which are made to her in the name of God! What higher glory could she, a daughter of Juda, desire, knowing, as she does, that the fortunate Mother of the Messiah is to be the object of the greatest veneration? And yet it tempts her not. She has for ever consecrated her virginity to God, in order that she may be the more closely united to Him by love. The grandest possible privilege, if it is to be on the condition of violating this sacred vow, would be less than nothing in her estimation. She thus answers the angel: 'How shall this be done because I know not man?'

### **Lack of Prudence**

The first Eve evinces no such prudence or disinterestedness. No sooner has the wicked spirit assured her that she may break the commandment of her divine Benefactor and not die; that the fruit of her disobedience will be a wonderful knowledge, which will put her on an equality with God Himself : than she immediately yields; she is conquered. Her self-love has made her at once forget both duty and gratitude: she is delighted at the thought of being freed from the twofold tie which binds her to her Creator.

### **The Contrast**

Such is the woman that caused our perdition. But how different is she that was to save us! The former cares not for her posterity; she looks but to her own interests: the latter forgets herself to think only of her God, and of the claims He has to her service. The angel, charmed with this sublime fidelity, thus answers the question put to him by Mary, and reveals to her the designs of God: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren; because no word shall be impossible with God.' This said, he is silent, and reverently awaits the answer of the Virgin of Nazareth.

### **The Virgin of Eden**

Let us look once more at the virgin of Eden. Scarcely has the wicked spirit finished speaking than Eve casts a longing look at the forbidden fruit: she is impatient to enjoy the independence it is to bring her. She rashly stretches forth her hand; she plucks the fruit; she eats it, and death takes possession of her : death of the soul, for sin extinguishes the light of life ; and death of the body, which, being separated from the source of immortality, becomes an object of shame and horror, and finally crumbles into dust.

### **The Virgin of Nazareth**

But let us turn away our eyes from this sad spectacle, and fix them on Nazareth. Mary has heard the angel's explanation of the mystery; the will of heaven is made known to her, and how grand an honour it is to bring upon her! She, the humble maid of Nazareth, is to have the ineffable happiness of becoming the Mother of God, and yet the treasure of her virginity is to be left to her! Mary bows down before this sovereign will, and says to the heavenly messenger: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.'

### **The Defeat of Satan**

"...Never was there a more entire or humiliating defeat than that which this day befell satan. The frail creature, over whom he had so easily triumphed at the beginning of the world, now rises and crushes his proud head. Eve conquers in Mary. God would not choose man for the instrument of His vengeance; the humiliation of satan would not have been great enough; and therefore she who was the first prey of hell, the first victim of the tempter, is selected to give battle to the enemy. The result of so glorious a triumph is that Mary is to be superior not only to the rebel angels, but to the whole human race, yea, to all the angels of heaven. Seated on her exalted throne, she, the Mother of God, is to be the Queen of all creation."

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