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He felt pouring down on him from above a sweetness and delight rarely given to even a few, and it made him lose himself completely. He was filled with such joy that he wished by any means to pass over entirely to that place where, in passing out of himself, he had already partially gone. This man, having *the spirit of God*, was ready to endure any suffering of mind and bear any affliction of the body, [1 Cor 7:40](#) if at last he *would be given the choice* that the *will of the heavenly Father* might be *fulfilled* mercifully in him. [Jos 24:15](#) [Mt 6:14](#) So one day he approached the sacred altar which had been built in the hermitage where he was staying and, taking up the volume where the holy Gospels were written, he placed it reverently upon the altar.

Then he prostrated himself with his heart as much as his body *in prayer to God*, asking in humble prayer that *God in His kindness —the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation* [2 Cor 1:3](#) —be pleased to show him His will. He prayed earnestly that at the first opening of the book he would be shown what was best for him to do, so that he could bring to complete fulfillment what he had earlier simply and devotedly begun. In this he was led by the spirit of the saints and holy ones, as we read they did something similar with sincere devotion in their desire for holiness.

⁹³ Rising from prayer in a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart, he prepared himself with the sign of the holy cross. He took the book from the altar, and *opened it with reverence* and fear. *When he opened the book*, the first passage that met his eye was the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ that tells of the suffering he was to endure. To avoid any suspicion that this was just a coincidence, he opened the book a second and a third time. Every time he found either the same text or one that was similar. This *man filled with the spirit of God* [Gn 41:38](#) then understood that he would *have to enter into the kingdom of God through many trials*, [Acts 14:21](#) difficulties and struggles.

The brave soldier *was not disturbed by oncoming battles*, [Eccl 8:8](#) nor was he downcast in his spirit as he was about to *fight the wars of the Lord* [1 Sm 25:28](#) in the camps of this world.

He was not afraid that he would yield to the enemy
since he had long struggled beyond human strength
not even to give in to himself.
He was so filled with fire that, even if in preceding ages
there had been someone with a purpose equal to his,
no one has been found whose desire was greater than his.
He found it easier to do what is perfect
than to talk about it;
so he was constantly active
in showing his zeal and dedication in deeds, not in words,

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because words do not do what is good,
they only point to it.
Thus he remained undisturbed and happy,
singing *songs of joy in his heart* to himself and to God. [Eph 5:19](#)
For this reason he was found worthy of a greater revelation,
since he rejoiced over a small one;
faithful in a small thing, [Lk 19:17](#)
he was placed over greater ones. [Mt 25:21](#)

Chapter III

THE VISION OF A MAN HAVING THE IMAGE OF A CRUCIFIED SERAPH

⁹⁴ While he was staying in that hermitage called La Verna, after the place where it is located, two years prior to the time that he returned his soul to heaven, he saw *in the vision of God* a man, *having six wings like a Seraph, standing over him, arms extended and feet joined, affixed to a cross. Two of his wings were raised up, two were stretched out over his head as if for flight, and two covered his whole body.* [Is 6:2](#) When the blessed servant of the most High saw these things, he was filled with the greatest awe, but could not decide what this vision meant for him. Moreover, he greatly rejoiced and was much delighted by the kind and gracious look that he saw the Seraph gave him.^a The Seraph's beauty was beyond comprehension, but the fact that the Seraph was fixed to the cross and the bitter suffering of that passion thoroughly frightened him. Consequently, he got up both sad and happy as joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart. Concerned over the matter, he kept thinking about what this vision could mean and his *spirit was anxious* to discern a sensible meaning from the vision. [Ps 143:4 \[Vulgate, Ps 142:4\]](#)

While he was unable to perceive anything clearly understandable from the vision, its newness very much pressed upon his heart. Signs of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man hovering over him.

⁹⁵ His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner part of his hands and on the upper part of his feet, and their points protruding on opposite sides. Those marks on the inside of his hands were round, but rather oblong on the outside; and small pieces of flesh were visible like the points of nails, bent over and flattened, extending beyond the flesh around them. On his feet, the marks of nails were stamped in the same way and raised above the surrounding flesh. His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood.

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Sadly, only a few merited seeing the sacred wound in his side during the life of the crucified servant of the crucified Lord. Elias was fortunate and did merit somehow to see the wound in his side. Rufino was just as lucky: he *touch*ed it with his own hands. [1 Jn 1:1](#) For one time, when the same brother Rufino put his hand onto the holy man's chest to rub him his hand slipped, as often happens, and it chanced that he touched the precious scar in his right side. As soon as he had touched it, the holy one of God felt great pain and pushed Rufino's hand away, crying out *for the Lord to spare him*. [Gn 19:16](#)

He hid those marks carefully from strangers, and concealed them cautiously from people close to him, so that even the brothers at his side and his most devoted followers for a long time did not know about them.

Although the servant and friend of the Most High saw himself adorned with such magnificent pearls, like *precious stones*, and marvelously decorated *beyond the glory and honor of all others*, still his heart did not grow vain. *He did not seek to use this to make himself appealing to anyone in a desire for vainglory*. [Gal 1:10](#) Rather in every way possible he tried to hide these marks, so that human favor would not *rob him* of the grace *given* him.

⁹⁶ He would never or rarely reveal his great secret to anyone. He feared that his special friends would reveal it to show their intimacy with him, as friends often do, and he would then lose some of *the grace given to him*. He always carried in his heart and often had on his lips the saying of the prophet: "*I have hidden your words in my heart to avoid any sin against You*." [Ps 119:11](#)
[Vulgate, Ps 118:11]

Whenever some people of the world approached him and he did not wish to speak with them, he would give this sign to the brothers and sons staying with him: if he recited the verse mentioned above, immediately they would dismiss politely those who had gathered to see him. He had learned through experience that one cannot be a spiritual person unless one's secrets are deeper and more numerous than *what can be seen on the face* and by their appearance can be judged in different ways by different people. [2 Cor 10:7](#) For he had met some people who agreed with him outwardly but inwardly disagreed, applauding him to his face but laughing behind his back. These brought *judgment upon themselves* and made honest people seem somewhat suspect to him. [1 Cor 11:29](#)

