St. Anthony Mary Claret

MARIAN WRITINGS: THE YEARS AT COURT, 1857–1869

From the Spanish of the original printings

English translation

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About this translation

Translated from the original printings of 1857–1869. **A selection**: *The Devotion of the Most Holy Rosary* (1858) is given separately. Each piece names the work of Claret it comes from.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Part IV. Confessor of the Queen (1857–1869)

22. Our Lady of Mercy: History and Prayer

\[Source: loose leaflet, Explicación de la estampa, con una oración a María Santísima de la Merced, Vic 1857, 4 pp.\]

The apparition to St. Peter Nolasco

At midnight between the first and second days of August of the year 1218, while the glorious St. Peter Nolasco was at prayer in the City of Barcelona, weeping and pleading for the multitude of Christians who were prisoners and slaves under the tyranny of the Mohammedans, the Most Holy Virgin deigned to appear to him, accompanied by a multitude of Angels;[1] and from the throne of glory and splendour on which she was seated she spoke these words to him: "Peter Nolasco, my son, heaven has heard your prayers and tears. I am Mary, I am the mother of the Son of God, who for the salvation and freedom of the human race shed his blood and suffered a cruel death. Look attentively and consider that my Son has sent me to you to make known to you that his will has charitably resolved that, in my name and for my glory, a Religious Order be founded with the title of Holy Mary of Mercy (*Merced*), or of Mercy (*Misericordia*), whose institute and profession shall be to redeem captives, its sons visiting them in living faith, in hope of eternal salvation and in true and perfect charity; so that, should the occasion arise and the need of the captives require it, the Religious shall not hesitate to expose themselves to death and give their lives for the salvation and freedom of other souls, in living imitation and after the example of my Son, who gave his on a cross for men held captive by sin. I declare to you, then, my son, that this is my will; and I tell you that, while you with abundant tears were seeking through prayer a remedy for the captives, gathering alms and redeeming them, I presented your petitions to my Son, who was pleased that, for your consolation and to institute this Order with a title especially mine, I should come down from heaven; and I chose you, Peter, because you are to be the foundation stone on which this my Order is to be built. The sons and daughters of this Order shall be clothed in white habits, in testimony of my original purity, in the way you see me clothed, covering and adorning their breast with the form of this scapular, which my love gives you." Then, having declared other fitting circumstances, the Queen of the angels disappeared, rising to the throne of her glory. Nolasco remained as though rapt by the singular favour that God and his mother had just bestowed on him, and spent the rest of the night giving thanks to God for so great a mercy. The second of August dawned, and Nolasco went to give an account of what had happened to him to his confessor, St. Raymond of Peñafort, who found him already speaking with King James, discussing the same revelation, which each of them had had separately with the same circumstances and at the same hour; and they carried out the command of the sovereign Queen.

Such is the true history of the descent of Most Holy Mary, under the title of Mother of Mercy, to the City of Barcelona. And shall we not honour Mary of Mercy, who willed to consecrate our homeland with her presence and to break the chains that imprisoned our fathers? Unworthy of the name of Catalan is he who does not feel impelled to pay homage to so Good a Mother. Let us consecrate ourselves, then, to her service; let our names be written among those of her slaves. *Què dicha* — what happiness to be slaves of Mary! Her chains are of gold, they are bonds of love, chains of benefits and graces. Above all, let us ask so loving a Mother to deign to free us from the captivity of sin.[2]

Prayer to Most Holy Mary of Mercy

O most holy Virgin of Mercy, since in your mercy you made yourself the special mother, protectress and patroness of Christian captives, coming down from on high in heaven to the City of Barcelona to encourage and strengthen the zealous St. Peter Nolasco, showing him the way and plan he was to use to console and

redeem so many unhappy people who groaned under the heavy yoke of the Mohammedans: look with compassionate eyes, my Mother, on so many Christians who through sin are in a still worse state than they. It is true that those were captives of the Mohammedans, but sinners are captives and slaves of the devils, who are worse still. Those, being in grace, drew much merit from their chains, and from the pains of this world went to the delights of heaven; but these draw no merit from their slavery, and from the pains and remorse they must suffer in this world they pass to the endless pains of hell, where the fire is not quenched and the worm of conscience never dies.[1] Those knew their unhappy state and escaped if they could, and if they could not by themselves, they desired and tried to get others to free them; whereas these are in such wretched blindness that they neither see nor know their most fatal situation, they will not come out of sin, and perhaps even, like delirious patients, turn against the charitable spiritual physician who wants to cure them.

Ah, my Mother, what shall I do, seeing so many Christians captives and slaves of Satan, bound with the strong and voluntary chains of vices and sins, but have recourse to you? Yes, my Mother, I have recourse to you, to you who are Mother of mercies and desire that all should live and die in divine grace. You are so zealous and charitable that scarcely had the Son of God become man in your most pure and virginal womb when at once you went to visit your cousin Elizabeth to sanctify her son John even before he was born.[2] You are the one who went to encourage and strengthen St. James at Saragossa for the salvation of souls. You are the one who encouraged the zealous Spaniard St. Dominic and taught him the holy Rosary as a most powerful means for the conversion of sinners. Come then, my Mother, encourage, strengthen and move all priests to devote themselves with fervent zeal to the ransom of Christian captives, I mean of sinners, who through their sins are under the tyranny of Satan, in danger of falling at any moment into the eternal pains of hell. Send down, my Mother, torrents of graces on poor sinners, so that, docile to the persuasions of the Priests, they may resolve to make a fervent confession of all their sins. Grace I also ask of you, Most Holy Virgin, for the just, that they may persevere until death. Relief and consolation I likewise implore for the blessed souls in purgatory.[3] Forgive me, my Mother, if I ask more and more, for I know that you are most rich and most generous; and therefore I pray to you for the Supreme Pontiff and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for the happiness of the Kingdom of Spain, for peace and temporal happiness in so far as it is needed for the eternal; finally I ask you, Most Holy Virgin, that no one may be condemned and that we may all be saved. Amen.

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[4] Cf. F. Colombo, *Vida del gloriosísimo patriarca y padre San Pedro Nolasco* (Madrid 1674), pp. 136–145.

[5] C. Ramos, *Un apóstol de María* \[Madrid 1954\], p. 269.

[1] Cf. Mk 9:48.

[2] Cf. Lk 1:39–56.

[3] *Aut.*, n. 264.

23. The Virgin, the Eucharist and Charity

\[Source: address to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Madrid, 8 December 1858; Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl en España, vol. IV, Madrid 1859, pp. 20–24.\]

Since today we are on the day of the Most Pure Conception of Most Holy Mary, which is a day of universal rejoicing, we must try to show this joy to so exalted a Lady by some means worthy of her greatness and worthy of her purity. Well then, there is no better means for this than charity, which is the best thing we have and which, therefore, we can offer her. For this purpose we gather here to stir one another up to charity, so as to serve God with punctuality and watchfulness, since He is always watching over his elect so that they may not be lost, in keeping with what he says in Sacred Scripture: *Non dormitabit neque dormiet qui custodit Israel*. This is all the more necessary nowadays, when mankind seems bent on launching out on new paths and unknown roads, roads that the hand of God has not traced.

To kindle this fire of holy charity which must burn in our hearts, and which must be offered to God by honouring the Most Holy Virgin in her immaculate purity, the imagination must continually fan this fire, which burns in the heart, and which the imagination must take care to fan at every instant, recalling the presence of God and his unceasing benefits, and picturing him in everything and through everything. But as our imagination is very rebellious and easily scattered, we need some means to subdue it, on the one hand, and on the other to direct it to God. This submission, and making our imagination serve to fan the fire of charity, we shall obtain through the Most Holy Virgin, our special advocate. See, if not, who presides over the newborn Church in the upper room, who with her fervent supplications draws down on that gathering the blessings of heaven and merits for it the coming of the Holy Spirit, who appears above those assembled in the form of fire to attest the purity and fervour of charity he lavished on them, and which from then on was to overflow in their hearts for the fulfilment of the high ministry to which they were destined.[1] Oh, if all gatherings were like that! Oh, if in all there burned this fire that is kindled in hearts and is the most precious homage men can pay to the divinity!

But there in the upper room, which is the heart in which this fire burns most purely and most intensely? It is Mary, it is the heart of Mary, because she is the purest, the one who has most charity, since she is the Mother of Jesus, who has him always present and is always with him; and, in the same way, Jesus is not only always with Mary, but even what he does for men he does through Mary and as a homage to Mary.

You have seen what she does for the Church by means of her prayers in the upper room. Recall another, earlier time, even before Jesus Christ began his public life, and you will see how powerful Mary's intercession is and how great Jesus' deference towards her. At the wedding at Cana that devout Lady notices the plight and distress of those who were giving the banquet on seeing that the wine was running out, and at once she has compassion on them; and her ardent charity makes her not only have compassion but want to help them; and to help them, what does she do? She goes at once to her Son and says to him these simple words: *Vinum non habent!* "They have no wine!"[2] And the Son is moved to help the wedding guests as a homage to Mary, even though the hour has not yet come for him to manifest himself and begin his public life; but Mary asks it, and the Mother must be pleased. And so, in homage to her, he not only works the miracle, but has to bring forward the time of his manifestation, the time of his public life.[3]

See how much the Mother's mediation can do with the Son. See how much the Son does in homage to his Mother. Well then, Mary is the same today as yesterday, and Jesus too is the same today as he was yesterday.[4]

But observe for a moment, gentlemen, Mary's conduct. Does she grant this favour to the troubled couple without their doing anything on their part, without their exercising their faith and their charity? No, gentlemen, no. Hear the words Mary speaks on that occasion: *Do whatever my Son tells you*.[5] You know, then, the condition she lays down for interposing her powerful influence. You must do what Jesus tells you. And what does Jesus tell you, O members of St. Vincent de Paul? He gives you sublime counsel for your good, to stir up your charity. He tells you to receive, to frequent holy communion, because without it not only will you not have charity, but you will not even be able to live with spiritual life. *Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis*. For that reason the Council of Florence says,[6] and St. Thomas had already said it, that what food does for the body, the holy Eucharist does for the soul.[7]

What happens to someone who does not eat? He grows thin, pale, weak and exhausted; he has no strength or vigour for anything; and not only that, but as he goes on not eating, he has less and less appetite, and comes to fall into such a state of weakness that when he wants to eat his stomach cannot bear it. Exactly the same happens with the unhappy Christians who do not approach the holy Eucharist: they grow so weak and thin in charity that they have scarcely any vigour to do anything good, and rather go falling at every step. For that reason we see nowadays in our Spain that all those who frequent the sacraments are generally members of

the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and we might even say that, unfortunately, outside it few frequent the sacraments.

It is plain that the enemy of the human race has much to gain from this, for it is in his interest that Christians stay away from the holy Eucharist, so as to weaken them and ruin their souls, around which he goes ever roaring and seeking means to devour them: *Tamquam leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret*.

For that reason he follows with Christians the same strategy as soldiers with a besieged fortress. The first thing they do is cut off the provisions, and in this way they weaken the garrison to such a degree that they force it to surrender through hunger.

So then, you who are besieged by the snares of the devil, take care to be on the alert and, moreover, to receive the holy Eucharist frequently, which is the convoy in which all spiritual graces come to you, with which your soul, strengthened, will have nothing to fear, neither Satan's unceasing siege, nor his snares, nor his assaults.

Let the members of St. Vincent de Paul not fail, then, in this duty, for a duty it is for them, since without the holy Eucharist and its frequent reception their Society is not possible. Attend, gentlemen, attend punctually the communions that your rule prescribes for you.

Attend, attend frequently even on other occasions during the year. Who knows whether by missing one communion you may lose a spiritual grace to which your salvation was bound!

I do not give you these warnings precisely by way of reproof, but to confirm in their purpose those who already frequent the holy Eucharist and to encourage the rest, if there should be anyone remiss or lukewarm in this respect.

See, the holy Eucharist is the tree of life, like the one God placed in paradise;[8] whoever eats of it will enjoy life, and eternal life. It is also the manna of the soul;[9] for just as that food tasted to the Israelites in different ways and according to their different appetites, so the holy Eucharist tastes to those who receive it according to the particular need of their soul; for the tastes and inclinations of Catholics are different too, and God leads each one by his own spirit. And so to some he gives a taste for humility; to others a taste for patience, a taste for piety, a taste for mortification and penance; and in all he fortifies and strengthens charity.

Try, then, to increase your hunger and your thirst for charity, so that with the holy Eucharist you may obtain all these goods, and there may be fulfilled in you what the Most Holy Virgin said: *Esurientes implevit bonis*.

For this, stir up in your hearts the fire of love, the fire of charity. We are by nature inert and heavy: *Filii hominum, usquequo gravi corde?* But the fire of charity, enlivening us, lifts our souls from their lowliness and habitual heaviness, in the way that the shell, heavy as it is, is lifted by the powder and hurled with great speed to a great distance; just as in steam engines, as the fire is increased, the speed of the engine increases. If you want to have energy for works of charity, increase in your hearts the fire of divine love by receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist. Fire makes fire. Make this fire catch in your heart and spread from it to all your affairs, as a blaze spreads through a reed-bed.[10]

It is also the property of fire to raise a flame, and of the flame to rise upwards. If you succeed in kindling divine love in your hearts, it will itself give you light in this life, will lift you towards the highest things, will make you rise to God himself, from whom it proceeds, and will in this way win for you eternal blessedness.

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[1] Cf. Acts 2:1–4.

[2] Jn 2:3.

[3] Cf. Jn 2:1–11.

[4] Cf. Heb 13:8.

[5] Jn 2:5.

[6] Cf. DS 1322.

[7] Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 77, a. 6.

[8] Cf. Gen 3:3–5.

[9] Cf. Ex 16:14–35; Num 11:4–9; Deut 8:3.

[10] Cf. Wis 3:7; Jas 3:5.

25. The Virgin, Model of the Apostolic Missionary

\[Source: Carta al misionero Teófilo, in Sermones de misión, vol. I, Barcelona 1858, pp. 24–26 (excerpt).\]

The eternal Word is to be considered in three states: incarnate, consecrated and preached. To become incarnate he chose the most humble mother,[1] but also the most chaste and most fervent, namely Most Holy Mary; and just as Most Holy Mary is mother of the incarnate Word, so the priest, says St. Bernard, is as it were father and mother of the Word consecrated and preached.[2] Therefore he must strive to be humble like Mary, chaste like Mary and fervent like Mary. The consecrated Word exists and remains in the Sacrament as long as the humble species of bread and wine of the Sacrament exist and remain; so that, if these disappear, the reality disappears also. The same happens with the preached Word: as long as the humble species of Jesus are kept, it produces its effect; but as soon as these disappear and one preaches in an arrogant and bombastic style, it instantly loses its power; it is now a human word, not a divine one, and as human it is regarded; people admire the composition, the artifice, and no one is converted.

The Most Holy Virgin, *quae castitate placuit, et humilitate concepit*, as St. Thomas of Villanova says, pleased God by her chastity and by humility conceived him in her virginal womb; scarcely had she given him birth in the middle of the night when she wrapped him in poor swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger[3] in the stable of Bethlehem, where he was adored by the angels, the shepherds and the Kings.[4]

Learn, Theophilus, from Mary. By chastity you must please God, and through the humility with which you study the holy Books and pray to God you will conceive what you are to say, or the Word you are to preach. The Virgin wrapped him in poor swaddling clothes;[5] you will wrap it in a simple and natural style. The Virgin placed him in the manger with all reverence;[6] you, without failing in the sacred decorum your ministry requires or in the reverence due to the divine word you preach, will place it in such a way that even the roughest and dullest men can reach and understand it, as the beasts reach the manger,[7] which is precisely for them. The preached Word follows the same practice: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio eius*;[8] *Spiritus Domini super me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me Dominus*;[9] and Jesus Christ himself gives thanks to his eternal Father because the divine word is revealed or preached to little ones, that is, to the humble.[10] The manger was near the doorway through which people passed, those of the city and strangers, the learned and the ignorant, great and small, men and women, so that you may understand that the preacher is debtor to all, *sapientibus et insipientibus*, as the Apostle says.[11] That is why his style must be popular, as St. Liguori and Muratori teach. The angels and the star drew the shepherds and the Kings;[12] angels too, and other things, will draw people to you for the holy mission. With what fervour and devotion they will hear the divine word! For God will inspire them and teach them that doctrine which he inspired in Origen and St. Augustine when they said: *Non est minus verbum Dei quam Corpus Christi*.[13]

They will hear the sermon, go to confession and receive communion.

Besides this saying of Origen and St. Augustine, in which they show the reverence and devotion with which the faithful must receive the divine word, I will now make use of a comparison Quintilian suggests, and it will serve you well for your guidance, prudence and discretion. He says: *Utendum est verbo, ut nummo, cui publica forma sit*.[14]

Therefore, dear Theophilus, you will use words as one uses money. 1) It must be the money of the country; so too you must use the language the country uses, so that all may understand you well. 2) The money given

to the poor and to servants, and most used every day, is coppers and small silver, and among the rich, silver and gold coins; so too you will use, with the poor and simple, ordinary people, words and expressions that all understand well, and if at some time you must speak with the learned, you will speak with words suited to their literary riches. 3) Money is also used in paper; you will do the same by means of leaflets, booklets, etc., and so you will carry on a great trade for heaven.[15]

Finally, Mary, mother of the incarnate Word, is the Mother of Fair Love: *Ego mater pulchrae dilectionis*.[16]

Here, Theophilus, is the last and principal endowment you must have to be a good missionary: to be devoted to Mary and to love God much.[17] Thus you will preach well, as the Venerable Ávila says,[18] and you will do all things well,[19] because everything that is done out of love is love, says St. Francis de Sales.[20]

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[1] Cf. Lk 1:38, 48.

[2] Cf. *Sermones varios*, n. 51: *Obras completas de San Bernardo* (BAC, Madrid 1953), vol. I, p. 1069.

[3] Cf. Lk 2:7, 12.

[4] Cf. Lk 2:16; Mt 2:11.

[5] Cf. Lk 2:7.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Cf. Is 1:3.

[8] Prov 3:32.

[9] Lk 4:18; cf. Is 61:1. Cf. *Aut.*, n. 119. Cf. *Aut.*, n. 687.

[10] Cf. Mt 11:25.

[11] To the wise and to the foolish (cf. Rom 1:14). J. Xifré, *Crónica de la Congregación*: Anales CMF 15 \[1915\] 190.

[12] Cf. Mt 2:2.

[13] *Ep. ad Philad.* 5, 1. And St. Jerome wrote: "I consider the Gospel the body of Christ" (*In Eccles.* 3, 13; *In Psal.* 147).

[14] *Institutionum oratoriarum libri duodecim*, bk. I \[Paris 1760\].

[15] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 310–322.

[16] Sir 24:24 \[Vulgate\].

[17] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 440.

[18] Cf. Venerable Maestro Juan de Ávila, *Obras* (Madrid 1759), vol. I, p. 45. The sentence is: "Love our Lord much" (cf. *Aut.*, n. 440).

[19] Cf. Mk 7:37.

[20] St. Francis de Sales, *Práctica del amor de Dios* \[*Treatise on the Love of God*\] (Madrid 1775), bk. 3, ch. 2–3, pp. 109–116.

26. Mary at the Foot of the Cross

\[Source: Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo, 33rd ed., Madrid 1859, pp. 561–563 (excerpt).\]

There stood by the cross of Jesus his Mother, etc.[1] My soul, consider Mary at the foot of the cross, who, pierced with sorrow and with her eyes fixed on her beloved and innocent Son, is contemplating the immense pains, outward and inward, he suffers in that hour of his death. She is, yes, wholly resigned and at peace, offering to the Eternal Father the death of her Son for our salvation; but alas, at the same time compassion and love afflict her greatly. Ah me, and who would there ever be who would not have compassion on a mother standing near the gallows on which her son was dying?

But here we must consider who this Mother is and who this Son. Ah! Mary loved this her Son with a love immensely greater than any that all other mothers have ever had for all their children. She loved Jesus, who, while being her son, was at the same time God; a Son supremely lovable, all beautiful and holy; a Son who had always been respectful and obedient;[2] a Son who so loved her, whom he himself had chosen as Mother from all eternity. And this Mother is the one who had to see such a Son die of pain on that infamous bed, without being able to give him the least relief; rather, increasing his pains by her presence, for he saw her suffer so much out of love for him?

O Mary, by that pain which you suffered at the death of Jesus, have pity on me and commend me to your Son. Hear how from the cross he commends me to you in the person of John: *Woman, behold your son*.[3]

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[1] Jn 19:25–27.

[2] Cf. Lk 2:51.

[3] Jn 19:26.

27. Meditation on Devotion to Most Holy Mary

\[Source: Ejercicios espirituales de San Ignacio explicados, Madrid 1859, meditation XXXII, pp. 400–412, and meditation XXXV, pp. 443–444 (excerpts).\]

Preparatory prayer

My God and Lord, I believe most firmly that you are here present.

I adore you, my God, with all the submission and affection of my heart, and I humbly ask your pardon for all my sins.

I offer you, my Lord and Father, this meditation, and I hope you will grant me the graces I need to make it well. For this same purpose I have recourse to you, Most Holy Virgin, my Mother, and to you, Angels and Saints, that you may intercede for me and obtain for me what I need to make this meditation with fruit. Amen.

Composition of place. Imagine that you see Most Holy Mary with Jesus in her most pure and virginal womb. You will see her with Jesus in Bethlehem, in Egypt, in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, at the wedding of Cana, on Calvary and in heaven.

Petition. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Jesus.

First point

One of the most powerful means God our Lord has given us to obtain and increase grace and divine love is without doubt devotion to Most Holy Mary. The reason is evident. We have everything through Jesus;[1] and since Mary is his Mother, she obtains all she wishes. Jesus is like the reservoir of all graces, and Mary is the channel through which they are communicated to us;[2] and we see that this precious channel is always joined to the reservoir; that is, Mary is always with Jesus, in Bethlehem, in Egypt, in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, at the wedding of Cana, on Calvary and in heaven, at the right hand of her own Son, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.[3] To get true devotion to Most Holy Mary right you must consider three things, namely: who this Lady is; what benefits you have received and must hope for from her; and in what this true devotion consists. Who is Most Holy Mary? Ah, a difficult question! Only God knows well who Most Holy Mary is, says St. Bernardine.[4] Nevertheless, you must know that Mary is a great Lady, conceived without stain of original sin, full of grace and of virtues, Virgin and Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, and advocate of sinners.

1. *Mary is a great Lady, conceived without stain of original sin.* Indeed, she is Lady; the very word Mary means lady; with this name the angel calls her when he says to her: *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour in the eyes of God*;[5] so that it may be seen that her name is not a whim of her parents, but disposed by God with great deliberation, since the Most Holy Trinity created her and gave her the name of Mary, so that she might be Daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the Eternal Son, Spouse of the Holy

Spirit and Lady of all created things. The dignity of Mother of God is an almost infinite dignity, says St. Thomas, because she is Mother of an infinite being, who is God;[6] and the Lord, creating her for this end, preserved her from original sin, adorned her with all the graces of which a creature is capable, enriched her with virtues and merits, entrusted to her the treasure of mercies and made her their dispenser.

2. *Mary is distinguished by God with all privileges and decorated with all prerogatives.* She is Mother without ceasing to be Virgin, and a singular Virgin, the Virgin by antonomasia; and, as the Evangelist says, the name of the Virgin is Mary.[7] She is Queen of heaven and earth, Queen of the Angels, Queen of the Patriarchs, Queen of the Prophets, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of the Martyrs, Queen of the Pontiffs and Confessors, Queen of the Virgins and of all the Saints. If a lady presented herself here who was queen of all the kingdoms and empires of the world, how much she would be admired and venerated! You must, my soul, venerate Most Holy Mary more, who is universal Queen of heaven and earth: in heaven, on earth and in hell every knee bends at the most sweet name of Mary, because she is Mother of Jesus;[8] and what is due to Jesus by nature and merit, that same is given to Most Holy Mary by grace.

3. *Mary is destined to be Mother and advocate of sinners.* The eternal Word became incarnate, became man, became our brother; and as a brother he wants us to have the same Father as he and the same Mother. He had already given us a Father; he had already told us: *When you pray, you shall say: Our Father, who art in heaven*;[9] and afterwards he gives us his Mother as our Mother: *Behold your Mother*.[10] Yes, Mary in Bethlehem gave birth to her first-born Son, and on Calvary she gave birth to the second-born, who are all of us, the disciples of Jesus Christ, figured in the beloved disciple. He wills that this same Mother of his and ours be the immediate advocate to whom we entrust our causes, and she will present them to Jesus, who is the advocate we have with God the Father.[11] Oh, what great confidence we ought to have!

Affections

1. *Thanksgiving.* Infinite thanks be given to you, O Most Blessed Trinity, for having created Most Holy Mary without sin, for having honoured her with so many graces and prerogatives, and for having given her to us as our Mother and advocate. We cannot, my God, give you the thanks that are owed you for this great and wonderful favour, and we beg you, Most Holy Virgin, our Mother and advocate, to give them for us.

2. *Praise and petition.* Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Jesus.

Second point

One of the virtues most pleasing to God and to the Most Holy Virgin, and most useful to men, is without doubt gratitude. We see this truth confirmed by the Old and New Testaments and by nature itself. When God delivered his people from evils and did them good, he required of them the tribute of thanksgiving; and so that they would not easily forget, he had them keep the twelve stones they took from the Jordan, and a portion of manna was kept inside the Ark.[1] In the New Testament we see that Jesus Christ showed himself pleased with the foreigner who, on seeing himself cured of leprosy, came to give him thanks; and he complained of the nine, who were cured likewise but were not grateful.[2] And we even see in nature that animals are grateful to whoever does them good; trees give fruit to whoever plants them, and the earth responds generously to whoever cultivates it.

Gratitude is so prized that not only does the benefactor see himself repaid by it, but he also feels as it were obliged to bestow new favours. Here is the reason why we must all be very devoted to Mary.

1. *For the very many and great benefits we have received.* St. Bernard says that God disposed that we should have everything through Mary. And St. Germanus adds that no one is saved except through Mary, who

intercedes for us and obtains for us the merits of Jesus Christ, her Son, and our Redeemer and Saviour.[3] No one is delivered from evils except through Mary, and no one obtains favours except through Mary.

The lights and inspirations you so often receive, think that they are benefits that come to you through the intercession of Mary. If you have not fallen into mortal sin, or have not committed a greater number of faults or graver ones, it is Mary's grace. If you have not died in sin and are not at present in hell, it is Mary's grace. If God preserves your health and life, if at every instant he grants you great favours, think that it is through the intercession of Mary. There is no mother so anxious to preserve her children as Mary is to preserve her devotees from all evil and misfortune.

Not only, my soul, must the multitude of benefits you have received from Mary move you to gratitude and to be devoted to Mary, but also the very many you must hope for, which the Virgin Mary will grant you if you are her faithful and true devotee. You cannot doubt either her power or her pity and good will.[4] As Mother of God she is most powerful, and as your mother she wishes you every good; that is why rightly and truly she is the refuge of sinners, the comfort of the afflicted, the health of the sick, the Mother of mercy and of divine grace. She prays for you now and always, and especially she will pray for you at the hour of your death, and will obtain and grant you on every occasion all you need.

By a special providence Jesus Christ disposed that the first person he sanctified under the law of grace, who was the Baptist, and the first miracle he worked, should be through the intercession of Mary his Mother: when she visited her cousin St. Elizabeth,[5] and when they attended the wedding at Cana, at which he changed the water into wine;[6] so that the disciples and all people might understand the compassionate heart of Mary, and how powerful her intercession is to obtain for us all graces, spiritual and bodily, temporal and eternal. Let us draw near, then, with confidence to our Mother Mary, as to the throne of grace that she is, that we may obtain mercy.[7]

Affections

1. *Confidence.* You have three motives, my soul, to trust in Most Holy Mary. 1st. She is your Mother. The Creator has stamped very strongly on every mother's heart the law of loving her children; and the greater their need, the greater and more anxious the mother's love and care for them, as we see by experience in all mothers, rational and irrational, even among wild beasts.[8] What child and devotee of Mary, then, will not trust in his Mother Mary, she being so good a mother, and the child so needy and in so pressing a need, and one of such consequence as that of eternal salvation or damnation? 2nd. Mary, even if she were not our Mother, has a very good and very compassionate heart, and this alone would be enough for her to help us, as we see done by those good ladies who out of their good heart help everyone. 3rd. She has Jesus' command, and the charge of his testament, which he gave her before expiring on the cross:[9] even if she were not our Mother, even if she had not so good a heart, it is enough that she has Jesus' command for her certainly to help us and care for us as very dear children.

2. *Resolution.* My Mother, remember that you are my Mother, and make me remember that I am your child. Yes, I will remember, and I will call upon you, I will have recourse to you in all my troubles and needs of soul and body, and I hope that you will bring me safely through them all. Amen.

Third point

True devotion to Most Holy Mary is one of the surest signs of predestination;[1] but it must be true, for if the devotion is false it is useless; so that it may be compared to money, which if it is not good but counterfeit is useless. So that you, my soul, may suffer no mistake or deception in a matter of such consequence, you must meditate very carefully whether your devotion to Most Holy Mary has all the requisites necessary for it to be good.

1. *Devotion to Mary consists in abstaining from all sin.* Love either finds or makes alike. Well then, if you, my soul, love Mary, you must make yourself like Mary. She was conceived without sin and never consented to any sin. That you may be like Mary, after baptism, in which original sin was blotted out from you, you must have a great horror of personal sin, you must never consent to it; and if at some time you should have the misfortune, which God never permit, of falling into some mortal sin, you must have no rest until you have risen and made a good confession. You must not do like those who say they are devoted to Mary and are settled in mortal sin. Those are not devotees of Mary; they are her greatest enemies, since, according to St. Paul, they crucify Jesus again;[2] and crucifying Jesus, how can they love and be devoted to Mary, his Mother? This cannot be.

2. *True devotion to Most Holy Mary consists in imitating her virtues.* St. Bonaventure said: If we want to be devoted to Mary, let us imitate her in charity, in modesty, in humility, in purity, in patience and in the love of God.[3] If a mother takes care and wishes that her children dress according to their rank, so our Mother wishes that her children dress, like her, in the garments of all the virtues. And just as a mother is ashamed, because it is her dishonour, if her children go about ragged, dirty, ugly and in tatters, so too it is Mary's dishonour if her children go about made ugly by vices, faults and sins.

3. *True devotion to Mary takes care and strives to pay her some acts of homage and to frequent the holy Sacraments.* It is impossible to live free from sins if one does not receive holy Communion; Jesus Christ himself assures us of this, saying: *If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, there will be no life in you.*[4] If there is no life, still less can there be solid virtues; but if there is frequent reception of the Sacraments, then, encouraged by the bread of the strong, the soul has courage to conquer its enemies; it overcomes difficulties and rises above itself, performs the most heroic acts, and even suffers martyrdom if need be.

4. *True devotion to Most Holy Mary takes care to do well, promptly, gladly and with perseverance, her prayers and the other things of her service.* Stop, my soul, at these last words, which say: *to do well*. If, when one does something for an important personage, one takes care to do it well, much more must one take care over what is done in homage to Most Holy Mary, since she is Queen of heaven and earth. Oh, how blameworthy you would be if you did your works and prayers with tepidity, slackness and little care! You must also do things in her honour promptly, and as soon as you can. Imitate Abel and Abraham, who promptly offered God what they knew to be his divine will and pleasure;[5] do not imitate Cain, who offered the worst, and late, and therefore God despised him and paid no heed to him.[6] O my soul, let all you offer to Mary be the best you have and can, and do it at once. Imitate Abel and Abraham, and take great care not to imitate Cain and those bad Christians who offer the worst, late and badly: they hear Mass, but only the last one; they say the Rosary and other prayers and devotions, but at the very last, very late at night and badly, because, overcome by sleep, they do it with distaste, and finally give it all up. These are not children of Mary; they are apostates and deserters; woe to them! Do not imitate them; on the contrary, you will use all those means which prudence dictates and experience teaches you are best suited to make your heart fervent in devotion to Mary.

Affections

1. *Means and resolution.* I know that the means I must use are: 1st. To have some image of Mary in sight, so as always to remember her. And so I resolve it; and everything I do I will direct to God through her most holy hands, and everything that gives me pain I will suffer remembering her sorrows and the passion of Jesus. 2nd. Every day I will say at least one part of the Rosary with attention and devotion, without dozing or talking. 3rd. I will say the prayers of morning, noon and night, and besides, each time the clock strikes the hour I will say a Hail Mary. 4th. I will enrol in one of her confraternities; I will wear the scapular; I will frequent the sacraments, at least once a month; I will read books that treat of devotion to her, I will have other people read them, and I will exhort them to have devotion to Mary; and finally, for myself and for all, I

will do what I know will be most pleasing to Most Holy Mary, my sweet Mother.

2. *Supplication.* My Mother, you are my Mother, and that is enough for me. As a good mother you will take care of me. A natural mother sometimes knows what her child needs and has nothing to help him with; but you know what I need, you have the means, you have a good heart, you have Jesus' command; so I am sure and confident that you will take care of me and give me what I need.[7]

Our Father and Hail Mary.

Conclusion of the meditation

Thanksgiving. I thank you, my God, for the good thoughts, affections and inspirations you have communicated to me in this meditation.

Offering. I offer you the resolutions I have formed in it, and I ask you for very efficacious grace to put them into practice; and for this purpose I beg you, Mary, my Mother, and the angels and saints of my devotion, to intercede for me and obtain this grace for me. Amen.

Perseverance in devotion to Mary

Oh, if only I knew how to be a true devotee of Mary and to pray to her continually! If only I knew how to win the heart of this great Mother of mercy and most powerful advocate of sinners! Do you want to do it, my soul? It is the easiest thing: have a horror of sin, consecrate yourself to her service, render her all possible acts of homage, not in order to cover up your faults by this, but in order to amend them; and above all strive to form in yourself, for her honour, a living copy of her virtues. Ah! no one who has done this has ever been lost, nor will ever be lost.[1] Within this tower of refuge, what can your enemies do against you? And covered with this shield, which of their shots can wound you? Mary will be for you a sure guide, to walk without stumbling on the difficult road of your salvation, and a door always open to enter the heavenly Jerusalem. Follow her steps and you will not go astray; give her your hand and you will not be able to fall. But the true devotees of Mary go to confession and communion frequently; and this precisely is the fourth maxim for persevering.

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[2] Cf. 1 Cor 1:5; Eph 1:23; Jn 1:16.

[3] Cited by St. Alphonsus, op. cit., p. 322.

[4] Rev 19:16.

[5] Cited by St. Alphonsus in *The Glories of Mary* (ed. cit., p. 789).

[6] Lk 1:30.

[7] Cited in *The Glories of Mary* (ed. cit., p. 790).

[8] Cf. Lk 1:27.

[9] Cf. Phil 2:10.

[10] Mt 6:9.

[11] Jn 19:27.

[12] Cf. 1 Jn 2:1.

[13] Cf. Josh 4:3; Heb 9:4.

[14] Cf. Lk 17:11–19.

[15] Cited by St. Alphonsus in *The Glories of Mary* (ed. cit., p. 632).

[16] Cf. ibid., p. 686.

[17] Cf. Lk 1:39–45.

[18] Cf. Jn 2:1–12.

[19] Cf. Heb 4:16.

[20] Cf. St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part I, ch. 1, ed. cit., p. 543.

[21] Cf. Jn 19:26.

[22] M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María* \[Madrid 1866\], p. 78.

[23] Acts 9:4.

[24] St. Bonaventure calls Mary "virtutum speculum" (mirror of virtues): *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, ch. 4, n. 2: *Obras*, BAC (Madrid 1947), vol. IV, p. 439.

[25] Jn 6:54 \[53\].

[26] Cf. Gen 4:4; 15:9–11; 18:6–8; 22:1–18.

[27] Cf. Gen 4:4–5.

[28] *Aut.*, n. 5.

[1] The *Memorare*.

28. Fidelity Crowned by Mary

\[Source: loose leaflet (LR no. 22), Sé fiel hasta la muerte y te daré la corona de la vida, Barcelona 1859, 4 pp.\]



The woodcut the leaflet explains, from the Barcelona printing of 1858.

All this I will give you, said Satan to Jesus Christ, showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, *if you will fall down and adore me*.[1] Since, then, Jesus willed to be tempted in order to overcome our temptations and to teach us how we must behave in them so as to come out victorious, let us hear what, for our instruction, he at once answered the devil with indignation: *Begone*, he said, *begone, Satan; for it is written: You shall adore the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve*;[2] and behold, the devil, put to

shame by this answer, left him, and angels came (in visible form, since in such form the tempter had come) and ministered to him.[3] We have seen the temptation and what Jesus did to overcome it; let us now see what the enemy does with the Christian soul, and what the soul must do to conquer, in imitation of Jesus and his Saints.

Fix your gaze on the picture, devout soul who read this, for even the smallest thing in it is very significant. Do you see there at the very top a resplendent Lady with a Child on her left, who with her right hand holds up a crown, as if offering it to that white-robed maiden who is climbing that steep path strewn with thorns, and who, her eyes fixed on the crown, stretches out her arms as though longing for it, heedless of what she treads on? Well, that is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who, as the channel of her Son's graces and the ladder of sinners, calls out to souls from high heaven, saying to them: My daughters, hear me: Happy is he who comes to me, imitates my virtues and listens to me; for whoever finds me will find the life of grace (signified by the child Jesus) and will be saved (which is what the crown she offers signifies).[4]

That maiden adorned in the white garment is a symbol of the Christian soul, which, on hearing the voice of Mary, conceives desires of attaining the crown;[5] but, seeing how high the mountain on which it stands, how steep the path and how strewn with thistles that hurt her feet, even as she stretches her arms towards the crown, because she knows her own weakness she asks with tenderness, humility and confidence for help from Mary, of whom she knows that her Son so honours her that he wills all graces to pass through her hands; and because she inwardly hears a voice that says to her: *Ite ad Mariam,* go to Mary — which is what is meant by the Child's looking at the maiden and pointing with his right hand to the Lady.[6]

But the devil, who had the audacious pride to tempt Jesus, in the excess of his rage at the efforts he sees in this soul to gain the crown, devises how to prevent her; and what does he do? Here it is: do you see him figured in that monster who, though he looks like a man, is sufficiently betrayed by his marks? Well, he comes out to meet the soul; he gives her a vivid but exaggerated picture of the difficulty of the road; he paints the devout life in the blackest colours, calling it an exaggerated mysticism; he urges her not to ruin her health with so much weariness and so many thorns; and then he entreats her to get herself some relaxation after the example of those dancers, and to try to cut a brilliant figure in society, winning honours, figured in the crown he shows her down there; so that she may keep up the lustre of honours, he incites her to procure temporal goods, figured in those coins you see in the mouth of that money-bag. With money, he tells her, everything is obtained; and flattering her with the pleasures of the table, figured in the dishes, bottles and glasses he offers her, he suggests that afterwards she will be able to give herself with less expense and greater intensity to the other, coarser and more brutish pleasures that follow upon dances, figured also in that couple dancing so brazenly. And these suggestions he hurls at her, like poisoned darts, at every time and place, and with such persistence that he gives her no rest.

But he does not always tempt by himself; he sometimes also makes use of his allies, worldly men, as in paradise he made use of the serpent to tempt Eve.[7] These men fall into three classes, figured in those three serpents you see coiled round that tree, whose tongues are continually hissing in the soul's ear. Some (the first class) persecute with threats and violent means: such are the enemies of the faith and of Religion, and these have crowned constant souls with martyrdom; and such are those who, finding themselves rebuffed like Potiphar's wife or the lustful elders,[8] contrive by calumnies and other means that the Josephs and chaste Susannas be buried in a dungeon, or murdered, or stabbed. Others (the second class) insult her, now mocking her retirement, which they call misanthropy, now her practices, which they call useless sanctimony \[*beaterio*\]; and when they cannot bite at her works, they try to blacken her intentions, saying she does it to deceive the world and swindle. And finally there are others (the third class) who openly oppose virtue, and oppose the soul's embracing a more perfect state in conformity with the evangelical counsels; and these are relatives, because they see in it the failure of their hopes of worldly goods which they promised themselves from her or through her; and they are figured in that leafy tree, well furnished with leaves, flowers and fruit.

And the soul, in the midst of such powerful, bold and tireless enemies wounding her right and left, what does she do? There you see her, her eyes fixed on the immortal crown Mary offers her, not daunted by the difficulty of the road, nor by the devil's flatteries, nor by the poisoned hissing of the serpents; while she flees the vicious extremes of right and left, she follows undaunted the middle way, where virtue lies and which leads to the life of heaven.[9] In her weariness, caused by the roughness of the road, and amid the thorns that hurt her feet, she takes heart on seeing that Jesus compassionately holds out a hand to her while he points her to his Mother, whose charge it is to give her help; and so, kindled more and more in that love of Jesus and Mary, which increases with the blows of temptation as fire does with the blows of steel struck on flint, she longs more and more for the crown, strives to pray more earnestly, despises more bravely the devil with all his works, the world with its pomps, amusements, riches, glitter and honours, and the flesh with all its flatteries and delights; and, ignoring everything that is not a means of reaching Jesus more quickly, her whole care is to follow constantly the plan of life traced out for her; and to succeed better she uses these resolutions:

1. In temptations I will say: God sees you and hears you; will you have the courage to sin with God watching you? Life is like a dream; death comes after me; it will overtake me when I least think of it; after death I must be judged on all I have thought, said and done; if death finds me in the state of grace, an eternity of joy awaits me in heaven; if in mortal sin, I shall go to suffer eternally with the devils; this is inevitable, whether I believe it or cease to believe it.

2. The moment I feel tempted, I will call Jesus and Mary to my help with some ejaculatory prayer: Jesus, save me; Virgin Mary, protect me.

3. Every day I will make the Christian's exercise morning and evening (as found in the *Camino recto*);[10] I will say one part of the Rosary; the Hail Mary when the clock strikes the hours; before dinner and supper I will ask God's blessing and afterwards give him thanks, as is in the *Camino recto*.

4. I will have at least a quarter of an hour of mental prayer in the morning and another in the afternoon; I will read a little in some spiritual book; and, as a craftsman tries to have the tools of his trade, I will try to have tools to help me in my good works, such as the *Catecismo explicado con estampas*; the Villacastín, besides the *Camino recto* cited in no. 3; the *Devout Life* of St. Francis de Sales; the *Spiritual Combat*, etc.[11]

5. Feast days I will spend attending the services of the Church, examining these resolutions of mine to see whether I keep them, reading a little more, praying more and doing works of mercy.

6. Each month I will go to confession and communion at least once.

7. I will never fail in my duties out of human respect.

8. I will flee the occasions of sin, bad company, courtships or flirtations, dances, gaming, cafés, taverns and social gatherings \[*tertulias*\], and I will never read impious or obscene books nor look at provocative images.

9. I will keep my senses recollected, neither looking at nor listening to obscene things or gossip, taking the greatest care not to fail in charity; I will not utter indecent words, still less blasphemies; if I hear them, I will say "Hail Mary most pure"; and if I fail in anything, I will kiss the ground when I am alone, as a sign of sorrow, and say a Hail Mary in penance.

10. To obtain the grace of never offending my neighbours in anything, I will say a Hail Mary daily, and another so as never to take revenge on whoever offends me.

11. To obtain the grace of never staining myself with any impurity, I will say three Hail Marys to the purity of the Virgin of Virgins.

12. If, which God forbid, I should fall into mortal sin, I will at once try to make acts of sorrow and of love of God, and I will go to confession as soon as I can.

13. I will try to have a good director and obey him blindly. If I do this I shall be saved. *Hoc fac, et vives.*

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[1] Mt 4:9.

[2] Mt 4:10.

[3] Mt 4:11.

[4] Prov 8:35.

[5] *Aut.*, n. 96.

[6] Gen 41:55.

[7] Cf. Gen 3:1–5, 13.

[8] Cf. Gen 39:1–20; Dan 13:1–64.

[9] *Metam.*, bk. 2, 137.

[10] 33rd edition (Aguado, Madrid 1859), pp. 5–14.

[11] L. Scupoli, *Combate espiritual* (Madrid 1849), 368 pp.

29. The Seminarian's Need to Be Devoted to Most Holy Mary

\[Source: El colegial o seminarista teórica y prácticamente instruido, vol. I, Barcelona 1860, pp. 268–270 (excerpt).\]

So great is the seminarian's need to be devoted to Mary that, if this devotion is not seen in him, it can be asserted that he is not called to the state of minister of the law of grace; for we observe that the woman whom Jesus chose for his mother, he wills to be mother, teacher and protector of his ministers.[1]

Jesus chose John the Baptist as his precursor, and wills that before his birth he be sanctified by means of his Mother Mary.[2] Jesus calls his Apostles, and before sending them to the towns of his nation he wills that they attend the wedding at Cana, so that they may see the first miracle he works at Mary's request, in order that they may believe in the power of Jesus and in the powerful intercession of Mary.[3] Before sending them throughout the world he wills to fill them with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and for this he has them withdraw and gather in the upper room, directed and protected by Most Holy Mary.[4] And finally, Jesus entrusts his Mother to the youngest priest, the virgin priest, the most fervent lover and the most beloved of Jesus, John the Evangelist, and so he said to him before expiring: *Ecce Mater tua*;[5] and, as St. Augustine adds: *Eam tibi commendo; curam illius habe*. "This is your Mother; to you I entrust her; take good care of her."

Hence the good seminarian takes these words as spoken to himself, and therefore he loves her and takes good care of her. He loves her like Blessed Berchmans, who was never sated with loving Mary.[6] He loves her as St. Stanislaus Kostka loved her, who loved his dear Mother Mary so tenderly that he kindled with her love all who heard him speak of her. He loves her like St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose heart, as soon as he heard the name of Mary sound, overflowed with love. He loves her like St. Philip Neri, who called Most Holy Mary his delight. He loves her like St. Bernardine, who called her his beloved, and each day went to visit her in a devout image. The seminarian will do the same each day: he will visit her, and will remember what we said on page 99 about the comparison of the telegraph station: let him think that he is speaking with the very Queen and Lady of heaven and earth, who is Mother of God, who has all power in heaven and on earth; let him think, moreover, that she is his Mother, who loves him and can help him. Oh, what love and confidence she must inspire in him!

And moreover he will take good care of Mary his Mother; he will see that all honour her in her images and praise her at every hour when the clock strikes, every day with the Holy Rosary, every Saturday and on all her feasts, imitating her virtues.

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[1] *Aut.*, n. 5.

[2] Cf. Lk 1:39–45.

[3] Cf. Jn 2:1–12.

[4] Cf. Acts 1:12–14.

[5] Jn 19:27: "Behold your mother."

[6] V. Cepari, *Vita* \[Rome 1717\], pp. 176–177. Cited by St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part I, ch. 1: *Obras ascéticas*, BAC (Madrid 1952), vol. I, p. 549.

30. The Virginity of Mary

\[Source: El colegial o seminarista teórica y prácticamente instruido, vol. II, Barcelona 1861, pp. 157–158 (excerpt).\]

The sin of our first parents had banished virginity almost entirely from the earth;[1] at least men generally lost it on reaching a certain age; and, the eyes of the children of Adam being darkened by the shadows of guilt, they no longer discovered its beauty and had entirely forgotten its heavenly origin. That is why it was necessary for God himself to come down to show it to them again; and, in taking human flesh and becoming the Redeemer of the human race, he does not take it in a woman, but in the most pure womb of a virgin, from whom he is born after nine months in Bethlehem,[2] without the least detriment to the virginity of Mary, his Most Holy Mother. It is true that for this it is necessary to overturn the most constant laws of nature and multiply wonders; but no matter: it is a question of virginity, and the God of purity wills to become incarnate only in the womb of purity, and to live enclosed nine months only in the sanctuary of virginity; he wills to have no temporal mother who is not a virgin before childbirth, in childbirth and after childbirth; and, far from diminishing her purity in any way by being born of her, he only consecrated it, as the Church sings in honour of Mary: *Cuius virginitatem non minuit, sed sacravit*. He wills to have a man to represent a father in the person of St. Joseph; but it was necessary that he be a virgin, as is the eternal Father, who is his own and natural Father. If he chooses and wills to go between two great Saints adorned with the name of John — the one as precursor[3] and the other as secretary and apostle of his love, and to entrust to him the keeping of his Virgin Mother[4] — both had to be virgins. And finally, if in heaven he forms a privileged choir and as it were a guard of honour to follow him wherever he goes,[5] all its numerous squadrons must be formed of virgins alone, the only ones permitted to sing the mysterious new song, and the only ones who will go adorned with the white aureole as the reward of so noble and angelic a virtue.[6]

Although I do not doubt, most beloved seminarian, that the esteem Jesus Christ has for virginity would already suffice for you to form a great idea of its excellence, since I suppose you very devoted to the Virgin *par excellence*, Most Holy Mary, I wish to show you also the supreme esteem the Lady had for it. Already as a child she had consecrated her virginity to God, when she was presented in the temple; and, on contracting marriage with St. Joseph, she had made sure of his intentions, and that in a lawful marriage she could always present this most fragrant lily to God. But listen to her in the conversation she has with the Archangel, when he announces to her that she is to be the Mother of the Son of God: *Quomodo fiet istud?*[7] she says to him; as if she said: I am resolved to keep for God the gift of my virginity at the cost of any sacrifice, even if I had to renounce the greatest fortune and even the exalted and in some way infinite dignity of being Mother of God.

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[1] Cf. Gen 3:1–24.

[2] Cf. Lk 2:1–20.

[3] Lk 1:63.

[4] Cf. Jn 19:26–27.

[5] Cf. Rev 14:4.

[6] Cf. Rev 14:3.

[7] "How shall this be?": Lk 1:34.

31. The Love Jesus Had for Most Holy Mary

\[Source: El colegial o seminarista teórica y prácticamente instruido, vol. II, Barcelona 1861, pp. 501–503 (excerpt).\][1]

Mary is Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit, temple and tabernacle of the Most Holy Trinity.[2]

Amare est velle bonum, says St. Thomas;[3] and to see how much Jesus loved Mary we need only look at the good he willed her and worked in her favour. He chose her from eternity to be his Mother, which is an almost infinite dignity. He had her conceived in grace and without stain of original sin. He enriched her with all virtues, gifts and privileges.

He was nine months in her most pure womb and was born leaving her a virgin and more sanctified.

Through her ministry he sanctified St. John,[4] and at her intercession he worked his first miracle, changing water into wine.[5]

All the time of his life Jesus obeyed her and was subject to her: *Et erat subditus illis*.[6]

At the hour of death he entrusted her to his most beloved disciple, to take good care of her.[7] He entrusted his Church to her.

Finally, he took her to glory and seated her at his right hand, and crowned her queen and empress of heaven and earth and advocate of sinners, with power to dispense all graces.

The priest, then, in imitation of Jesus, must love Mary, must will her every good.

He must hold her as Mother, and as such love her, serve her, honour her, and, like Jesus, be completely subject to her.

He will learn from Jesus and from St. John the way to treat her.[8]

He will imitate her virtues, especially her poverty, humility, chastity, meekness, patience, obedience, prayer, recollection, love of God and zeal for the salvation of souls.[9]

At every hour of the day and night he will say the Hail Mary to her. The morning, noon and evening prayers \[the Angelus\]. Every day he will say the rosary.[10]

Every Saturday he will fast in her honour and have the spiritual reading of his devotion, and with great fervour he will celebrate her feasts during the year.

In his room he will have an image, which he will always greet on going in and out, and during the day he will turn to her, and make use of her as of a telegraph that goes to heaven.[11]

The good priest must not be content with being devoted to Mary himself, but must promote her devotion in every way; for example: teaching how to say the rosary well, enrolling in one of her confraternities and keeping its rule;[12] frequenting the sacraments in her honour; in imitation of her and to please her, exercising himself in works of mercy; mortifying the passions — for example, anger in honour of Mary's patience and meekness; gluttony and sloth, in honour of her frugality and diligence; self-love and vanity, in honour of her obedience and humility. Oh, how she likes this kind of homage!

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[1] Taken from *El colegial o seminarista teórica y prácticamente instruido…*, vol. II, Librería Religiosa, Barcelona 1861, Imprenta de Pablo Riera, calle d'en Robador 24 and 26, pp. 501–503.

[2] *Triduo en obsequio de María Santísima*, LR, Barcelona 1869.

[3] "To love is to will good" (*Summa theol.*, II-II, q. 25, a. 5 and 7).

[4] Cf. Lk 1:41.

[5] Cf. Jn 2:1–11.

[6] "And he was subject to them" (Lk 2:51).

[7] Cf. Jn 19:27.

[8] *Doc. Autob.*, II: EA, p. 413.

[9] *La colegiala instruida*, LR \[Barcelona 1863\], p. 421. Cf. *Avisos a las doncellas* \[Vic 1844\], p. 10.

[10] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 47, 66, 108, 266, 610, 646, 765, 801.

[11] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 48; *Doc. Autob.*, I: EA, p. 409.

[12] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 94; *Doc. Autob.*, I: ibid., p. 409.

32. Devotion to Most Holy Mary

\[Source: Carta ascética to the president of one of the choirs of the Academy of St. Michael, Barcelona 1862, pp. 44–45 (excerpt).\][1]

Devotion to Most Holy Mary is another of our principal obligations. She is the Mother of God and the Mother of men; on these two cardinal points the whole devotion turns. As Mother of God, she can do all things; as Mother of men, she will protect us and grant us all graces. Luther said that what irritated him most was to see people honour the Most Blessed Sacrament and Mary.[2] No one will be surprised, then, that Protestants become furious when speaking of these objects, which are the delight of good Catholics.

Let us honour, then, Most Holy Mary, our most tender Mother; let us imitate her virtues, let us continually pay her our homage, let us often receive the holy sacraments in her honour, and let us not forget that the rosary is one of the devotions she likes best, since she herself taught it to our fellow countryman St. Dominic;[3] and just as the Saint, by means of this devotion, converted heretics and other sinners and put a stop to the blasphemies the Albigensians uttered against God and the saints, so too we shall obtain the same if, like St. Dominic, we say it each day and teach others to say it with devotion and fervour.[4]

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[1] Also published in

[2] Cf. V. Ráulica, *Las delicias de la piedad. Tratado sobre el culto de la Santísima Virgen* (Madrid 1859), p. 162.

[3] Cf. F. Possadas, *Vida del glorioso padre y patriarca Santo Domingo de Guzmán* (Madrid 1721), pp. 113–114.

[4] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 266.

33. Mary, the Exaltation of Woman

\[Source: Vida de Santa Mónica, Barcelona 1862, ch. X, pp. 75–77 (excerpt).\]

There is the history of all times, peoples and places; it speaks very loudly and tells you very clearly: pagans, philosophers and Protestants have degraded and debased you, and the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ and the Apostles and their successors have exalted and ennobled you. Let us see it.

Most Holy Mary has ennobled and exalted you. She is a woman, a daughter of Adam, like you; and in spite of being a woman, she is raised to the almost infinite height of Mother of God.[1] She is venerated and invoked by men: before the images of Mary men prostrate themselves, pray, ask, humble themselves and hope to obtain what they beg; and it is impossible that one who is truly devoted to Most Holy Mary should debase woman; for in woman he sees a sister, a kinswoman of the woman Mother of God, whom he loves, respects and serves with all fidelity and devotion. It is true that not every woman is mother of God, but every woman is single, married or widowed, and in all these states he contemplates the woman Mother of God; and although it is true that not all single, married or widowed women can be mothers of God, they can imitate the virtues the woman Mother of God practised in these three states, especially chastity, modesty, meekness, patience, humility, charity and the rest. Well then, when the Catholic man, a true devotee of Most Holy Mary, sees in women sisters of the Mother of God, and sees at the same time living copies of her virtues, how should he dare to debase them? If the Catholic man respects the lifeless images of the Mother of God

solely because they represent the original, who is in heaven, how will he not respect virtuous women, who are living images and who practise the virtues of Mary, which mere images cannot do?

Women, understand it well: Most Holy Mary is the one who has opened for you the way to exaltation; be grateful to her; imitate her virtues, especially chastity, and I give you my word that you will always be respected and venerated by truly Catholic men. I say truly Catholic, because if men are not Catholics, or are so only in name, and in their works are pagans, pantheists or Protestants, expect nothing good from these men; for just as they despise the Mother of God, so will they despise you.[2]

All fair are you, my Mother: in you there is no stain.

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[1] Cited by St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part II, disc. 4: *Obras ascéticas*, BAC (Madrid 1952), vol. I, p. 790.

[2] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 695.

34. Mary as a Child, Model for Schoolgirls

\[Source: La colegiala instruida, Madrid 1863, pp. 5–6, 19–20, 66–70, 147–148, 421–424 (fragments).\]

Dedication to Most Holy Mary

Most Holy Virgin, to you, in a particular way, it belongs that I dedicate the present work.

Its object being to instruct and educate schoolgirls well, to whom better than to you could it be dedicated? Yes, to you belongs the dedication of this Manual, which has been designed to honour the time you spent in the College of the holy Temple of Jerusalem, where you were a schoolgirl from the tender age of three until you took your state and were married to the most chaste St. Joseph. Having, then, been a schoolgirl so long, you know with your admirable wisdom, and by long experience you are aware of, the need girls have, besides the teachers who teach them by word of mouth, of a Manual containing the principal things they must know and practise in matters of religion and morals, in the duties and tasks of their sex, so as to prepare and dispose themselves for the exact fulfilment of the obligations of the state to which divine Providence may destine them.

I know, Lady, that you take an interest in girls, and therefore I trust you will kindly receive this little work, designed for the good of those who are precisely under your beneficent protection. I know that you are the guide who directs them, the light that illumines them. You are the tower of David[1] where they take refuge like white and timid doves, and are kept safe from hawks and delivered from violent storms. You are, Lady, for girls the mystical ark of Noah, where they are saved from the shipwreck inevitable for those outside it.[2] Finally, you are their preceptress, who teach them by example and by word, and even better than the Apostle you say to them: *Imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ*.[3] Therefore, this little work being so suited to your purposes, I do not doubt that you will accept it, bless it, and it will bear abundant fruit. So be it.

Blessed among women

Let us pass to the law of grace; and the first who presents herself to us is Most Holy Mary, of whom all the matrons of the old law were figures. This valiant woman, immaculate, holy and most perfect, Virgin and Mother of God, has with Jesus preserved us from all temporal and eternal evils, and has brought us all temporal and eternal goods, and has filled the individual, the family and the whole of society with happiness.

God in the beginning formed the body of Adam from clay, and from one of his ribs formed the body of Eve.[1] God himself could equally have formed the body of the new Adam from clay, or from some rib of some man he could have formed the body of the humanity that was to be joined to the divinity in the person of the Word, and so redeem and save the human race; but he did not do so; rather he willed to make use of woman.

Satan made use of Eve,[2] and even today he makes use of bad women to cause evil, as we have said; well then, God our Lord, by contrast, made use of Mary to crush the enemy's head,[3] and still makes use of this holy woman and of good women to do good to the human race.

To be convinced of this truth one need only follow the thread of history, and one will see how in every age he has joined the cooperation of virtuous women to do good. Jesus Christ himself not only made use of Most Holy Mary so that she should be Co-redemptrix, but moreover admitted the cooperation of women, for example of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Mary Salome and other pious women.[4]

Presentation of Most Holy Mary in the temple, her admission, and how she behaved during her stay

When the child Mary reached three years, her parents St. Joachim and St. Anne set out from Nazareth for the temple of Jerusalem. On reaching the temple, the three made very fervent prayer to the Lord.[1] The prayer done, they rose and went to the Priest, and the parents handed over to him their daughter, the child Mary; and the Priest gave her his blessing, and together they all took her to a section where the college was of the girls who were brought up in recollection and holy habits until they reached the age to take the state of marriage.[2]

The child Mary was handed over and entrusted to her teacher, whose name was Anne. The child Mary at once prostrated herself at her teacher's feet, and with the deepest humility asked her blessing, and begged her to receive her under her obedience, teaching and counsel, and to have patience with the much she would have to labour and suffer with her. Her teacher received her gladly and said to her: My daughter, in me you will find a mother and protection; I will take care of you and your upbringing with all possible vigilance. Then the child Mary went on to offer herself with the same humility to all the girls and young women who were there; she greeted each and dedicated herself as her servant, and asked them, as older and more capable in what was to be done there, to teach her and command her, and thanked them because, without her deserving it, they admitted her to their company.[3]

Then the Priest said to her: Daughter, very young has the Lord brought you to his house and holy temple; thank him for this favour; try to please him by labouring hard to serve him in truth and with a perfect heart, in learning all the virtues, so that from this sacred place you may go back prepared and armed to bear the labours of the world and defend yourself from its dangers. Obey your teacher Anne; begin early to bear the sweet yoke of virtue, so that you may find it easier for the rest of your life.

The child Mary answered: You, my lord, as Priest and minister of the Most High, who stand in his place, and my teacher together with you, will command me and teach me what I must do so as not to go wrong in it; and so I beg of you, with the desire to obey your will in everything.

Then the Priest said to her: My daughter, you will attend the divine praises and canticles of the Lord with all reverence and devotion, and you will always pray to God for the needs of his holy temple and of his people, and for the coming of the Messiah. At dawn you will rise to pray and bless the Lord until the hour of terce (which is nine in the morning); from terce until evening you will occupy yourself in some handiwork, so that you may be taught in everything. And at the meal, which you will take after work, you will keep temperance. After eating you will go to hear what the teacher teaches you, and the rest of the day you will spend in reading the holy Scriptures; and in everything you will be humble, affable and obedient to what your teacher commands.

The most holy Child always heard the Priest on her knees, and asked his blessing and his hand; and, having kissed his and her teacher's, she resolved in her heart to keep the order of life they marked out for her all the time she was in the temple, unless they commanded her otherwise; and as she resolved, so she fulfilled it, she who was the Mistress of holiness and virtue, as though she were the least disciple.[4]

As she grew in age she grew in all the virtues; but the one in which she most distinguished herself was humility and love of work; she continually asked her Teacher's leave to serve all her fellow pupils and perform the humble offices of sweeping and cleaning the house and washing the dishes. Every day, morning and evening, she asked her teacher's blessing and kissed her hand, and she did the same when she commanded her some act of humility or gave her leave to do it; and sometimes, if she permitted it, she kissed her feet with the deepest humility.[5]

Most Holy Mary was so gentle and sweet in her conduct, so obliging, submissive and diligent in humbling herself, in serving and respecting the other young women who lived in the temple, that she stole the hearts of all, and obeyed all as if each one were her teacher. And with the ineffable and heavenly prudence she had she ordered all her actions, so that she lost no occasion of exercising herself in all manual and humble works, in the service of her companions and in pleasing the divine will.[6]

In eating and sleeping and other bodily things she was most perfect; she never exceeded, but rather abstained somewhat from what was necessary. Out of obedience she retired at the same hour as the others; in the little time she slept her heart kept watch, and she was always in deep contemplation of the heavenly mysteries.

She read the holy Scriptures much, and God gave her knowledge of the profound mysteries enclosed in them; and Mary used all that knowledge for the worship, praise and love of God. Mary was very quick in reasoning, most profound in understanding, most lofty in thought, most prudent in choosing and arranging, most effective and gentle in acting; and in everything she was a most perfect rule and a prodigious object of admiration for men and for angels, and of delight for God himself, who made her wholly after his heart and pleasure.[7]

The imitation of the Virgin

The girl must try always to imitate Most Holy Mary, especially from the age of three, when she was in the temple, until they married her to St. Joseph. What great obedience! Everything they commanded her she did with promptness and joy and with all possible care and perfection. She was not only obedient to her elders, but also humble and charitable with her little companions; she was fervent in matters of piety and devotion; in a word, the Most Holy Virgin continually exercised herself in the virtues in all she said and did. Therefore the schoolgirl will often ask herself: How would Most Holy Mary behave in this situation in which I find myself? And she will do what she knows Most Holy Mary would do, had she been in that same situation. Oh, how the Lady likes imitation! More than all the homage that can be offered her; more than all the prayers and praises that can be addressed to her. Do it, then, child, and you will be good, which is what we so much desire.

Mary, teacher and model

The Most Holy Virgin Mary is the most exact copy of Jesus Christ; she is the most proficient disciple ever to come out of his divine school. She can say to us with more propriety than the Apostle: *Imitate me, as I imitate Christ*.[1] Most Holy Mary was a child, single, married and widowed, so that all states might learn from her.

Mary was conceived in grace, without stain of sin; she was the daughter of St. Joachim and St. Anne, whom she loved, obeyed and revered as a good daughter does her parents, without ever failing them in the least thing.

At three years they took her to the temple, or college, that there was, where she stayed until they married her to St. Joseph. She was never idle, and was always very diligent; she spoke little and always thought of God, to whom she offered all she did. She prayed much, ate little and slept less,[2] and her heart kept watch thinking of God and of what she had to do the following day.

She obeyed her teachers and superiors; she loved and served her fellow schoolgirls with much love and pleasure. Her virtue was so great that the other girls felt as though dazzled and eclipsed beside her, as the stars, which shine at night, are submerged and drowned in light when the sun comes out. Her very virtues brought on her the envy of her companions; they slandered her to the superiors, ill-treated her with words and pushed her about; but the Most Holy Virgin bore it all with the most heroic patience; she forgave them all, loved them more and served them with greater humility and charity.

\[To\] Mary, without her ever having had a suitor, they married to St. Joseph, with whom she lived most perfectly; she never followed fashions or vanities; she never attended dances, theatres or public promenades. When the Archangel St. Gabriel brought her the message,[3] he found her alone and in her house, retired and occupied in holy meditations. She was never less alone than when she seemed most alone, for she had in her company God, the angels and the holy books, which she read with much devotion.

Once she went visiting, not out of curiosity, nor to see whether what the Archangel had told her of her cousin was true, nor to pass the time idly, but to exercise charity.[4] Once, invited, she attended a wedding, not out of gluttony or vanity but out of graciousness, and at table she exercised compassion.[5] She never left the house except to go to the temple, and then always went with her parents, with her husband or relatives; so that at home she was always alone, and away from home she always went accompanied, although her principal guard was herself.

She did harm to no one, and good to all. She never made a sour face at her elders nor despised her inferiors; she helped the poor and consoled the afflicted.

By no event was her anger ever stirred, nor did she ever lose her most perfect meekness; she was always seen with admirable inner and outer evenness, without any difference ever being noticed in her countenance, her voice or her movements that would testify to some inner movement of anger.[6]

Mary was so humble that she held herself unworthy not only of the dignity of Mother of God and of the graces inherent in such dignity, but also unworthy of the ground she trod, of the air she breathed and of the food she took.[7]

She was very modest in her looks and very sparing in speech; she spoke little, and always in a low voice; her actions, her steps and her clothes all revealed what she was, so that her outward appearance was an image of her inner virtue. She did not love her beauty, nobility or other gifts, but God alone.

What she heard said of Jesus, and what she saw and heard of Jesus himself, she kept and pondered in her heart,[8] and only when it was fitting for the greater glory of God and the good of souls did she tell it.

The glorious St. Ambrose, speaking of Mary, said: From this picture I present to you, you will learn what you must flee, correct and practise.[9] Nothing so moves a disciple to apply himself and learn as the excellence of the teacher. What teacher more noble and excellent than the Mother of God herself? Who more illustrious than she whom God himself chose? Who more chaste than she who, without ceasing to be a Virgin, was Mother of God? A Virgin not only in body but also in heart and soul, so that she never stained her most chaste affection with any fault or imperfection.

This one, then, you must imitate; this one you must take as teacher, model and pattern of chastity and of all the virtues; she possesses them all, and in heroic and sublime degree. Happy the soul that finds her, that keeps and imitates her, for she has found life, and shall obtain salvation from the Lord,[10] that is, grace and the glory of heaven.

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[11] Cf. Song 4:4.

[12] Cf. Gen 6:13–22; 7:1–24; 8:1–19.

[13] 1 Cor 11:1.

[14] Cf. Gen 2:21–22.

[15] Cf. Gen 3:1–6.

[16] Cf. Gen 3:15.

[17] Cf. Lk 8:1–3; Jn 19:25.

[18] Cf. M. de J. de Ágreda, *Mística ciudad de Dios*, part I, bk. 2, ch. 1, LR (Barcelona 1860), vol. II, pp. 190–191.

[19] Ibid., p. 191.

[20] Cf. ibid., p. 192.

[21] Cf. ibid., pp. 213–214.

[22] Cf. M. de J. de Ágreda, op. cit., ed. cit., p. 215.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Cf. M. de J. de Ágreda, op. cit., ed. cit., p. 216.

[1] 1 Cor 11:1.

[2] Cf. Song 5:2.

[3] Cf. Lk 1:26–38.

[4] Cf. Lk 1:39–56.

[5] Cf. Jn 2:1–12.

[6] M. de J. de Ágreda, *Mística ciudad de Dios*, part I, bk. 2, ch. 12, ed. cit., p. 276.

[7] Cf. ibid., p. 278.

[8] Cf. Lk 2:19, 51.

[9] Cited by St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part II: *Obras ascéticas*, BAC (Madrid 1952), vol. I, p. 895.

[10] Cf. Prov 8:35.

35. Woman in the Light of Mary

\[Source: La misión de la mujer que el Todopoderoso le ha confiado, Barcelona 1864, pp. 7–17 (excerpt).\]

Adam's consolation to Eve

Adam, out of the love he bears his companion, consoles her as a good husband consoles his dear afflicted wife; trusting in the Lord's promises, Adam would say to her: "Take comfort, my wife; although it is true that through sin we have incurred the penalty of death, yet we shall live, even after death, in the children we shall have.

"We shall have children, and to them our nature will pass as it is in us, without sanctifying grace, without original justice; we shall give them life, though an ephemeral life, which will be subject to death like ours.

"But take comfort, my wife, because from us another Adam and another Eve are to be born; God himself will be called the Son of man; the same God, one and three, who formed my body from the earth, will form another body from the immaculate blood of Mary, your daughter and mine; and thus taking our nature, he will repair with his grace the damage and harm we have caused by sin.

"That woman, your daughter and mine, who is to be the Mother of the Redeemer, will be so powerful that she will crush the head of the infernal serpent that deceived you.[1] She will be so full of grace that she will undo what your sin has done, and therefore she will be called *Ave*, full of grace[2] — *Ave*, the reverse of *Eva*; I call you Eve, which means life and mother of the living,[3] but I say it in view of this son, who is truly our life, our sweetness and our hope. O my wife! The Lord had made me great; he had made me master and lord of all the earth, citizen of heaven, image of the Most Holy Trinity and son of God, and by sin I have made myself unhappy. But that woman, your daughter and mine, who will be called Mary, will be greater still; she will be at once Daughter, Mother and Spouse of God himself, and her graces and virtues will remain eternally, for she will never ever sin."

Adam's forecasts fulfilled

We who live in the happy age of the law of grace — yes, we have seen these so consoling forecasts fulfilled; we have experienced that where iniquity abounded grace has superabounded.[1] Yes, the Son of Mary, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, communicates to us his grace, by which we become friends and children of God;[2] he communicates to us his glory, reigning with him in his very kingdom of heaven; he communicates his most sacred person to our nature by the incarnation; and finally he communicates his person and his divine and human natures, with attributes, merits and graces, to each one in particular by means of holy Communion. O prodigy! O wonder of love!

All this abundance of goods, all this series of graces, God has dispensed to us through Mary. Yes, God has made use of this valiant woman, who was conceived and born without stain, died without pains, lived without sins and always exercised herself in the virtues. This is the woman, virgin, wife, widow and mother, whom God has made use of to sanctify and teach other women. Christianity, no doubt, has done great things in the world: it has established peace between heaven and earth, it has destroyed the slavery and tyranny of Satan, it has proclaimed liberty and fraternity among men;[3] but the greatest of its marvels, the one that has exercised most influence on domestic and civil society, has been the sanctification and perfection of woman; so that the husband himself, though he may have been bad at the beginning, comes at last to be sanctified by the wife faithful to her mission, says St. Paul.[4] Philosophers say in their theories that in the moral world the throne belongs to woman, as in the physical world to man; therefore, they say, men will always be what women want them to be.

What happens in each house? What goes on in families? The sacred union of husband and wife is called *matrimonio* because it is proper to the mother to raise the offspring. The man lives for his family, but its interests almost always take him away from the domestic hearth; and how then can he take good care of his children? How can he have in his charge the care and inner government of his house? But the woman not only lives for the family; she draws its bonds so tight that, when she is lacking, they loosen and perhaps disappear.

Kinds of women

There are, one may say, two kinds of women or mothers: one bad, the other good; the one like Eve, and the other like Mary. The one Satan makes use of to harm the human race; the other God makes use of to fill it with his mercies and graces. We read in the sacred Bible: "Happy is the husband of a virtuous wife, for the number of his years will be doubled."[1]

"The valiant or manly woman is her husband's comfort, and makes him live the years of his life in peace."[2]

"A good wife is a happy lot; a lot that will fall to him who fears God, and will be given to a man for his good works."[3]

"Whether he be rich or poor, his heart will be content, and his face will be cheerful at all times."[4]

"The grace of a diligent wife delights her husband and fills his bones with marrow."[5]

"Her good upbringing is a gift of God."[6]

"A discreet woman, a lover of silence and of temperate spirit, is something beyond price."[7]

"A holy and modest woman is grace upon grace."[8]

"There is nothing of such value that it can equal this chaste soul."[9]

"What the sun is to the world when it rises in the highest dwellings of God, that is the graciousness of a virtuous woman for the adornment of a house."[10]

"The prudent woman builds up or adorns her house; but the foolish woman will destroy with her hands even the one already built."[11]

God our Lord, in the same sacred Scripture that tells us the happiness a virtuous and well-brought-up woman brings a man, tells us of the calamity of a bad woman; and so it is that in the book of Ecclesiasticus, ch. XXV, he says:

"There is no head worse than the poisonous head of the snake."[12]

"Nor is there anger worse than a woman's anger; I would rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than with a wicked woman."[13]

"All malice is very small compared with the malice of a woman; she will be the lot that falls to the sinner as punishment for his wickedness."[14]

"Do not look only at a woman's good looks or beauty, nor fall in love with a woman for her beauty."[15]

God makes use of the good woman to do great and admirable things; the devil and his followers also make use of the bad woman to cause great misfortunes, bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal.

Woman must be guided from childhood

That is why it is most fitting to guide woman from her most tender years along the paths of virtue, and to instruct her well in the mission the Almighty has entrusted to her. And since God, to give us an idea of a good and perfect woman such as Most Holy Mary was, example and model of women and of all people, willed that at three years of age she should already be taken and presented in the temple for her education, retirement, prayer and other virtues, so it is fitting to bring girls from a very tender age to some house of religious education so that in time they may be able to fulfil their duty.

Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for us.

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[1] Cf. Gen 3:1–13.

[2] Lk 1:28: "Hail, O full of grace!"

[3] Cf. Gen 3:20.

[4] Cf. Rom 5:20.

[5] Cf. Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:4–7.

[6] Cf. Rom 8:21.

[7] Cf. 1 Cor 7:14, 16.

[8] Sir 26:1.

[9] Sir 26:2.

[10] Sir 26:3.

[11] Sir 26:4.

[12] Sir 26:16.

[13] Sir 26:17.

[14] Sir 26:18.

[15] Sir 26:19.

[16] Sir 26:20.

[17] Sir 26:21.

[18] Prov 14:1.

[19] Sir 25:22.

[20] Sir 25:23.

[21] Sir 25:26.

[22] Sir 25:28.

36. Mary, Heart of the Church

\[Source: address to the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, Madrid, 8 December 1863; Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl en España, vol. IX, 1864, pp. 25–26 (complete).\][1]

There is almost nothing left to say, gentlemen, after having heard the bishops of Guadix and of León; but I will not on that account fail to address a few words to you. Very fittingly has the bishop of León invoked the memory of the Virgin Mary.[2] What a memory! For to whom, gentlemen, must we turn to practise virtue and charity if not to the help of Mary? Mary is all charity. Where Mary is, there is charity.[3] But Mary, gentlemen, is also all purity, and this memory concerns us greatly, so as to unite these two virtues in practice. In order to be able to bear the Saviour in her womb, Mary was conceived in grace, then confirmed in grace, and finally full of grace. This sanctifying grace is what we must ask for and seek unceasingly. Mary is also, gentlemen, as you well know, Mother of God and of men. What great consolation this is for us! For, as Mother of God, she can do all things, and she not only asks but commands. And as Mother of men, who more full of graces and favours for them than this heavenly Mother? Yes, gentlemen, Mary is our true Mother.[4] Eve was so according to the flesh; but since she was not exempt from falling into sin, and did in fact fall into it,[5] she brought us death together with life; that is why she is called mother of mortals, which perhaps it would be more exact to call mother of the dead, because sin deprives us of the principal life, which is grace. But Mary, our spiritual Mother, who was precisely destined to destroy the effects of that fault, has not brought us and could not bring us anything but life and eternal salvation, and that is why she is called the Mother of the living.[6]

It strikes me, gentlemen, to consider how the word of God, which produces all things, made Mary our Mother. *Woman*, he says to her, seeing her at the foot of the cross, *behold your Son*,[7] pointing out in St. John the human race. And see how that vague entity which our Lord expressed by the word *woman* is from then on converted into our Mother. I find a certain likeness between this and the way Jesus Christ instituted the divine sacrament of the Eucharist. *This*, he says, *is my body*,[8] because here too the vague entity *this*, which before the consecration was only an ordinary species, is then converted by the word of God into his precious body. O admirable power of the divine word, which thus creates in a moment the greatest and most marvellous things!

Another memory that has just been very fittingly invoked is that of the Supreme Pontiff.[9] In this connection I will tell you that the world is like a great family, and in every family there must be a centre of direction, or head, and a centre of love, or heart. The head is the father; the heart is the mother.

Well then, in the Christian world the head is Jesus Christ, and the heart is the Virgin Mary. But Jesus Christ is an invisible head. The visible head is the Supreme Pontiff, as the Saviour himself established when he said: *Tu es Petrus*, etc. Here, my brothers, is why impiety directs its attacks chiefly against the Pontificate and against the cult of Mary: because they are the head and the heart of the Church; and enemies, whenever they attack, aim their blow at the heart or the head, as the surest to cause death. Luther said that what he most abhorred in Catholicism was devotion to Most Holy Mary in the mystery of the Conception and the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Mary is, then, the heart of the Church. That is why all works of charity spring from it. It is well known that the heart has two movements, which physicians call systole and diastole. By the first it contracts and absorbs the blood; by the second it dilates and pours it out through the arteries. So too Mary is continually exercising these two movements: absorbing the grace of her beloved Son and pouring it out on sinners. For mothers not only influence the moral life of the children they nurse, but these in turn influence the moral life of their mothers. And who will be able to conceive to what point the Child Jesus would influence the graces his most holy Mother received?

If, then, we know that Mary is our Mother, let us not forget either that the favourite and pampered children of mothers are the littlest, as is seen even in the birds of the field, which wear themselves out for their newly hatched chicks and love them less as they grow, even rejecting them when they are grown. If we wish to be the favourites of our heavenly Mother, let us be the littlest, that is, the most humble and simple of heart.[10] If we do so, how much more will Mary love us than natural mothers love their little ones, and the little birds their young — Mary, who received us from God as her children with the charge to regard us as such! Let us remember, likewise, that it is the little children who most seek and need the support of their mothers, while the grown-up ones hardly ever ask for it; so that the fear of drawing away from Mary, if we were grown-up, that is, presumptuous and proud, may also spur us to be little, that is, humble and simple.

Yes, let us be humble so that we may unite ourselves to Mary; for thus Mary will welcome and protect us, and, after favouring us with her protection in this life, will give us eternal bliss in the next.

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[1] Address published in the *Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl en España…*, vol. IX, 1864, pp. 25–26. Also published in

[2] Cf. *Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl en España* (Madrid 1864), vol. 9, p. 23.

[3] *Aut.*, n. 447. Cf. *Aut.*, n. 270.

[4] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 340–437. Cf. *Aut.*, n. 5. Cf. *Doc. Autob.*, IX: EA, pp. 431–433; *Aut.*, nn. 71–76, 95–98. Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 674, 676–678. Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 154–164, 270–273. Cf. *Luces y gracias*, 1870: EA, p. 665.

[5] Cf. Gen 3:6–7.

[6] This epithet is applied to Eve in the Bible; cf. Gen 3:20.

[7] Jn 19:26.

[8] Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24.

[9] *Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl en España* \[Madrid 1864\], p. 24.

[10] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 95–98.

37. Mary in God's Saving Plan

\[Source: Tardes de verano en el real sitio de San Ildefonso llamado La Granja, Barcelona 1864, pp. 117–135, 145–156, 170–176, 194–195 (excerpts).\]

Predestination and vocation

\[After speaking of the divine plan of salvation, the dialogue continues between two imaginary characters: Don Federico and Don Prudencio.\]

"Truly," said Don Federico, "this is the most magnificent and wondrous plan God could conceive and carry out. But I observe that she who was to be the Mother of God made man must necessarily enter into that plan, and you say nothing about her."

"The observation is just and timely," answered Don Prudencio, "and I am going at once to deal with so singular and incomparable a Mother. The prevarication of the human race having been foreseen by God from eternity, and the plan of the incarnation of the Word conceived to redeem and exalt it, Mary also entered into that plan as preconceived and predestined to give a human body to the divine Redeemer. That is why the Church has never hesitated to apply to her the following expressions, proper to the eternal Wisdom: 'From eternity I was ordained, and from the most ancient times, before the earth existed. The depths were not yet, and I was already conceived… When God prepared the heavens, I was present.'[1] The eternal Father chose her already from then as his Daughter, the Holy Spirit as his Spouse, and the divine Word as his Mother. What graces and privileges, then, would the three divine Persons not grant her when, the fullness of time having come,[2] Mary was conceived to be, respectively, their Daughter, Spouse and Mother! 'It is a general rule,' says St. Bernardine of Siena, 'that when God chooses a rational creature for a singular dignity or a sublime state, he gives it all the charisms of grace that are necessary and fitting to the dignity or state of that person and to

its splendour.'[3] And what greater dignity than Mary's? Mary is Mother of God, and this sublime, incommunicable and therefore singular dignity contains many others that flow spontaneously from it. Because she is Mother of God, Mary is Queen of heaven and earth, co-redemptrix of the human race, Mediatrix between God and men, Mother of them all, Advocate of sinners, Dispenser of all graces."[4]

"How well the divine Lady deserves these beautiful and honourable titles!" exclaimed Don Federico. "But tell me, Don Prudencio, have there not been heretics who have claimed that the Virgin Mary is not truly Mother of God?"

"Yes, sir," answered Don Prudencio, "there were already in the fifth century. Nestorius and his proud followers had the infernal audacity to deny the Virgin-Mother her divine motherhood, but the Council of Ephesus anathematized them on 22 June 431.[5] From this sacred Council come those words we say every day to Most Holy Mary: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Jesus.* Mary is true Mother of God, as every woman is the true mother of her son. A woman gives birth to the fruit she naturally conceived in her womb by the means instituted by God. That fruit is nothing other than a human body, to which, sufficiently organized, God united a soul that vivified and personified it. From this resulted a man or a human person, whose true mother is said to be, and is, she who conceived his body. Mary too gave birth to the fruit she had conceived in her immaculate and virginal womb, and which the Holy Spirit supernaturally formed in her and from her. The body formed and organized, God united to it a soul that vivified it, but without personifying it; for to personify it, at the same instant the second of the three divine Persons united himself hypostatically to that body and soul; and since these Persons are inseparable from their one nature, that nature, together with the person of the Word, was united to the soul and body, which already constituted in Mary's womb a true man, though without human personality. We have, then, that in the Son of Mary there are the two natures, divine and human, and one sole person, which is that of the Son of God. He having become man in Mary's womb and been brought forth by her, it follows that the Son of God himself is the Son of Mary, and consequently that she is the true Mother of a true man who personally and truly is God. Therefore we can and must call Mary *Theotokos*, that is, MOTHER OF GOD, not hyperbolically, but exactly as it sounds, because strictly and really she is so."

"Allow me, Don Prudencio," said Don Federico. "There being in Jesus, Son of Mary, the two natures, divine and human, and the three divine Persons being inseparable from their one nature, it seems that in Jesus there cannot be only one person, that is, that of the Word, but there must be three, namely that of the Father, that of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit, since all three are equally inseparable from the divine nature."

"The three divine Persons," answered Don Prudencio, "being inseparably united to their common and single nature, are where that nature is; but since it was not the divine nature that took flesh, nor the three Persons, but only one of them, that is, the Son, therefore we say and must say that in Jesus there is only the person of the Son of God, because he alone became man in the womb of Mary. It does not matter that the Father and the Holy Spirit are also in the divine nature which is in the incarnate Son, because they do not and cannot figure in him as incarnate as he is. Only the Son of God became Son of Mary, and he alone could clothe himself with a human body without the other two Persons taking it with him, because all three Persons are distinct from one another. In Jesus, then, there are two natures and one sole Person, as in God there are three Persons in one sole nature; and just as the unity of nature in God means that there is only one God, so the unity of person in Jesus means that there is only one God-Man. The reason for this latter unity is that the person of the divine Word is the only bond that unites hypostatically, without confusing them, the two natures, divine and human.[6] Consequently, he who is God-Man is the same as he who is Man-God; or, if you will, there is one sole Jesus, at once or simultaneously Son of God and Son of Man; more clearly, one sole Jesus, who is God and Man."

"How admirable and adorable," exclaimed Don Federico, "are these lofty mysteries of our holy faith! What goodness of God in becoming man to redeem us! What glory for Mary, Mother of this good God made man

without ceasing to be God!"

"Yes, my friend," said Don Prudencio, "in contemplating these mysteries of divine goodness and love towards us, we ought, in gratitude, to annihilate ourselves before God as he annihilated himself for us, in the Apostle's expression,[7] by becoming man in the most pure and virginal womb of Most Holy Mary. And what tongue can extol, what mind comprehend the sublime dignity to which that fortunate Virgin was raised by her divine motherhood, that only Virgin among all mothers, that only Mother among all virgins? Chosen among all the daughters of Adam to be Spouse of the divine Love and to share, so to speak, the honours of the divine fatherhood with respect to that Son whom the eternal Father begot from himself before the ages and whom she conceived in the flesh in the fullness of time[8] — that Son consubstantial with his Father according to the divinity, and consubstantial with Mary according to the humanity he received from her — she had to be filled with all the graces, prerogatives and excellences proper and peculiar to a creature raised to such rank and dignity. From her close alliance with the Holy Spirit, from her maternal union with the eternal Word, from her honourable kinship with the eternal Father, Mary turns out to be a creature so graced, so illustrious, so sublime, that nothing in creation can equal her; a creature that is above all creatures; a being that is not a God, but has its place immediately after God; a being before whose name heaven, earth and hell bow down, as they bend the knee before the name of her divine Son;[9] a being that is the most candid emanation of the eternal Light, the most spotless mirror of the divine Majesty, the most perfect image of the infinite Goodness;[10] a being that, in St. Bernard's expression, has a suppliant omnipotence; a being, in short, that without being infinite surpasses everything finite. Well might she herself say in her immortal and ineffable canticle: 'He who is mighty has done great things in me.'[11] All these excellences God the Father owed to Mary, and he gave them to her so that she might worthily share with him the rights over his Son, which he as Father and she as Mother possess in common.[12]

"All these excellences God the Son also owed to Mary, and he communicated them to her so that her motherhood, as far as possible, might be in harmony with the dignity and sonship of the divine Word, who is himself. Does not a son owe it to his mother to honour and love her? What, then, would a Son who is God not do to honour his most pure Mother and show her his love? Would he not raise her to the most exalted condition, dignity, power and throne after the divine? If an earthly king left his mother sunk in the state and condition of a common woman, he would doubtless fail in the love and honour he naturally owes her; for it is a law engraved not only in the hearts of kings but in those of all men, that every good son, in order to honour and love his mother duly, must admit her to every possible share in his goods, honours, rights, and even his power, gladly and promptly granting her requests, as Solomon did with Bathsheba his mother.[13] If, then, God engraved these sentiments in our hearts with respect to our mothers, what would not, what will not the God-Man still do with respect to his?"

"With true and supreme pleasure," said Don Federico, "I am hearing the many great glories of our good and common Mother, the Mother of God, and I am sorry at heart that, it being already late, our time for conversing on the lofty and singular prerogatives of so august a Lady is ending. Nevertheless, as we go back home, I hope you will be so kind, Don Prudencio, as to tell me what the divine Spouse did for his worthy and virginal Spouse."

"The Holy Spirit," continued Don Prudencio, "choosing Mary as his Spouse, that is, as Spouse of a divine Person who, *par excellence*, is called Holy, had to lavish on her all the charisms of holiness proper to make her the holiest of all creatures, the most worthy among them all to be his Spouse; and he lavished them on her, sharing with her as much as he could give and she receive. Thus Mary was endowed with a holiness the most eminent in creation, a superhuman holiness, a holiness above the angels, a holiness divine by participation, a holiness, in short, that makes her the worthy Spouse of so holy a Spouse. He personified in her, in the highest degree, all the virtues; he poured out on her blessed soul, with inconceivable profusion, all his graces, all his gifts, all his fruits, so that Mary is the most finished copy, the most perfect pattern, the most

faithful likeness of the divinity and holiness of the divine Spirit; in a word, the masterpiece in which God the Spirit exhausted, so to speak, all the resources of wisdom, goodness and omnipotence which he possesses and exercises with the other two divine Persons.

"Thus it is that the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity all concurred in forming Mary as the most complete and similar image of themselves, in making her for the world a kind of visible photograph of the invisible Trinity, whose complement she is, humanly speaking, in the expression of a celebrated and pious writer: *Maria universum Sanctae Trinitatis complementum*."

"In all truth and sincerity," said Don Federico, "I declare to you, Don Prudencio, that I had never had, as now, so high an idea of the greatness and loftiness of the Virgin Mary. Oh! Blessed, blessed once and a thousand times among all women,[14] for she alone and unique among them all merited from the Most High the primogeniture among all creatures, the supremacy among all queens, and to be the precious bond that unites indissolubly her divine Son Jesus Christ with us all, making him our brother, as he is the divine ring that unites hypostatically in himself the divine nature with the human to redeem and save us."

"Destined as so exalted a Lady was to so sublime a dignity," added Don Prudencio, "it is easily understood that God, her Father, her Son and her Spouse, would preserve her in her conception from every stain of original sin; that in her childbirth and after it she would unite supernaturally the glories of motherhood with the unfading flower of her virginity; and that after her death she would be exalted in body and soul above all the choirs of Angels and placed beside Him who by his own power ascended to the right hand of his eternal Father with the humanity she herself supplied him.

"All this, my friend, must inspire in us the holiest and most fervent devotion to Most Holy Mary; and this devotion, to be worthy of her and profitable to us, must embrace three sentiments: 1. A sentiment of respect and veneration proportioned, as far as possible, to her sublime dignity of Mother of God. 2. A sentiment of true and unlimited confidence in her power and goodness, having recourse to her as our refuge and protection in all our needs. 3. A sentiment of tender, filial love corresponding to the maternal tenderness with which she loves, protects and helps us. With the understanding we must meditate on the excellences of so privileged a creature, her dignity, her holiness, her goodness, her power, all her titles and privileges. With the will we must kindle in our heart an inextinguishable bonfire of love in honour of so lovable and loving a Mother of God and of men. With the memory we must recall unceasingly her never-interrupted favours and benefits, which make her so worthy of our gratitude and our worship.

"No more for today; fare you well, Don Federico, and until tomorrow, God willing."

"Good night, Don Prudencio," the other answered.

"Oh, how little one thinks of God, one and three!" exclaimed Don Federico, now on his way home. "How little he is known and loved! Ah! I too have been negligent until now in thinking of him, knowing him and loving him; but henceforth I will try to meditate every day on God and his works, on creation, conservation and redemption. I will try, likewise, to think more of you, O holy Virgin, to know you and love you more. In return, you, O Mother of God and my Mother, will always protect me and pray to your divine Son for me now and at the hour of my death. Amen."

Prayer

O Virgin and Mother of God! I give myself as your son, and in honour and glory of your purity I offer you my soul and body, my faculties and senses, begging you to obtain for me the grace never to commit any sin. Amen, Jesus.

Hail, Mary, Daughter of God the Father; hail, Mary, Mother of God the Son; hail, Mary, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit; hail, Mary, temple and tabernacle of the Most Holy Trinity; hail, Mary, conceived in grace

without stain of original sin.

I resolve to say every day, in honour of Mary, the holy Rosary with attention, devotion and fervour, and I will exhort as many as I can to do the same. So I resolve and hope to fulfil it, helped by the grace of God. Amen.

In Mary grace superabounded

God had no need to give existence to anything that has it. Essentially and infinitely happy in himself, nothing was lacking or could be lacking to him for that. Being able, nevertheless, to communicate happiness, without losing a jot of his own, to other beings by drawing them out of nothing, he willed in his goodness to do so, and created the universe, within which, among innumerable other inferior creatures, he placed two species of superior beings, the Angels and men, the only ones capable, being intelligent and free, of attaining the enjoyment of true and eternal happiness in heaven. God created the Angels before men, and, unlike men, who consist of soul and body, he made them purely spiritual creatures, more perfect and noble than men, endowed like them with intelligence, will and memory, that is, capable of knowing and loving God and keeping the memory of his benefits. He created them all in the state of grace, but did not confirm them in it; he willed that they be wayfarers before being comprehensors or blessed, that is, he willed that, enjoying as they did free will, or their own individual freedom, they should cooperate, on the day of trial, freely and individually, with the grace with which they were adorned, in order to merit attaining the end to which he destined them. The Lord revealed to them his plan of creation, and with it that of the redemption of humanity, which he foresaw already prevaricating in the persons of Adam and Eve. He gave them knowledge, then, that in the fullness of time[1] this unfortunate race would have a Redeemer, who would be the divine Word made man, that is, the Son of God made man in the womb of a virgin, in the womb of a mere human creature, who by her dignity, her holiness and her singular prerogatives would come to be exalted in body and soul above all the choirs of Angels, as her Son, the Man-God, would raise his humanity to sit at the right hand of the Father,[2] where every knee in creation would have to bend to adore him,[3] honouring and venerating at the same time Mary, his Mother, as Queen and Empress of the whole universe.

This double plan having been made known to the Angels, God required of them all an act of spontaneous and humble submission to the Messiah then to come and to his virginal Mother, notwithstanding the inferiority of his humanity with respect to the angelic nature. Thousands of thousands, or rather millions of millions of angels, led by the archangel Michael,[4] submitted instantly and humbly to the just and kind decrees of the Most High, paid in advance their due homage to the Saviour God and to his divine Mother, and paid with fervent eagerness their tribute of love to the triune God, their Creator. There were many others who, puffed up with their rare beauty and audaciously led by proud Lucifer, rebelled against God, resisting his plans and refusing to pay homage to any being inferior to them in nature, however much they saw in the future Mother of the Redeemer the highest dignity possible in creation, and in her divine Son humanity hypostatically united to the divinity. No, said the proud captain of so impious and insubordinate a cohort: *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God… I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High*.[5]

The trial was then over, and in virtue of it God confirmed the faithful Angels in grace, established them in the state of glory and admitted them for evermore to form part of his heavenly court. But the rebels, having lost the grace in which they were created and been transformed by their fault into angels of darkness, God deprived of his glory and cast them all together into the abyss, into the inextinguishable fire, into eternal fire.[6]

"It is truly horrifying," said Don Federico, "the terrible but just punishment such illustrious creatures deserved by their rebellion."

"Let us go now," continued Don Prudencio, "to the creation of man. The sixth day having come, and all the species of plants and land, water and flying animals having been drawn out of nothing,[7] God created our first parents, Adam and Eve,[8] somewhat inferior to the Angels, but in the state of grace, as he had created them. He endowed them also with intelligence and free will; he placed them in a paradise of delights, making them lords of all the animals and plants, with leave to eat of the fruits of all the trees except one, which he excepted on purpose[9] so that they might recognize that he kept and would always keep his sovereign dominion over all things. Such was the trial to which God subjected the obedience and fidelity of Adam and his consort. They were continuing in complete and ineffable happiness in the earthly paradise when Lucifer, swollen with spite and rage against God and devoured by envy at seeing the happiness of the first two human beings on earth and that which awaited them in heaven, resolved to make them lose the first and together with it their rights to the second. To this end he made use of a serpent, which coiled round the forbidden tree and through it said to Eve, who was there nearby, idle and moved by curiosity: *Why has God commanded you not to eat of every tree of paradise? — Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise,* she answered, *we eat; but of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of paradise God commanded us not to eat and not to touch it, lest we die. — No,* replied the serpent, *you shall by no means die. God knows that on whatever day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil. —* The woman took of that fruit and ate, and gave of it to her husband, who ate also.[10]

"Thus, my friend, was consummated this great act of disobedience to the formal precept of the Creator, an act which, though in itself it seems very simple and of little account, nevertheless contains a manifest rebellion, the effect of the pride and ambition which the father of lies[11] suggested to both consorts under the form of the insidious serpent. At the very instant of eating, the eyes of Adam and Eve were indeed opened,[12] but not to be as gods, as he had promised them, but to know the inestimable goods they had just lost and the countless great evils to which they were now subject. They suddenly saw themselves naked[13] of grace and original justice, and deserving of the punishment God was without fail and at any moment about to inflict on them. Fearful and covered with shame, they hide.[14] The Lord commands them to appear, and after rebuking them he hurls against them and all their race that terrible but just sentence whose consequences we all know and deplore. He then curses the serpent,[15] the unclean reptile Satan used to ruin them and us; but already from then God made a ray of consoling hope shine for unhappy humanity, personified there in the first father and first mother of all men. He made known, in the hearing of Adam and Eve, to perfidious Lucifer, author of so much wickedness, that under the very form of a serpent he had taken he would one day have his head crushed by a woman, that is, that a day would come when a Woman and her Son (Mary and Jesus) would conquer him. By this the unhappy parents of the human race understood that a day of redemption would shine for it, and they bequeathed this consolation, by tradition, to their posterity."

"Sad indeed," said Don Federico, "and extremely deplorable was the misfortune of our first parents in paradise."

"And so it was for them, and is still for us!" exclaimed Don Prudencio. "But in the midst of so many sorrows the Apostle's words are a powerful balm for us: *Where iniquity abounded, grace superabounded*[16] — the grace of Jesus Christ, true God and Man. That, no doubt, is why the Church sings in the *Exsultet* of Holy Saturday: 'O happy fault, that merited so great and so glorious a Redeemer!' And well it was for us, my friend, that God himself took upon himself the payment of our debts, for otherwise we were irremediably and for ever lost. Satisfaction and offence must, according to justice, be in correlative proportion. Since, then, the fault of Adam and Eve was morally infinite, having offended an infinite God, the satisfaction had likewise to be infinite, according to the rules of strict justice. Now, I will not say one man, but not even all men together are capable of giving God such reparation or satisfaction. We therefore needed a redeemer who would be at once God and Man: man to suffer and die and so expiate the fault of humanity; God to give this satisfaction the infinite value it had to have to be acceptable in God's eyes and to free us from the slavery of Satan. That

is exactly what the God-Man Jesus did, who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,[17] paying for them a more than condign price, a satisfaction not only morally infinite but intrinsically and divinely infinite."

"What goodness of God," exclaimed Don Federico, "to have provided us by himself, although he was the one offended, so powerful and effective a means of reconciling us with his divine Majesty, of drawing us out of the shameful abjection in which we were sunk, and of making us recover the rights we had lost!"

"And note, my friend," added Don Prudencio, "several coincidences found providentially and fittingly in the fall of man and in the sovereign remedy God applied to it. Satan conquered the human race in the person of its progenitors beneath the forbidden tree; Jesus conquered Satan, ransoming, redeeming and saving the human race also on a tree, that of the cross. Adam, naked in body, was left naked in soul too by sin, losing the grace that adorned it; Jesus willed to die naked in body too, in order to cover our souls with the mantle of his graces and merits. Satan used a woman, Eve, to cause the ruin of her husband and of all their descendants; God also used a woman, Mary, for the restoration of those same descendants, giving us through her a Redeemer and making her herself the Gate of heaven."

Mary, promise and reality of salvation

In the chosen people, the only one among all that faithfully preserved the venerable traditions of the consoling truth that was to regenerate the world, the Patriarchs sighed unceasingly for the fulfilment of the divine promises; the Prophets, inspired by God, encouraged the just by foretelling, at shorter or longer range, the coming of the divine Consoler, and rebuked the vices of sinners, urging them to prepare to receive the Holy of holies. At last the day came; the longed-for hour struck which the Most High, in his lofty and adorable purposes, had fixed for releasing the first pledge, the forerunner and sure guarantee of the faithfulness of his promises. Of the line of the Patriarchs and Prophets there was born in Nazareth a little girl, conceived without any stain of sin, full of grace and resplendent with holiness. This is the Virgin foretold by Isaiah,[1] the Virgin who, betrothed very young to the virgin St. Joseph,[2] and without any detriment to her ineffable virginity, was to give the world its liberator.

"But tell me, Don Prudencio," asked Don Federico, "how is it that, since the Virgin Mary was to remain as much a virgin after her childbirth as she was in it and before it, God permitted or willed that she should have a husband? This seems…"

"Listen, my friend," said Don Prudencio, interrupting him. "In all God's works the most exquisite prudence is wont to shine, and in the incarnation of his Son, which was to be the most stupendous of all his works, his prudence had to shine in the most extraordinary and astonishing way. Do you want to know how the great Father of the Church, St. Jerome, reasons on this? I will tell you. 'Why,' asks that Father, 'does the Son of God take flesh in the womb of a betrothed virgin?' And he gives several reasons: '1. So that by the lineage of Joseph that of Mary might be shown. 2. So that she might not be stoned by the Jews as an adulteress. 3. So that, fleeing into Egypt, she might have a support. The martyr St. Ignatius (St. Jerome goes on) adds a fourth cause: so that,' he says, 'the childbirth of Mary might be hidden from the devil, who thinks it ordinary and not virginal.'[3] I will also quote you some magnificent words St. Bernard wrote on the matter: 'What could be wiser,' he says, 'what more worthy of divine Providence? By so prudent a design a witness is admitted to the heavenly secrets, the enemy is excluded from them, and the reputation of the Virgin-Mother is preserved unstained.'"[4]

"I like very much," said Don Federico, "the two authorities you have just quoted; but it seems to me that, nevertheless, men may fall into the error of believing Jesus to be the son of Mary and Joseph as other men are of their parents."

"Catholic Christians," answered Don Prudencio, "do not and cannot fall into such an error, because the Gospel is extremely explicit on this point. Here is what St. Luke tells us: 'The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel, having come in to where she was, said: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she heard this, she was troubled at his words, and wondered what manner of greeting this might be. And the Angel said: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God; behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give 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. And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be, since I know not man? And the Angel answered and said to her: THE HOLY SPIRIT SHALL COME UPON THEE, AND THE POWER OF THE MOST HIGH SHALL OVERSHADOW THEE. Therefore the Holy One who shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word. And the Angel departed from her.'[5]

"Mary's consent having thus been obtained, the three divine Persons, and especially the Holy Spirit, that is, the personal Love of the Father and the Son — the incarnation of the Son being a work of love — formed in the virginal womb of so blessed a Maiden, without the intervention of anyone else, a most perfect and most pure little body, to which they united a soul no less pure and perfect; and, this individual humanity being constituted, but without a human person, the person of the divine Word united himself to it, and the great and inestimable work of our reconciliation with God was consummated in principle. God alone formed the body of the first Adam, who by his sin infected the whole human lineage, and he formed it of the red and virgin earth of the field; God alone formed the body of the second Adam, who came to restore what the first had destroyed, and he formed it of the red and virgin blood of the most pure womb of Mary, honouring her for nine months with his personal presence and ennobling her thereafter with the most exalted dignity of Mother of God."

Love's answer to Jesus and Mary

"Great, above all nowadays," said Don Prudencio, "is the indifference of Christians, and great their negligence in profiting from the immense goods which the Saviour obtained for them with so many toils and sufferings and lavishes on them to lead them to the possession of the supreme Good. Great too is what he has had and still has to bear from heretics, unbelievers and bad Christians; and yet for all he shed his blood and every day offers it to save them. Ah! this proves the great and infinite love and zeal Jesus has for the glory of his eternal Father, and the very great and inextinguishable love with which he loves men, his redeemed. Let us love him, since love is repaid with love. Let us be grateful to him for having redeemed us at the cost of so many labours, and for having borne with us until now, despite our strayings and excesses, which so offend him. Let us be grateful also to his most holy Mother, who is ours too, for the lively interest and effective intercession with which she obtains for us the means of our sanctification and salvation. Long live, long live for ever Jesus and Mary in the heart of all the just, and may they triumph over all errors, faults and vices in the heart of all sinners!"

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[1] Prov 8:23–25, 27.

[2] Cf. Gal 4:4.

[3] Quoted by St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part II, disc. 2 (BAC, Madrid 1952, vol. I, p. 758).

[4] Mt 1:16.

[5] Claret's note: "See Bérault-Bercastel's history, vol. II, p. 29.

[6] Cf. Council of Chalcedon, session V, 22 Oct. 451: DS 302.

[7] Cf. Phil 2:6–8.

[8] Cf. Gal 4:4.

[9] Cf. Phil 2:10.

[10] Cf. Wis 7:26.

[11] Lk 1:49.

[12] St. Bernard, *Sermon 2 on the Annunciation*, BAC, Madrid 1953, vol. I, p. 666.

[13] Cf. 1 Kgs 2:19–20 (Vulgate 3 Kgs 2).

[14] Cf. Lk 1:42.

[15] Cf. Gal 4:4.

[16] Cf. Mk 16:19; Acts 5:31; 7:55; Rom 8:34; Heb 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22.

[17] Cf. Phil 2:10.

[18] Cf. Rev 12:7.

[19] Isa 14:13–14.

[20] Cf. Mt 25:41.

[21] Cf. Gen 1:20–25.

[22] Cf. Gen 1:26–27.

[23] Cf. Gen 2:16–17.

[24] Gen 3:1–6.

[25] Jn 8:44.

[26] Cf. Gen 3:7.

[27] Cf. ibid.

[28] Cf. Gen 3:8.

[29] Cf. Gen 3:14.

[30] Claret's note: "*Ubi abundavit delictum superabundavit et gratia* (Rom 5:20)."

[31] Cf. Jn 1:29.

[32] Cf. Isa 7:10–14.

[33] Cf. Lk 1:27.

[34] Claret's note: "God hid Mary's divine childbirth, and so the divinity of Jesus, not only from the devil, but also from the wicked and the Jews, and from all the heretics who have denied it down to our day, down to Renan, as children all of the devil: *You are of your father the devil* (Jn 8:44).

[35] St. Bernard, *Homilies on the Virgin Mother*, 2 (BAC, Madrid 1953, vol. I, pp. 201–202).

[36] Lk 1:26–38.

38. The Great Army of the Heart of Mary

\[Source: Reglas del Instituto de los Clérigos Seglares que viven en comunidad, Barcelona 1864, pp. 3–8 (excerpt).\]

Who is she that comes forth with the majesty of the rising dawn, fair as the moon, chosen as the sun, terrible as an army well ordered and set in battle array?[1]

This is Mary. She is a full moon for sinners, giving light in the night of sin, so that they may not fall into hell. She is dawn for the newly converted, since with her help they go on departing from the darkness of sin and its occasions, and grow from virtue to virtue like the light of daybreak. Mary is sun for the perfect, whom she illumines with her special grace and inflames with her most ardent charity.

Finally, Mary is for the enemies of our souls like an army well ordered and set in battle array. The armies of the kings of the earth are made up of soldiers; but the army of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth, is made up of Angels and of the devotees of her Immaculate Heart enrolled in her Archconfraternity. In an army there are soldiers of different corps, for example cavalry, artillery and infantry.

In the Archconfraternity there are three distinct orders, and each has its special rule, which it fulfils exactly; and united in the Immaculate Heart of Mary they form an admirable ensemble and a perfect whole,

formidable to the enemies, world, devil and flesh, so that with the help of Mary, with their prayers, their good example and the works of holy zeal with which they fight, heresies are destroyed, sinners are converted, the just persevere in grace and very many souls are saved. Moreover, through it many temporal graces are obtained: harvests in the fields, health in bodies, happiness in families, peace in kingdoms, prosperity and good fortune everywhere; and so what is written is literally fulfilled, namely, that her household, those who are her devotees, are equipped with double garments:[2] garments for the body, garments for the soul, for time and for eternity.

We have said that in the Archconfraternity there are three orders. In the first order are those who form the Congregation called that of the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; they are priests and brothers wholly consecrated to God and to Most Holy Mary, and continually occupied in missions, in giving spiritual exercises to the clergy, to nuns, etc., according to their rules.[3]

In the second order are those who form the Institute of secular clergy who live in community, according to their special rule.

In the third order are all the other faithful devotees of Mary who, enrolled in her Archconfraternity, have as their principal rule the holy law of God, which they try to keep with the greatest exactness; and besides, they take pains to fulfil faithfully the obligations of their state and to say the devotions prescribed in the Archconfraternity, and one part of the Rosary each day out of devotion to Most Holy Mary.

Do you want to know, most beloved reader, in what these first two orders we have just spoken of agree and in what they differ? We shall tell you.

They agree in three things:

1. In that all their members seek the greater glory of God and devotion to the sacred hearts of Jesus and of Most Holy Mary.

2. In the sanctification and perfection of their own souls, and in the salvation of the souls of their neighbours.[4]

3. In the careful discharge of the functions of their sacred ministry. In these three things all agree and all pursue them with equal zeal; but they differ in that those of the first order have fixed houses in which to live and reside, but they remain only for the time their superior disposes, or he sends them to another town, another diocese, another nation, as the greater glory of God and the good of souls require. That is why their members possess no benefices, nor dignities, nor anything else; so that they are wholly given over into the arms of divine Providence like the holy Apostles; and so far nothing has been lacking to them, nor will be in future.

Those of the second, on the contrary, are fixed in the diocese, and are those who hold the offices, benefices, parishes, canonries, dignities, professorships, etc.; and they are also those who have no vocation to enter the first order, or are prevented by some insuperable obstacle that hinders them from doing so; and so they occupy themselves holily until the opportune hour and the happy moment arrive to consecrate themselves as a perpetual holocaust to Jesus and to Most Holy Mary.

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[1] Song 6:10.

[2] Cf. Prov 31:21.

[3] *Const.*, 1857, n. 2.

[4] Cf. *Constitutions CMF*, 1857, n. 2.

39. The Virgin's Mission in Glory

\[Source: Apuntes de un plan para conservar la hermosura de la Iglesia, 2nd ed., Madrid 1865, p. 190 (excerpt).\]

The memory of the mystery of the Assumption of Most Holy Mary must inspire in us great confidence and hope of salvation, when we think that, just as in heaven we have our Father, so also we have our Mother. If on earth she was so charitable, she will be more so in heaven, where this virtue reaches its height.

There Mary is most rich, most powerful, most good, most generous, and has a great will to help us, and wants us all to go up to heaven and be glorious and eternally happy with her and with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And just as all three divine persons crowned her, she desires to see us too crowned with the crown of glory.[1]

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[1] *Apuntes para el régimen de la diócesis* \[Madrid 1865²\], pp. 191–192.

40. The Apparition of the Virgin and the Founding of the Order of Mercy

\[Source: L'egoismo vinto (Life of St. Peter Nolasco), Rome 1869, pp. 20–22.\][1]

On 1 August 1218, the day on which the Church celebrates the feast of the sacred bonds or chains with which the prince of the apostles was bound, and which are venerated in the Eudoxian basilica, St. Peter Nolasco was during the night in most fervent prayer. On the one hand he was meditating on the danger to which one is exposed living amid the business of the world, and, desiring to make sure of his eternal salvation, he was considering whether it would not be better to go to a desert to lead a solitary life, to which he had always had a great inclination. On the other hand he was contemplating the pains and torments suffered by the poor Christian slaves and the great danger they were in of apostatizing from the Catholic faith — a thought that continually wounded his pious and charitable heart — and he was examining how he could remedy so great a need, not only for the present but also how to perpetuate that same remedy in the Church. While he was occupied with such thoughts, behold, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him in a clear vision, all dressed in white, most beautiful, resplendent, accompanied by angels and other saints of heaven, filling with extraordinary light and glory the place where Nolasco was praying; and after assuring him that she was the Mother of the divine Redeemer of the world, with sweet and at the same time grave words she commanded him not to go and live in solitude; and she added that it would be most pleasing to her divine Son and to her if an order were instituted and founded whose religious would occupy and dedicate themselves chiefly to redeeming and ransoming Christian slaves from the power of the Moors and unbelievers. She made known to him, moreover, that it was her will that the religious of that Order should wear a white habit, in conformity with the one the Queen of angels was wearing at that moment, as a sign and in honour of her purity, and that he should be the first to wear that habit, because he was to be the father and superior of all the others, choosing him as shepherd of the whole religious family.

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[1] P. Marietti, 1869, pp. 20–22.

41. God's Providence and Mary's Presence

\[Source: L'egoismo vinto (El egoísmo vencido), Rome 1869, ch. VII.\][1]

In the beginning God created heaven and earth;[2] in heaven he placed the angels in the state of meriting, and on earth he placed Adam and Eve. Many of the angels rebelled against God, and the Lord, in punishment for their pride and rebellion, expelled them from heaven and condemned them to eternal torment; but the angels who remained faithful he confirmed in grace and glorified. The supreme chief of the good and faithful angels is the archangel St. Michael; the chief of the rebel angels, or of the devils, is Lucifer.

Lucifer and his followers are obstinate enemies of God and of men, and out of pride and envy they wage continual war on us. God permits it for our good, because we who live on earth form the Church militant, and we must fight and struggle, as the apostle St. Paul says, "not only against men of flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the evil spirits scattered in the air";[3] and, to be able to resist and win the victory, he exhorts us to take up the arms of God,[4] which are the virtues, especially justice, faith, hope, the word of God and prayer; these are the principal arms of our warfare.[5]

Now I will show you also what are the arms or wiles Lucifer and his followers use. They pretend to be friends and present to us what most satisfies us; they promise us what most pleases us; they study our inclinations, smooth the way for us and push us forward. They know the affection we have for riches and exaggerate their importance; they observe the vehement desire we have for honours and worldly glory, and extol them as much as possible to dazzle us; and finally they know very well our inclinations to sensuality, and so they spare no means to present to our senses the most attractive objects; and thus, exciting our imagination, they stimulate the passions. All the skill and cunning of the devils and their followers consists in knowing how to lie to and deceive mortals, make them unhappy in this world and damned for all eternity in the next. They do as the fisherman does, who by means of the bait draws the fish to the hook, and so it is caught, cooked and devoured. And since it may be affirmed that the devil is the author of all evil works, St. John assures us that "for this the Son of God came, to destroy the works of the devil".[6] Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man, conquers him with his preaching, with his passion and with the sacraments he himself instituted; and that is why St. Paul affirms that he did not pride himself "on knowing anything except Jesus Christ, and him crucified".[7] Jesus is the way we must follow, the truth we must believe and the life we must live.[8] This is the doctrine preached by the apostles and the Fathers of the Church, which all ministers of the word of God have preached and will preach.

Because of the special care and providence God our Lord has for the Church militant, in all times he has sent and sends men after his own heart, full of grace and doctrine, to confront the errors the devil has invented and suggested to the impious, his followers, who pursue the vices into which he has hurled them. I will cite some here, so that this truth, as certain as it is consoling, may be seen and become more evident. In the same period in which Pelagius was born, St. Augustine was also born, a great doctor of the Church, so that with his doctrine he might refute and confound the falsehood the devil suggested to the heresiarch Pelagius. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Church found herself assailed by three very grave evils; but the Lord, who, according to the prophet, neither slumbers nor sleeps but guards Israel,[9] sent three wise and timely physicians to heal her, who were at the same time also valiant captains to make war on the enemies of Jesus, of Mary and of humanity. These three envoys of heaven were St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Peter Nolasco, and each of them founded an order, a religious family.

At that time France was enveloped in the errors and vices of the Albigensians, and the Lord sent Dominic de Guzmán, full of learning and virtues, who began to combat those unfortunate people with heroic courage; and to have companions in the struggle, and to have those who after his death would continue the struggle against the enemies of the Church, he instituted and founded the illustrious Order of Preachers.

In a similar way, the world of that time was oppressed by the first and greatest capital vices: pride, avarice and the ambition for worldly honours, with an insatiable thirst to pile up riches. To remedy these very grave evils, God sent the poor seraphic man of Assisi, so that he and his companions might be a most effective remedy through the preaching of the Gospel; and by the example of their poverty and humility they made it understood that the doctrine they preached was not impracticable; and so that this remedy should not cease with the death of the patriarch of Assisi, God inspired in him the foundation of the Order called that of the Friars Minor, and God himself made known to him in a most special way the rule that was to rule and govern that religious family.

Likewise, in that same period very many of the faithful were suffering the harshest slavery under the barbarous Saracens, especially in Spain; and God sent the zealous and charitable St. Peter Nolasco, and he likewise, by order of Most Holy Mary, founded, as we said above, a religious order. The professed religious of this Order are not content with the three customary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as the religious of other orders practise them, but add a fourth vow: that of remaining as hostages or in prison to procure the freedom of Christian slaves in danger of apostatizing from the faith, or to ransom them. This fourth vow, besides the habit, the rule and other things proper to the Mercedarians, distinguishes them completely from the Trinitarians, whose Order was also founded for the purpose of redeeming slaves. The founders of this religious order of the Trinitarians were St. John of Matha and St. Felix of Valois, in France.

After some years, proud and impatient Satan raises his head again; he uses Luther, Calvin and their followers to disturb anew the peace of the Church; and at once the merciful God raised up and called to the battlefield St. Ignatius of Loyola and his Company, called of Jesus, which has won the most complete victories.[10]

Notwithstanding the triumphs won by the Society of Jesus over the devils and perverse men, to hold back the torrent of iniquity it has been necessary for God to send other persons; and this has been accomplished by means of many congregations of clerks regular that have come since, such as the Fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri; the Piarists, founded by St. Joseph Calasanz;[11] the Fathers of the Mission, by St. Vincent de Paul; the Redemptorists, by St. Alphonsus Liguori; the Passionists, by St. Paul of the Cross; and finally the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded on 16 July 1849 and approved by the reigning pontiff, Pius IX, on 22 December 1865.

All these and other congregations devote themselves to the mixed life, which is the life practised by Jesus Christ when he lived on this earth, clothed in our mortal flesh,[12] uniting the contemplative life of Mary and the active life of Martha. Every day in the morning the members of this Congregation have an hour of mental prayer, the recitation of the divine office and of the holy rosary, and they visit the Most Blessed Sacrament. Besides this, they devote themselves to study and to spiritual reading and to the sanctification of their own soul, without forgetting the souls of their neighbours. On the contrary, I must say that all the new congregations devote themselves to missions and to giving spiritual exercises to all classes of society, to catechizing, to hearing confessions; in a word, they occupy themselves in the sacred ministry.

With great satisfaction of heart I must make an observation here, and it is that God our Lord, to cast down and destroy the heresies, errors and vices which the devil strives to raise up and propagate by every imaginable means, makes use of the Virgin Mary and of her fervent devotees, whom she helps in a most special way, as the Church sings in that antiphon of the divine office which says: "Rejoice, Virgin Mary. You alone have crushed all the heresies Satan has invented until now, and you will crush all those that arise until the end of time." Thus will be fulfilled those words God addressed to the serpent: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum*.[13] Yes, Mary will crush your head, your errors, your vices and your deceits. Come then, all Christians: love, confidence and sincere and fervent devotion to Most Holy Mary, who is Virgin and Mother of God! With her we shall be able to do everything. Let us imitate her virtues, as children of such a Mother. Let us make use of the beautiful devotion of the most holy rosary, like St. Dominic; of the crown and the way of the cross, like St. Francis; and of supplications, litanies and the *Salve*, like St. Peter Nolasco. Between us, children of Mary, and the heretics, children of the devil, there will be perpetual war;[14] but there is no reason to lose heart; we shall conquer with the help of Jesus and of Mary, his Mother.

The Saint offered a similar view of the history of the Church to his missionaries in Vic in the exercises he directed for them in the summer of 1865. In a note for the talk on zeal he wrote: "When Pelagius was born in England, St. Augustine was born in Tagaste. When the Albigensians appeared, God sent St. Dominic and St. Francis. With the rosary. When Luther began to publish his errors in the year 1521, in that year St. Ignatius was wounded at Pamplona. In the middle of the 19th century, when in Germany Strauss, Hegel and Schelling have published pantheism, and in France M. Renan has written against the divinity of Jesus Christ, in Spain

the Most Holy Virgin has founded her sacred Congregation, so that her Heart may be the ark of Noah, the tower of David, the city of refuge and the sacred propitiatory" (Mss. Claret, X, 75–76; J. M. Lozano, *Constituciones y textos sobre la Congregación de Misioneros* \[Barcelona 1972\], p. 602).

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[1] *El egoísmo vencido*.

[2] Gen 1:1.

[3] Eph 6:12. *Aut.*, n. 101.

[4] Cf. Eph 6:13.

[5] Cf. 2 Cor 10:4.

[6] 1 Jn 3:8: *In hoc apparuit Filius Dei ut dissolvat opera diaboli* (1 Ep. 3:8).

[7] 1 Cor 2:2.

[8] Cf. Jn 14:6.

[9] Cf. Ps 120:4 \[Heb. 121:4\].

[10] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 139–167.

[11] Cf. C. Bau, *Historia de las Escuelas Pías en Cuba*, Havana 1957.

[12] Cf. Rom 8:3.

[13] Gen 3:15.

[14] Cf. Gen 3:15; Rev 12:17.

42. Mary, Model of Apostolic Zeal

\[Source: L'egoismo vinto (El egoísmo vencido), ch. X.\][1]

A great example of this holy zeal which we all must have, and of the way in which we must practise it, is offered us by the Queen of the angels, Mary. We know that Mary remained seven years in Egypt, and the good she did there until she returned to Nazareth; before that she had been in the hill country, in the house of St. John the Baptist, where she remained three months, conversing familiarly and spiritually with all.[2] She travelled from Jerusalem to Ephesus, as the Holy Fathers say; she went likewise to Antioch and to other places, always full of grace, charity and zeal; she made use of prayer, conversations and good example,[3] for she was so modest, grave and good that, says St. Dionysius,[4] if faith had not undeceived them, all would have thought she was God, like her Son. Notwithstanding her virginal modesty, says St. Ignatius Martyr,[5] she was subjected to the great murmurings of the scribes and Pharisees, enemies of her divine Son; she, however, was not held back by this nor grieved, but rather showed herself more joyful at the lot given her of being able to imitate her son Jesus, and likewise by her example to encourage the apostles and disciples, present and future, to suffer and to continue their mission.

These three means, prayer, good example and familiar conversation, are common to men and women, to priests as well as lay people.

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[1] *El egoísmo vencido*.

[2] Cf. Lk 1:56.

[3] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 214–220. Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 223–224. Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 228–229.

[4] PG 3, 1103.

[5] Cf. *Epistola ad S. Ioannem*: PG 5, 943. Cited by La Puente (loc. cit.).

43. The Rosary and Christian Life

\[Source: Remedios contra los males de la época actual aplicados por medio del Santísimo Rosario, Barcelona 1870, art. IX, pp. 52–54 (excerpt).\]

Most beloved reader: we have spoken of the solid devotion of the most holy Rosary, and we have seen how in this devotion the essence and qualities of Christian adoration are perfectly united; we have explained what are the material part and the spiritual part of the Rosary. Moreover, we have said how by this devotion the three capital enemies of our soul are conquered, and finally we have taught the simple practice of this great devotion.[1]

Happy are you, happy all the faithful, and happy the nations that in all their troubles have recourse to Most Holy Mary; for she will bring them out of them for the good of all, and will grant them the graces they need in life, at the hour of death and even after death.

The most holy Rosary is the devotion of the learned and the ignorant, and so indispensable that whoever does not say the Rosary says nothing, or his devotions are short-lived.[2] We desire that all Prelates, parish priests, Missionaries, Preachers and Confessors exhort and teach people to say the most holy Rosary; and moreover we beg most earnestly all fathers of families that in church or in their houses, before some image of Most Holy Mary, they say the Rosary with the greatest modesty and devotion. If possible, let them all gather; or if not, let each say it as he can. There are some so devoted to Most Holy Mary that each day they say the three parts of the most holy Rosary to her. There are others, and they are the majority, who each day say one part. There are others who say one decade, as those do who are called members of the Living Rosary.[3]

I. A very fervent person, zealous for the greater glory of God, of Jesus Christ and of Most Holy Mary, and desirous of the salvation of souls, used to say that we must teach and exhort everyone to say each day one part of the most holy Rosary, or a decade, or a Hail Mary, or at least a "Hail Mary most pure, conceived without sin".

II. That all hear holy Mass with attention and devotion on all Sundays and feasts of the year, as is a duty; and moreover that those who can hear it every day out of devotion.

III. That all who have the corresponding age, discretion and instruction go to confession when the Church commands it, and moreover do so frequently, according to the advice of their own confessor.

IV. That they learn and frequently review the Catechism of Christian doctrine.[4]

V. That they take care to gain all the indulgences they can and apply them to the souls in Purgatory through the hands of Most Holy Mary.

Here are some facts about the Living Rosary: "Devotionis obiectum quae vulgo nuncupatur Rosarium vivens, ad flectendam Dei iram spectat per intercessionem B. Mariae Virginis de Rosario; ad servandam et fovendam fidem in animabus Christifidelium, ad obtinendam conversionem peccatorum atque ad exaltationem sanctae Christi Ecclesiae. Pia confraternitas sub nomine et titulo Rosarii viventis originem sumpsit in civitate Lugdunensi, anno 1826… Methodus sive ordo institutus in recitatione Rosarii, a B. Dominico instituti, in eo consistit quod preces quibus Rosarium integrum efformatur, inter quindecim personas dividantur; ita tamen ut singulis diebus Rosarium ex integro recitetur in unaquaque quindena sive sectione" \[The object of the devotion commonly called the Living Rosary is to turn away the wrath of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary; to preserve and foster faith in the souls of the faithful, to obtain the conversion of sinners and the exaltation of the holy Church of Christ. The pious confraternity under the name and title of the Living Rosary originated in the city of Lyon in 1826… The method or order instituted in reciting the Rosary instituted by Blessed Dominic consists in dividing the prayers that form the whole Rosary among fifteen persons, so that each day the whole Rosary is said in each group of fifteen or section\] (J. J. Bourassé, *Summa aurea de laudibus Beatissimae Virginis Mariae*, Paris 1866, vol. V, section four, IV: *Rosarium vivens*, col. 391). The author speaks also of the method, the formation of the pious association, the meetings, the obligations and the indulgences of the Living Rosary (ibid., cols. 391–396).

The living rosary "is a pious association formed by groups or choirs of fifteen faithful who undertake the daily recitation of one of the fifteen mysteries assigned to them each month. It was organized in San Sebastián in 1664 by Fr. Juan Martínez del Prado. But the venerable Pauline Marie Jaricot, who organized it in France in 1826, is jointly recognized as its principal promoter" (M. Llamera, *Libro del Rosario. Doctrina y práctica* \[Valencia 1949\], lesson 44).

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[1] Cf. *Remedios contra los males…*, LR (Barcelona 1870), pp. 9–52.

[2] *Aut.*, n. 45.

[3] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 695. *Aut.*, n. 696.

[4] *Aut.*, n. 285.

44. Letter to a Devotee of the Heart of Mary

\[Source: autograph letter, 1864, Mss. Claret VIII, 521–535 (complete). The section titles are not Claret's.\]

My dear Sir: I have just received your most esteemed letter, in which you ask me to tell you something so as to grow daily more and more in the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Dear friend, you could not ask me for anything more to my liking. I would wish all Christians to hunger and thirst for this devotion. Love, my friend, love, and love very, very much, Mary.[1]

And so that your devotion may rise higher, and also to satisfy your wishes, I will tell you that we must love Most Holy Mary: 1. Because God wills it. 2. Because she deserves it. 3. Because we need it, since she is a most powerful means for obtaining all graces, bodily and spiritual, and finally eternal salvation.[2]

1. God wills it

We must love Most Holy Mary because God wills it. To love is to wish well to the beloved, to do him good, to make him a sharer in one's goods;[1] for God himself gives us the example and stirs us to love Mary. The eternal Father chose her as his much-beloved Daughter; the eternal Son took her as Mother, and the Holy Spirit as Spouse; the whole most holy Trinity has crowned her Queen and Empress of heaven and earth and has made her dispenser of all graces.

You must know, my friend, that Most Holy Mary is the work of God, and the most perfect that has come from his hands after the humanity of Jesus Christ; in her the omnipotence, the wisdom and the goodness of God himself shine in a very particular way.

It is proper to God to give graces to each creature according to the end for which he destines it;[2] and since God destined Mary to be mother, daughter and spouse of God himself and mother of man, one may infer from this what a heart he would give her and with what graces he would adorn her.[3]

2. She deserves it

We must love Most Holy Mary because she deserves it. Most Holy Mary deserves it because of the abundance of graces she received on earth, because of the eminence of the glory she possesses in heaven, because of the almost infinite dignity of Mother of God to which she has been raised, and because of the prerogatives attached to this sublime dignity.

Mary was as it were the centre of all the graces and beauties God had distributed to the angels, to the saints and to all creatures.[1] Mary was to be Queen and Lady of the angels and of the saints, and therefore she had to have more graces than all of them already in the first instant of her being. Mary was to be the Mother of God himself. It is a principle of philosophy that between the form and the dispositions of the matter there must be a certain proportion;[2] the dignity of Mother of God is here as the form, and the heart of Mary is the matter

that is to receive this form. Oh, what an abundance of graces, virtues and other dispositions are gathered in that most holy and most pure heart!

From the moment God determined to become man, he fixed his gaze on Most Holy Mary, and from then on he arranged all the necessary preparations; he had her born of patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings, and all their graces he gathered in Mary, and he willed that Mary should be the cream and the flower of them all. Moreover, he went before her with blessings of sweetness and set upon her head a crown of precious stones,[3] that is, graces and beauties; but much more did he enrich her heart.

In the heart of Mary two things are to be considered: the material heart and the formal heart, which is love and will.[4] The material heart of Mary is the organ, sense or instrument of love and will;[5] just as with the eyes we see, with the ears we hear, with the nose we smell and with the mouth we speak, so with the heart we love and will.[6]

Theologians say that the relics of the saints deserve veneration and cult: 1. Because they were living members of Jesus Christ. 2. Because they were temples of the Holy Spirit. 3. Because they were organs of virtue. 4. Because they will be instruments of grace and of miracles. 5. Because they will be glorified after the resurrection.[7]

The heart of Mary unites these properties and many others besides: 1. The heart of Mary was not only a living member of Jesus Christ by faith and charity, but also the origin, the spring from which his humanity was taken. 2. The heart of Mary was a temple of the Holy Spirit, and more than a temple, since from the most precious blood come forth from this immaculate heart the Holy Spirit formed the most holy humanity in the most pure and virginal womb of Mary in the great mystery of the incarnation.[8] 3. The heart of Mary was the organ of all the virtues in heroic degree, and singularly of charity towards God and towards men.[9] 4. The heart of Mary is, today, a living heart, animated and exalted in the highest glory. 5. The heart of Mary is the throne from which all graces and mercies are dispensed.

Mary is truly Mother of God. Just as a woman who has given birth to a man is called and is mother of that man whom she bore, so too Most Holy Mary is and is called with full propriety Mother of God, because she conceived and bore him. The woman who bore a man is called and is mother of that whole man, who is a compound of soul and body, even though the soul comes from God alone; so too Most Holy Mary is Mother of God, because that divine compound of divine person, rational soul and natural body is the term of the generation in the most pure and virginal womb of Mary. This dignity of Mother of God is what most exalts her, because it is an almost infinite dignity, since she is mother of an infinite being;[10] it is more than all she possesses in grace and in glory. The doctors and Holy Fathers say that the tree is known by its fruits, as the Gospel states; what then shall we say of Mary, who brought forth that blessed Fruit which St. Elizabeth so praised when she said: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"[11]

St. Thomas says that fire does not catch in the log until the log has the same degrees of heat as the fire;[12] well then, if for the humanity to which the divinity was to be joined to be formed from the blood of Mary's heart she had to have an almost divine disposition, what shall we say now of Mary if, besides considering her Mother of God, we add the other graces she afterwards received from Jesus?[13] Jesus, wherever he passed, did good to all,[14] more or less according to the disposition in which he found them; what shall we think of the graces and benefits he would bestow on Mary, through whom he passed not quickly, but remained at great length in her womb nine months and at her side thirty-three years, she being always in the best disposition and preparation to receive the benefits of Jesus? To these graces must be added also those she received from the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and moreover we must add those she earned by the exercise of so many and such heroic virtues throughout the whole course of her most holy and long life, accompanied by that continual and fervent meditation in which, according to the prophet, the flame of divine

love is kindled.[15] Considering the grace of Mary, St. Bonaventure exclaims: "The grace of Mary is a most immense grace, a most manifold grace": *Gratia Mariae, gratia est immensissima, gratia multiplicissima*.[16]

We must consider not only the graces Mary obtained in order to be, and because she was, Mother of God, and the graces she received from Jesus Christ and from the Holy Spirit and gained by her own cooperation, but it is also indispensable to fix our attention on the multitude of incomparable prerogatives which so great a dignity has brought her. We shall mention some:[17]

1st. That of having been preserved from original sin, which she would unavoidably have incurred had she not been destined to be the Mother of God himself; for this, God endowed her with a heart immaculate, most pure, most chaste, most humble, most meek, most holy, since from the blood come forth from this heart the body of God made man was to be formed.

2nd. That of having conceived and borne in time that same Son of God whom the eternal Father had begotten in eternity. Do not doubt it, says St. Bonaventure: the eternal Father and the sacred Virgin have had one and the same Son.[18]

3rd. Just as the eternal Father had this divine Son without losing anything of his divinity, so too the Most Holy Virgin Mary conceived and bore this very same Son without the least detriment to her most holy virginity.

4th. That of having had a legitimate power to command the absolute Lord of all creatures, since this is a right nature gives to all mothers; a right to which he willed gladly to subject himself, for he said he had come not to abolish the law but to fulfil it more perfectly than other men;[19] and the evangelist St. Luke testifies how he obeyed his Mother and St. Joseph: *Et erat subditus illis*. But this right does Most Holy Mary such honour that St. Bernard says he does not know which is more worthy of admiration, that Jesus should obey Mary or that Mary should be able to command Jesus; for, says the Saint, that God should obey a woman is a humility without example, and that a woman should command a God is an exaltation without equal.[20]

5th. She has been the Spouse of the Holy Spirit in a way infinitely more noble than other virgins; for the others scarcely deserve to be allied to that divine spouse as to the soul, whereas Mary has been so not only as to the soul but also as to the body, though in the most chaste manner. The alliance there has been between the Holy Spirit and chaste virgins has served only for the production of acts of virtue, but the alliance between this divine Spirit and Most Holy Mary has produced, in the most ineffable manner, the Lord of virtues, Christ our Lord.

6th. She has been as it were the term, so to speak, and the crowning of the Most Holy Trinity: *Maria universum sanctae Trinitatis complementum*,[21] because she has produced the most excellent fruit of its fecundity *ad extra*, as theologians say; that is, she has produced a God-man. Mary has produced one capable of giving the Most Holy Trinity an honour such as the Most Holy Trinity deserves; an honour that all creatures together, even multiplied very many times over, could not pay as the Son of Mary, true God and man, does.

7th. In having been made Queen and Lady of all creatures for having conceived and borne the divine Word, through whom all things were made, as St. John says.[22]

3. Efficacy of this devotion

We must love Mary and be her true devotees, because devotion to Most Holy Mary is a most powerful means of attaining salvation. The reason is that Mary can save her true devotees, because she wills to and because she does so.[1] Mary can, because she is the gate of heaven; Mary wills, because she is the mother of mercy;[2] Mary does so, because it is she who obtains justifying grace for sinners, fervour for the just and perseverance for the fervent;[3] that is why the Holy Fathers call her the ransomer of captives, the channel of grace and the

dispenser of mercies.[4] That is why it has been said that to be devoted to Mary is a sign of predestination, just as it is a mark of reprobation not to be devoted to Mary, or to be hostile to her.[5]

The reason is very clear. No one can be saved without the help of the grace that comes from Jesus, as head of the Church or body; and Mary is like the neck which joins, so to speak, the body with the head; and just as the influence of the head on the body must pass through the neck, so the graces of Jesus pass through Mary and are communicated to the body, or to the devotees, who are its living members: *In Christo fuit plenitudo gratiae sicut in capite fluente; in Maria sicut in collo transfundente*[6] \[In Christ was the fullness of grace as in the head from which it flows; in Mary as in the neck through which it passes\].

Mary is called by the Holy Fathers the ladder of heaven, because through Mary God came down from heaven and through Mary men go up to heaven;[7] and when the Church says that this incomparable Queen is the gate of heaven and the window of paradise,[8] she teaches us by these words that all the elect, just or sinners, enter the mansion of glory through her mediation; with this sole difference, that the just enter through her as through the front door \[*la puerta de llano*\], but sinners through the window, which is Mary; by the ladder, which is Mary.[9] Therefore, my friend, in Mary, after Jesus, we must place all our confidence and hope of our eternal salvation. *Haec peccatorum scala, haec mea maxima fiducia est, haec tota ratio spei meae*; *Unica peccatorum advocata, portus tutissimus, naufragantium omnium salus*. *Peccatorem quantumlibet foetidum non horret, donec horrendo Iudici miserum reconciliet*.[10]

Oh, happy the one who calls upon Mary with confidence, for he will obtain the pardon of his sins, however many and however grave they may be; he will obtain grace and finally the glory of heaven, which I so much desire for you and for all.

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[11] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 43–45.

[12] Cf. J.-Ch. Ducos, *Le pasteur apostolique* (Paris 1861), vol. I, p. 438.

[13] Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1 c.

[14] Cited by St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *Las glorias de María* (Barcelona 1870), pp. 197–198.

[15] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 447; *Religiosas en sus casas* \[Barcelona 1850\], p. 147. *Aut.*, n. 447. Cf. *La colegiala instruida* \[Madrid 1864\], pp. 423–424.

[16] Cf. J.-Ch. Ducos, op. cit., pp. 438–439.

[17] Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, III, q. 27, a. 5.

[18] Cf. Ps 20:4 \[Heb. 21:4\].

[19] Cf. J. Gallifet, *De l'excellence de la dévotion au Coeur adorable de Jésus-Christ* (Paris 1861), vol. I, pp. 46 ff.; Mss.

[20] Cf. J. Gallifet, op. cit., pp. 264 ff.

[21] Cf. L. Castiglione, *Il Cuore di Maria aperto a tutti* (Naples 1850), p. 4; Mss.

[22] St. John Eudes and Fr. Gallifet used this same argument (op. cit., p. 75).

[23] Cf. *Mística ciudad de Dios*, LR \[Barcelona 1860\], vol. 3, p. 239. Cf. *Obras Completas*, BAC \[Madrid 1970\], vol. 3, p. 168.

[24] Cf. J. Gallifet, op. cit., pp. 264 ff.

[25] Cf. St. Thomas of Villanova, Sermon 3 for the Nativity of the Virgin: *Obras*, BAC (Madrid 1952), p. 203. Similar statements are found in St. Bernardine, St. Bonaventure and Suárez (cf. St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *Las glorias de María* \[Barcelona 1870\], pp. 332–334).

[26] Lk 1:42–43. Ducos, op. cit., p. 440.

[27] Cf. *Summa theol.*, III, q. 27, a. 5 ad 2.

[28] Cf. St. Thomas, ibid.

[29] Cf. Acts 10:38.

[30] Cf. Ps 39:4 \[Heb. 39:3\].

[31] The autograph manuscript cites the *Speculum*, c. 1.

[32] Ducos, op. cit., pp. 441–442.

[33] Cf. *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis*, c. 6, p. 83.

[34] Cf. Mt 5:17.

[35] Cf. *Homil. 1 super "Missus est"*, nn. 7 ff.: PL 183, 59 ff.; *Obras Completas*, BAC, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 190.

[36] Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Homil. 1 de Beata Virgine*: PG 93, 1461. Ducos, op. cit., p. 442, n. 2.

[37] Cf. Jn 1:3.

[1] Cf. J.-Ch. Ducos, op. cit., p. 444.

[2] Cf. St. Bernard, *Sermo 1 de Assumptione*, n. 1: *Obras Completas*, BAC, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 703.

[3] Cf. *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis*, c. 6.

[4] Ducos, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 442.

[5] Cf. ibid., p. 443.

[6] Cf. *Arbor vitae crucifixae*. *Tractatus de Incarnatione Christi*, 8: PL 180, 30.

[7] PL 183, 100.

[8] PL 183, 441.

[9] Cf. J.-Ch. Ducos, op. cit., p. 443.

[10] St. Bernard, *In deprecat. ad B. Virg.*. Ducos, op. cit., vol. I, p. 443, n. 3, and by St. Alphonsus Mary de…