St. Anthony Mary Claret

MARIAN WRITINGS: THE MISSIONARY YEARS, 1843–1857

From the Spanish of the original printings

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from the original printings of 1843–1857. **A selection**: two pieces are given in *Jacob's Ladder and the Gate of Heaven*, and the pastoral letter on the Immaculate Conception 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 II. Apostolic Missionary (1843–1849)

1. Devotion to Most Holy Mary

\[Source: Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo, Barcelona 1846, pp. 43–44.\]

The third \[maxim\] is: prayer to the Lord and devotion to Most Holy Mary. Since final perseverance is a most special gift of God, as our mother the Church teaches,[1] and the Almighty grants it, says St. Alphonsus Liguori, only to those who ask for it,[2] St. Thomas therefore teaches that it must be asked for always, in order to be able to enter heaven.[3] We must always say to the Lord: *Thy kingdom come*,[4] now that of divine grace, and afterwards that of eternal glory. To obtain these gifts we must make use of devotion to Most Holy Mary as one of the most powerful means. She is the channel from heaven through which flow all the graces we need to turn away from evil and to do good.[5] She is the gate of heaven, the Church sings;[6] and no one obtains the mercy of the Lord except through her mediation, says St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople. For this reason you should commend yourself every day to Most Holy Mary and pay her some acts of homage, such as praying the holy Rosary to her devoutly, and making some novena and some fast in her honour, if your health and work allow; if you cannot do these things, at least deprive yourself of some of those you could lawfully do, such as smelling a flower, drinking a glass of water, looking at or going to some place you would enjoy, etc. Above all, try to imitate her virtues: the humility, the meekness, the purity, and the love she had for God and for her neighbour. I very specially charge you with that prayer which I have placed among the daily exercises, so that you may pray it every day. Short though it is (and for that reason you must never omit it), I assure you that if you are constant in praying it, you will obtain through it grace now and eternal glory afterwards.

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[1] VI, ch. 13, "De perseverantiae munere": DS 1541.

[2] St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *Apparecchio alla morte*, consideration XXXI, On perseverance: *Opere ascetiche* (Rome 1964), vol. IX, p. 314.

[3] *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 137, a. 4, ad 3.

[4] Mt 6:10.

[5] Ducos, *Le pasteur apostolique* (Paris 1861), vol. I, p. 442.

[6] Cf. the hymn *Ave, maris stella... felix caeli porta*; and the hymn *Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia caeli porta manes*.

2. Devotion and Prayer to Mary

\[Source: Reglas de espíritu, Vic 1844, pp. 10–12.\]

I recommend to you very, very much that you be most devoted to the Most Holy Sacrament and to the Most Holy Virgin.[1] To this end you should have some book that treats of her, such as *The Glories of Mary*, or the *Anuario de María* ...

All that I have said so far, and all that can be said, comes down to two things, namely:

1. Whatever is done, let it be done purely for love of God.

2. Whatever gives pain, suffer it for love of God.

Finally I beg and ask you, by the wounds of Jesus and by the love of the Most Holy Virgin, to read and practise these counsels. Long live Jesus.

I very earnestly recommend that you say often this aspiration, which I know to be very pleasing to Mary:

O Mary, Mother of mercy! By the love and merits of Jesus Christ, I beg you to intercede for the conversion of sinners, for the perseverance of the just, and for the eternal rest of the souls in purgatory.

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[1] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 36–55. Cf. *Propósitos*, 1870: EA, p. 588.

3. Love and Devotion to Mary

\[Source: Avisos saludables a los niños, Barcelona 1845, pp. 20–30.\][1]

The third \[maxim\] is: to love the most holy Virgin Mary with all one's heart, as Mother of God, and to commend oneself to her every day, offering her some act of homage. Yes, my dear ones, you must love Mary with all your heart, because she is lovable for many reasons. You must love her because she is the most lovable creature that exists or can exist. She is all goodness and all tenderness of mercy, all kindness and all beauty; not a fading and earthly beauty, which kindles the passions and shines today and not tomorrow, but a beauty wholly of heaven, more than angelic, wholly divine. It is a beauty that unites all the beauties of heaven and earth; a loveliness that unites the beauty of the soul, the beauty of all the virtues and the beauty of all the gifts. That is why the divine Spirit calls her all fair and immaculate.[2] She is fair and beautiful, says the devout author of the *Anuario de María*, with all the beauties of nature, with all those of grace and with all those of glory.[3]

You must also love her because she is your Mother, who esteems you greatly; your Queen and Lady, whom all the saints and angels esteem; your advocate who prays for you; and for the pleasure you will give God by it, who is so intent that she be loved and revered, being his beloved Daughter, his dear Mother and his divine Spouse, on whom he poured out the fullness of his divine love. What powerful motives these are, especially the last ones, to oblige you to love Mary with all your heart! Ah, dear children, if I were so happy as to succeed in inspiring in you the devotion and love you owe to Mary, as they inspired it with victorious eloquence and irresistible sweetness — a St. Ildephonsus, archbishop of Toledo, a St. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, a St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, a St. Bonaventure, cardinal, a St. Liguori, bishop,[4] a ... oh, how many more things I would tell you, so that you might love her much and be very devoted to her! Look, children, I would tell you, look: after God, Most Holy Mary is the most perfect and the best work there is in the world. Do we not love the things of this world for the goodness God has given them? Then how much more must we love Mary, being the most perfect and the best of all the things he has created?

And not only does she surpass in goodness all that is created, but she surpasses also all that can be among pure creatures; so that in creating Mary God made the greatest effort of his divine omnipotence, says the Venerable Segneri. God could well have created, and could now if he wished create, a heaven richer and more studded with stars; he could create an ocean wider and more spacious, an earth more splendid and more beautified with plants and flowers, richer and more laden with fruits, metals and precious stones; but not a mother more excellent than Mary. From which it follows that the most august title of Mother of God in Mary is an immense sea of perfections, and of perfections so lofty that only God himself can know and appreciate them, as St. Bernardine of Siena says. See, then, whether you ought to love Mary with all your heart, and whether it is right that you commend yourselves to her every day and every day pay her some act of homage.

Look, my children: all the holy men and women in heaven were extremely devoted to Mary; all strove to render her loving tokens of homage. And to convince you of this truth, I will not speak to you of a St. John the Evangelist, who, after Jesus Christ had entrusted her to him from the cross,[5] honoured and served her with more affection and tenderness than if she had been his own natural mother; nor of a St. Dionysius, disciple of the apostle St. Paul, who, after having seen her, would have adored her as a deity had he not been enlightened by faith; nor of a St. Ildephonsus, archbishop of Toledo, who received from her hand the precious gift of a chasuble she brought him from heaven; nor of a St. John Damascene, whose right hand, with which he had written the defence of the glories and honour of that sovereign Virgin, was cut off by order of a heretical emperor and restored to him through this Lady's intercession; nor of a St. Bernard, whom she so caressed; nor of a St. Simon Stock, Carmelite, who received from her own hand the holy scapular as a sign and pledge of salvation;[6] nor of a St. Dominic, to whom she entrusted the preaching of the most holy

Rosary as a remedy for all evils;[7] nor of a St. Peter Nolasco, to whom the Virgin herself appeared to charge him with the redemption of Christian captives; nor of a St. Cajetan and a St. Felix of Cantalice, who received the good Jesus from the arms of his divine Mother; nor of the young St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus, the first of whom, being in Madrid, received from an image of Mary the counsel to enter the Society of Jesus, and the second of whom had the happiness, at the hour of his death, that the Virgin herself came down from heaven to receive his soul; nor of a St. Joseph Calasanz, who saw her, together with her divine Son, blessing the children of his school; nor of a St. Raymond Nonnatus, whom she sent to Barcelona to take the habit of Mercy; nor of a St. Thomas, who from his earliest childhood ... nor of ... It would be endless. I will only tell you to read *The Glories of Mary* written by St. Liguori (to whom she herself also appeared on an occasion when he was preaching),[8] or the most devout work entitled *Anuario de María*, in which you will find more than seventy examples, prayers and practices of devotion with which in all times the holy men and women most favoured by God have commended themselves to her and honoured her. Nevertheless, I want to tell you one before I finish, which, being about two children very devoted to Mary, I think will greatly edify you.

We read in the history of Blessed Bernard Morlás, a Dominican religious, that, being sacristan of the convent of Santarém in the kingdom of Portugal, he devoted himself to teaching two boys who, out of devotion, wore the holy habit of the great Father St. Dominic, and above all to instilling in them the holy fear of God and that they should be true devotees of Jesus and Mary. It often happened that, eating their lunch before an image of Mary holding the good Jesus in her arms, they would invite him to their lunch, and the Most Holy Virgin would let him down from her arms so that he might taste the lunch of those innocent children. They told the matter to their master, Blessed Bernard, who instructed them to ask the divine Infant and his most holy Mother to invite them too, and their master, to the house of his heavenly Father. They did so; and the good Jesus answered that they were invited for three days hence, the time when his glorious Ascension into heaven was celebrated, which in the year 1277, when this happened, fell on 9 May. And behold, on that day, the three being prepared to celebrate the solemnity, after hearing holy Mass and receiving holy Communion, while giving thanks to God the three died holily and passed to enjoy eternally the banquet of glory.[9]

Do you not see, beloved children, how Jesus and Mary repay? For God's sake, love Mary much; see, she is the best of mothers; and, just as a good mother cannot see her child perish, neither will Mary allow it if we call on her from the heart. Commend yourselves to her, then; offer her some act of homage every day, and I assure you that through her intercession you will obtain the love of God in life, and after death you will be rewarded still better in heaven. To this end pray devoutly every day the Christian's morning and evening exercise, which you will find at the end of this volume;[10] in it you will find that simple prayer to Most Holy Mary that begins: *O Virgin and Mother of God*, etc.; I charge you to pray it fervently together with the three Hail Marys in reverence of her purity, and, even if you repeat it during the day, I assure you that you will not regret it. You will also try to honour her every day by praying the holy Rosary, wearing the scapular of one of her confraternities, never omitting, when the clock strikes the hour, to greet her with the Hail Mary. Above all things you must try to imitate her virtues, her purity, her humility, charity towards your neighbour, and still more the love of God, seeking to foster it by frequenting the holy sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, especially on the days dedicated to her and on her greatest feasts.

Many other acts of homage you could offer her, which you will find in various devout books; nevertheless, I want to warn you that in the choice of devotions you must keep in mind that maxim of the glorious St. Teresa, who said: *From silly devotions may God deliver us*. That is to say, you must avoid loading yourselves with too many of them, and still more wanting to practise them all, as some do, who no sooner hear of some new way of honouring the Most Holy Virgin than they would like to practise them all at once. Not that, my dear ones, because then you would practise none. You must be discreet in choosing them, and if you wish to get it right, believe me, take counsel with your confessor; and after you have chosen and agreed what you are to practise, be faithful in following it with perseverance; and you may be certain that you will please Mary

more by offering her some act of homage well done and with constancy, even though it be small, than if you did many with slackness and laziness, now practising them, now dropping them. We read on day 3 of the *Month of Mary*, continued in the *Way of Heaven*, that a nun prayed three whole rosaries every day, but with some tepidity and lack of devotion, and for this the Most Holy Virgin rebuked her, saying: *I would rather you prayed me only a third part, but with more attention.*[11]

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[1] Taken from *Avisos saludables a los niños, que para su bien espiritual les dirige D.A.C.P.*, Barcelona, Imprenta de los Herederos de la V. Pla, calle de Cotoners, 1845, pp. 20–30.

[2] Cf. Song 4:7.

[3] Cf. M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María o el verdadero siervo de la Santísima Virgen* (Madrid 1866), pp. 2–3.

[4] R. Tellería, *San Alfonso María de Ligorio* \[Madrid 1951\], vol. II, p. 929.

[5] Cf. Jn 19:27.

[6] M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María* \[Madrid 1866\], pp. 301–302.

[7] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 677. *Aut.*, n. 45.

[8] J. Croisset, *Año cristiano*, 2 August, LR \[Barcelona 1854\], p. 43.

[9] *Diar. dom.*, 7 May (Claret's note).

[10] *Avisos saludables a los niños* (Barcelona 1845), pp. 59–64.

[11] Cf. J. M. Saporiti, *Mes de María* (Barcelona 1769), pp. 19–20.

4. True Devotion to Mary

\[Source: La cesta de Moisés, Barcelona 1845, pp. 14–19.\]

By all that is most holy and sacred above heaven and earth I ask and beg you to be most devoted to the Most Holy Virgin; and I assure you that, if you believe me in this counsel, I hail you as happy and blessed; for she is the mystical ark of Noah,[1] and just as none of those who entered the ark of that great patriarch perished in the flood, so neither will you perish in the flood of vices, nor in the great Nile of the world into which you are about to be cast at any moment, if you have the most happy fortune of embarking in the ship of true devotion to her.

Devotion to Mary is a sign of predestination, as the Fathers St. John Damascene, St. Anselm and St. Peter Damian say.[2] And when God grants it to anyone, he bestows a mercy so great that it can almost be called the greatest, in the expression of the Venerable Richard of St. Laurence;[3] for indeed, with it come all the other graces. Ask it of God unceasingly and seek it by every means possible to you, such as reading books that treat of her, for example *The Glories of Mary*, the *Anuario de María*, etc. By reading the lives of the saints who were most devoted to her, for example St. Dominic, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, etc., you will learn well the way to love, serve and honour her.

If you truly love her, your love will be not only of the tongue but in deed and in truth.[4] Of the tongue: by praying the holy rosary to her every day, the Hail Mary when the clock strikes the hours, and repeating this angelic salutation three times at dawn and at nightfall, to ask her holy blessing, like a good son of his esteemed Mother. In deed: by offering her acts of virtue and the reception of the sacraments. In truth: when in her honour you deny yourself looking, speaking, eating, going out of the house, etc. Oh, how the Most Holy Virgin likes these little sacrifices!

At the same time, imitate her favourite virtues, which are humility, purity and charity, letting no day or occasion pass without exercising yourself in them for love of Mary. Do you wish, for example, to practise humility? Do or say nothing in order to be praised; if you are praised, attribute it all to God, as the Virgin herself did when she heard the praises with which St. Elizabeth greeted her;[5] and meanwhile try to change the conversation, quickly putting away every thought of vanity and pride.[6]

Dress and eat simply, without complaining about food and clothing, whatever they may be. Choose the lowest places and occupy yourself in the humblest tasks, as the servant of your neighbour. When you are mocked, despised, persecuted, be silent, suffer, and rejoice at the great reward that awaits you in heaven; and meanwhile you will say: Be it for love of God; Jesus and Mary suffered more for me; my sins deserve more.[7]

Being truly humble, you will be chaste; for if many have lost this angelic virtue and are sunk in the miry sea of impurity, it is because they lacked the ballast of humility. If you are humble, you will have recourse to God and to the Most Holy Virgin, and you will obtain the grace needed for triumph in the battles. If you are humble, you will flee dangers, and we know that in this war it is the cowards, those who run away, who win. Flee dangers, then, especially those that come from persons of the other sex; the first stirrings of temptation, put them away at once, just as if, without your noticing, someone had thrown live coals on you, you would shake them off in all haste; and meanwhile call upon the most sweet names of Jesus and Mary.

But do you wish to calm the heats of the concupiscence of the flesh? Burn in the fire of divine love, and I promise you that you will succeed in stifling them; for, as St. Gregory says, in proportion as the flame of divine love grows and rises, the burning of the flesh diminishes, so that these two fires can be compared to the two pans of a scale: the more the one rises, the more the other sinks.[8]

Love God, and love him as much as you can; love also the Most Holy Virgin, since she first loved us;[9] she is our Mother and the Mother of fair love.[10] Ah, how much that good Mother loves us! And for love of God and of the Virgin Mother love, finally, your neighbour as yourself; for in the observance of the two precepts of Christian charity all the prophets, laws and spiritual counsels are bound together, interwoven in the basket you need to cross the broad Nile of the world.[11] Embarked in it, you will be saved from the whirlpools of the waters like another Moses, to be, like him, raised to great fortune,[12] or to whatever is most fitting for you in this land of Egypt, and afterwards to attain the greatest, the only true happiness in the promised land, which is the harbour of eternal glory.

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[1] Cf. Gen 6:14; 7:7.

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

[3] Cf. *The Glories of Mary*, ed. cit., p. 603.

[4] Cf. 1 Jn 3:18.

[5] Cf. Lk 1:46–49; cf. *Propósitos*, 1843, n. 10: EA, pp. 524–525.

[6] Cf. *Particular examen on the virtue of humility: degrees of that virtue*, note 6: EA, p. 525.

[7] Cf. ibid., p. 525.

[8] Cf. St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, part III, book XVIII, on ch. XXVII of Blessed Job, n. 16: *Opera omnia* (Venice 1768), vol. II, p. 203.

[9] Cf. 1 Jn 4:19.

[10] Cf. Sir 24:24 \[Vulgate\].

[11] Cf. Mt 22:37–40.

[12] Cf. Ex 2:1–10; 3:1–21.

5. The Married Woman and the Virgin

\[Source: Avisos saludables a las casadas, Vic 1846, pp. 48–50.\]

If God our Lord, my sister, gives you the fruit of blessing, take the care that is fitting; during pregnancy make some special devotion to Most Holy Mary, asking her for a happy delivery and the grace that the infant may receive holy Baptism. Oh, if you knew how much the desires of mothers for their children are worth! In these days you will receive communion more often, and you will ask the eternal Father and the Virgin Mother for graces for yourself and for your child.

On the day before you leave the house, offer the infant to God and thank him for having preserved both of you from death; withdraw for a while to meditate on the great humility and devotion with which the Virgin Mary did this. On the day you leave the house you will go with devotion, joy and composure to offer the child to God and to the Most Holy Virgin, asking them fervently to take him as their child, saying to them again and again: Jesus and Mary, I do not want to be the mother of damned children. If you see that he is going to be lost, grant me the grace of taking him from the world while he is an innocent little angel. (And if he dies, do not weep, for that would be weeping for his good fortune and forgetting your request.) From that day you will keep in mind that God has placed him in your hands so that you may bring him up well. If a great monarch gave you his son to rear, what care would you take? This same care, and even greater, you must take of your child, whom the Monarchs of heaven and earth, I mean God and the Virgin, give you to rear; if you care for him well, they will give you the reward, and if badly, temporal and eternal punishment. You will know that your obligations towards your children are many; they can be reduced to these four: 1st, to teach them what is good; 2nd, to keep them from what is bad;[1] 3rd, to guide them by good example; 4th, to give them instruction and a state of life that is not against their will.

As to the first, try to teach them Christian doctrine and to commend themselves to God, to the Most Holy Virgin, to their holy guardian angel and to the saint whose name they bear (...).

Try with patience and devout ingenuity to instruct your family from their most tender years. Then, as they grow, see that they advance in virtue and frequent the holy Sacraments.[2]

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[1] Cf. Ps 33:15.

[2] Cf. Lk 2:52.

8. Sighs and Laments of Our Lady of Sorrows

\[Source: loose leaflet, Catalan original c. 1847; Castilian translation Barcelona 1857.\]

> *O all you who are looking at me, listen! and tell me whether there can be any sorrow like my sorrow \[Lam 1:12\].*

I had a much-loved son, and the Jews seized him ... They killed him! Look at the instruments with which they tormented him! Before he died he charged me to take Christians as my children;[1] but these repay me with such ingratitude and cruelty that with their sins they crucify him again, and pierce my heart with swords.

Yes, Christian man; yes, Christian woman: you would rather please the Barabbas of your vices, to sate your pleasures, than our divine Jesus; but what grieves me most is that with your sins you crucify him again.

Yes, sinner: with your blasphemies and indecent words you are spitting in the face of my beloved son,[2] and you treat him worse than those who crucified him. The Jews would not seize him on a feast day, and you ill-treat him even more, because on feast days, with those indecent and provocative clothes, you bind his hands, and with your impurities you are scourging him;[3] with those dances you kick him; with your evil thoughts you crown him with thorns; and, despising the counsels that tell you not to dance and not to go in bad company, you despise him and treat him as if he were a mock King;[4] on feast days, instead of praising God, you busy yourself only with drink and obscene words in the cafés and taverns; with these indecent conversations you give him gall and vinegar;[5] with thefts and swindles you strip him;[6] with those wicked games you are piercing his heart as with a lance;[7] and with your sins you kill him, and even make a mockery of him, abusing his holy patience, which, instead of punishing you, is waiting for you to be converted.

But alas! so great is the madness of the sinner that he remembers neither these pains and sorrows nor the death that awaits him. But I tell him that, whether he remembers it or not, and whether he believes it or will not believe it, he will die and be judged, saved or damned, according as he has done good or evil, and that he can by no means escape. And what most increases my sorrow is that, after so many warnings, he has not

chosen to profit by them, and must be damned for an eternity.

O my son! O daughter of my heart! listen to me, and I will tell you what you must do if you wish to give me some consolation. I ask you only three things:

1. That you do not commit or take part in any sin.

2. That you do all you can to prevent every sin of your neighbour.

3. That every day you pray seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys in memory of my sorrows, for the conversion of sinners and the destruction of the seven capital sins, because sin is the cause of my sorrows and of the death of my beloved Son. Amen.

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[1] Cf. Jn 19:26–27.

[2] Cf. Mt 26:67; 27:30; Mk 14:65; 15:19; Lk 18:32.

[3] Cf. Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15; Jn 19:1.

[4] Cf. Mt 27:29, 41; Mk 15:31; Lk 22:63; 23:36.

[5] Cf. Mt 27:34.

[6] Cf. Mt 27:28.

[7] Cf. Jn 19:32–34.

9. Meditation on the Seven Sorrows of Most Holy Mary for the Seven Days of the Week

\[*Source: La paloma (Resumen de los principales documentos ...), Barcelona 1848, pp. 28–32.*\][1]

Remembering the wise and devout counsel of Cornelius a Lapide, that whoever wishes to make sure of his eternal salvation should love Mary and strive to grow and be perfected every day in devotion to her; and the best means of attaining this devotion and love being to meditate on her sorrows, I have thought it fitting to distribute them over the seven days of the week, so that by meditating on them every member of the faithful may attain the eternal salvation that I desire for all.

SUNDAY. First sorrow. The Virgin suffered it when she presented her Son in the temple.[2]

You will please Most Holy Mary if you keep silence and are devout in church; if through her you give your heart to God, and if you think of the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of his most holy Mother.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows Christians add to hers by sinning in churches, and because, instead of giving their heart to God, as is asked of them, they let the devil possess it. Pray to God for the conversion of these unhappy people, praying for this intention an Our Father and Hail Mary.

MONDAY. Second sorrow. The Virgin suffered it fleeing from King Herod.[3]

You will please Mary if with patience and without complaint you suffer the calumnies, persecutions and other evils your neighbour causes you.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows Christians add to hers when they sin by cursing and wishing evil to those who persecute them; and likewise those who give scandal, who by their bad example kill souls, worse than Herod's soldiers killed the innocent children.[4] Pray to God for their conversion, saying an Our Father and Hail Mary.

TUESDAY. Third sorrow. The Virgin suffered it seeking her Son.[5]

You will please Mary if you try to remain always in the presence of God and in his holy grace, and if you ever lose it (which God forbid), you will try to recover it quickly in the temple by making a good confession.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows added to hers by Christians who, after losing her Son by sinning, instead of seeking him, go further from him, increasing their offences and putting off their conversion from day to day. Pray to God for their conversion, etc.

WEDNESDAY. Fourth sorrow. The Virgin suffered it seeing her Son laden with the cross.[6]

You will please Mary if you take with patience the crosses of this life, such as illnesses, tribulations, losses, etc.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows added to hers by Christians who in their trials rage, curse and blaspheme. Pray to God for their conversion, etc.

THURSDAY. Fifth sorrow. The Virgin suffered it seeing her Son crucified.[7]

You will please Mary if you try to abstain from sinning and prevent others from sinning, for those who sin are the ones who crucify Jesus Christ anew.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows added to hers by sinners who with sins of thought crown her beloved Son with thorns; with those of word give him gall and vinegar to drink, spit in his face and blaspheme him worse than the Jews; and with those of deed, such as dances, thefts and indecent things, nail him hand and foot. Pray to God for their conversion, etc.

FRIDAY. Sixth sorrow. The Virgin suffered it at the foot of the cross, holding her Son in her arms.

You will please Mary if you contemplate the passion and death of Jesus.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows added to hers by Christians who with their sins crucify her divine Son and, instead of unnailing him by a good confession, clinch his nails tighter by confessing sacrilegiously, because they keep their sins silent and do not amend. Pray to God for their conversion, etc.

SATURDAY. Seventh sorrow. The Virgin suffered it when she left her Son's body in the tomb.[8]

You will please Mary if you strive to receive the Holy Eucharist worthily and often, keeping Jesus placed in your heart as in a tabernacle, and to accompany so sorely afflicted a Mother in her so anguished solitude.

Have compassion on Mary for the sorrows added to hers by those who resist the divine inspirations, those who receive the body of her divine Son only once a year, and those who receive communion sacrilegiously. Pray to God for their conversion, etc.

In order to increase devotion to the sorrows of Most Holy Mary, it is worth pondering what this sorrowful Mother said to St. Bridget in one of her revelations: that, as a loving mother, she promised to be present at death to those devoted to her sorrows, contrite and repentant of their faults, in order to receive their souls.

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[1] Cf. *Aut.*, n. 351; *Propósitos*, 1852, n. 5: EA, p. 537.

[2] Cf. Lk 2:22–38.

[3] Cf. Mt 2:13–15.

[4] Cf. Mt 2:16–18.

[5] Cf. Lk 2:41–50.

[6] Cf. Mt 27:31; Mk 15:20–22; Lk 23:26–32; Jn 19:16–17.

[7] Cf. Mt 27:35; Mk 15:24–27; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:18.

[8] Cf. Mt 27:57–60; Mk 15:42–46; Lk 23:50–55; Jn 19:38–42.

10. The Rosary in Honour of the Most Holy Virgin

\[Source: Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo, Barcelona 1848, pp. 131–135.\]

Introduction

The prayer called the Rosary is the devotion most pleasing to God and to the Most Holy Virgin, and at the same time the most profitable to all men after holy Mass; when one says that the Mother of God herself taught it to the great patriarch St. Dominic as an effective specific for relieving the needs of the world and granting the graces mortals need to be saved,[1] and that the decades of which it is composed are like the steps of the great stairway by which souls climb to heaven, the praise of this devotion to Mary par excellence is complete. A thousand times happy are those persons and families who let no day pass without paying Mary this tribute of devotion, for they will receive from this good Mother many graces of every kind in life, and more special ones still at the hour of death, and finally glory.

It is true that some have the custom of praying it every day or almost every day, but so badly that it could sooner be regarded as an insult than as worship addressed to Mary, and that for this reason they bring upon themselves the Virgin's indignation rather than her graces. So that you, then, may not experience this evil, I will tell you, if only in passing, how you should pray it.

When you begin to pray the Rosary you will make yourself modest and devout, abandoning any posture that seems less suitable for speaking with the Queen of angels and of men; you will not chatter, you will not doze, nor pronounce it yawning, nor drag out the endings, nor pray almost singing, which is what promotes lack of devotion and brings on sleep; you will not start asking about things foreign to that act, nor begin before the others have finished, for it is disgusting to see how some already begin the Holy Mary, for example, when the others have not yet reached the middle of the Hail Mary, spoiling everything and making a babel with which the devil amuses himself, rather than a choir of persons dedicated to honouring the Mother of God. Do not do so, then; take care that all the words go at a regular pace, that they are pronounced whole and not as if chewed or broken off, that room is left for your companions to do the same, and that everything is done with edification. Certainly, if you had to speak to an earthly queen, you would try not only to be modest and composed in her presence, but you would take great care in what you said and great attention to what was said to you; quicken, then, your faith, and know that in praying the Rosary you are speaking with God and with Mary, who are the sovereigns and lords of heaven and earth, and this will oblige you to be modest and attentive; and, so that you may obtain the bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal graces they are wont to grant to those who pray devoutly, set before your consideration the persons who take part in each of the mysteries you meditate, and this will also help you to know how much Jesus and Mary have done to save you. With these reflections your heart will break with sorrow for having sinned and for having repaid the greatest benefits with the blackest ingratitude; you will be kindled with lively desires to imitate Jesus and Mary, and you will ask them for the graces you need for this, which you need not doubt they will grant you; you will not only try to save yourself, but you will also do what you can so that others may be saved, which you will ask and obtain for them. Pray, then, pray the holy Rosary devoutly and attentively, and I hope that to do so you will put into practice what I have just pointed out to you.

If while praying you feel drowsy, get up at once if you are sitting; pray walking about, or refresh your eyes with water. But the best and wisest thing would be for the whole family to kneel before an image of the Most Holy Virgin, which should never be lacking in your room or chamber, and which you will greet on entering and leaving it, saying to her at the very least: *Hail Mary most pure, conceived without sin*.

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[1] Cf. F. de Possadas, *Vida del glorioso P. y Patriarcha Santo Domingo de Guzmán* (Madrid 1721), pp. 111–119.

11. Objects of Marian Devotion

\[Source: Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo, Barcelona 1848, pp. 168–170.\]

It is very useful and praiseworthy to wear or carry the scapular of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, or the rosary, or some medal, because by this Mary is honoured and we are helped in our needs of body and soul. Countless are the examples one reads in books of the innumerable people who have been cured, and even preserved from bodily ills, by means of the scapular, rosary or medal of the Virgin Mary; and indeed, so great and so ancient is their power that it is found sketched and symbolized in the Old Testament. In fact, one reads in chapter II, verse 26, of the third book of Kings that Abiathar was spared the death he had deserved, as Solomon told him; and why? because he had carried the ark, which was a figure or symbol of Mary.[1]

There are also many who have been cured of spiritual ills, for by wearing or putting on the medal of the Most Holy Virgin they have been converted; well known, public and almost recent is the famous conversion of the Jew Ratisbonne; and how many, how many are converted every day by means of the medals distributed by the members of the archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, while by the same means many, many more are kept in grace and progress in virtue!

Try, therefore, dearly beloved Christian, try always to have the scapular, rosary or medal of Most Holy Mary, and when you get up in the morning kiss it in veneration, for it is right that in this you imitate good children, who kiss their parents' hand on rising; repeat it at night if you wake, and especially if some temptation troubles you, because then, invoking Mary in earnest, you have nothing to fear, nor any reason to lose heart; for I assure you that if you continue constant in invoking her, you will always come out victorious.[2] And not only must you yourself wear the scapular, rosary or medal, but you must try to get others to wear them too, so that they also may be preserved from all bodily and spiritual evils and be made sharers in so great a good.

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[1] The reference is therefore 1 Kgs 2:26.

[2] Cf. *Aut.*, nn. 95–98.

12. The Virgin Mary, Example for Widows

\[*Source: Avisos muy útiles para las viudas, Colección de opúsculos, vol. I, 1850, pp. 156–158 (Catalan original, Barcelona 1848, pp. 31–33).*\]

True widows should try, as far as they can, to live always in retirement, abstaining from going to banquets, festivities and gatherings, unless in some particular case charity or Christian prudence requires it, and then they will conduct themselves with great reserve and modesty, always imitating the Most Holy Virgin, who, though it is true one reads that she once attended the wedding at Cana of Galilee, yet with what modesty and charity! for, moved with compassion, she obtained from her beloved Son the grace of the first miracle, the changing of water into wine.[1]

The Most Holy Virgin passed through the three states of single woman, married woman and widow, and in no state did she live so long as in that of widowhood, giving the whole world the most admirable examples of virtue and perfection, but especially widows. What great retirement! What mortification of faculties and senses! What fasts, what abstinence in sleep! What modesty in dress! O ... widows, fix your attention on contemplating and imitating the Most Holy Virgin; read her life and ask her for the grace you need to imitate the virtues you see shining in her.

To oblige that good Mother and admirable Widow the more, fast every Saturday in memory of her solitude;[2] pray to her a part of the Rosary or the Chaplet of Sorrows, with the other vocal prayers for which you have devotion; but let them not be many in number, because then they are prayed with little devotion and little fruit is drawn from them. You will also make the Novenas of the seven principal feasts of the Most Holy Virgin and, if you can, you will fast on their vigils; these seven feasts are: the Conception, 8 December; the Nativity, 8 September; the Presentation, 21 November; the Annunciation, 25 March; the Visitation, 2 July; the Purification, 2 February; the Assumption, 15 August. To make these novenas you may use, if you wish,

the Novena of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in each of them you will carefully perform some of the acts of homage indicated there, as the Saints did in honour of Mary.

The Most Holy Virgin went to visit, serve and honour her cousin St. Elizabeth, who was with child of St. John;[3] but before the birth she withdrew, because she foresaw what would ordinarily happen, that many people would come there, and, as the Lady was so fond of retirement and silence, she went back home before this happened.[4] Everyone must learn from Mary, but especially widows.

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[1] Cf. Jn 2:1–12.

[2] *Documento autobiográfico* I: EA, p. 409. *Aut.*, n. 644.

[3] Cf. Lk 1:39–56.

[4] M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María* \[Madrid 1866\], p. 20.

13. The Conception and Birth of Jesus

\[Source: Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado, Barcelona 1848, pp. 65–72 (lesson six).\]

Explanation of the plate and of the third article of the Creed, which is: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of holy Mary the Virgin

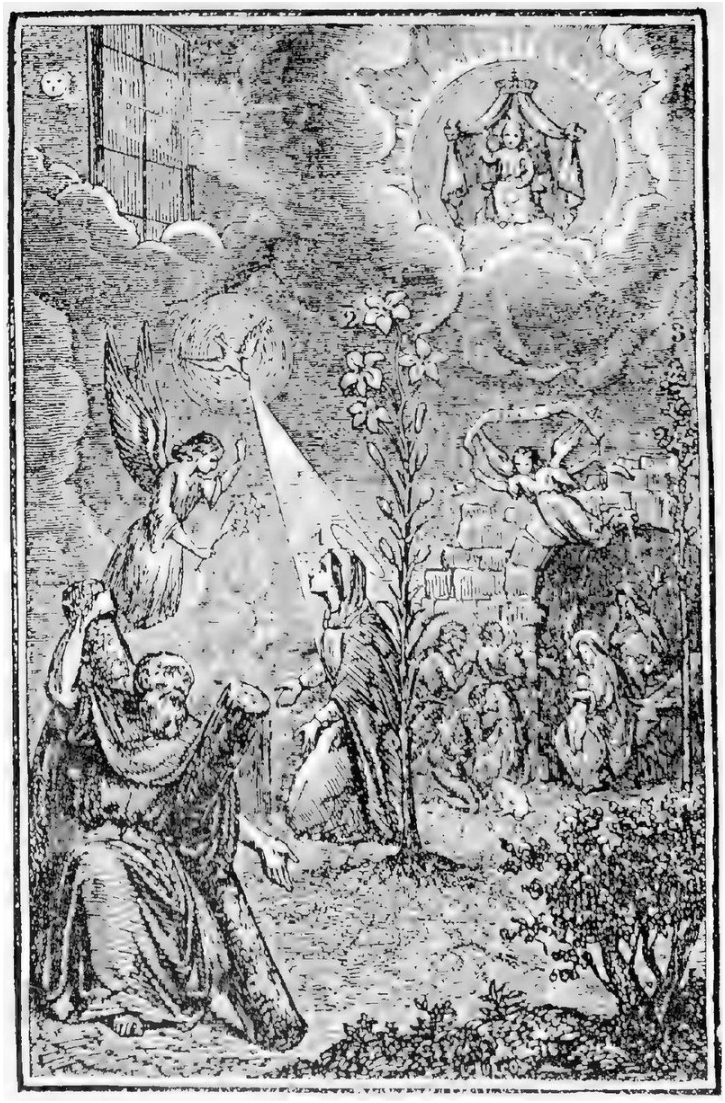


Plate IX of the Catechism, from the 1867 printing: 1. Most holy Mary. 2. The rod of Jesse. 3. The rod of Aaron. 4. The birth of Jesus.

My child, do you not see there in the middle of the plate that Lady (no. 1), so modest and as if amazed? It is the Most Holy Virgin, to whom the archangel St. Gabriel brings an embassy from heaven, telling her that she will be Mother of the Son of God. That you may understand all this better, you must know that when the devil led our first parents into sin he made use of the woman; and God our Lord, to redeem them and all their posterity, which is all of us men, also makes use of a woman, who is the Most Holy Virgin Mary, as God himself said to the serpent, or to the devil who was in it: *she* (the woman) *shall crush your head*.[1] In Adam's sin we were all defiled.[2] Just as from a cistern or tank whose waters are dirty all that is drawn out comes out dirty, so all men, descendants of Adam, contracted and came forth with original sin (except the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who was preserved), which is the stain of our first parents, and we were left children of wrath and reprobation.[3]

God our Lord could very well have left men in this wretched state and cast them into hell, like the rebel Angels, without doing them any injustice, since even human justice punishes the offender without waiting for him to commit a new crime. But the tender mercy of God our Lord was moved towards us,[4] and at the same time as he cast Adam and Eve out of paradise, punishing them, he promised them a Liberator, a Redeemer, who was to be no less, as I have already said, than his only natural Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and who would be born of a woman who was to crush the head of the infernal serpent.[5]

From the time our parents sinned until this God became incarnate, the long space of four thousand years went by, whether because God so disposed it, or so that man, who sinned through pride, might more clearly recognize the need of the remedy and so cry out for the physician, or also so that he might hold this incomparable benefit in greater esteem. But meanwhile God sent Prophets, who announced the coming of the Redeemer, marking the time, the character with which he would come, the circumstances of his coming, of his passion and death, and by various likenesses and figures he made them understand the mysteries of the Desired of the nations; such are what you see in no. 2 of the plate, which is the rod of Jesse, prophesied by Isaiah (11:1) when he said: *A rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and from his root a flower shall rise*,[6] which is a figure of the Most Holy Virgin, who brought forth Jesus for us as a most fragrant flower; and what is in no. 3, which is the rod of Aaron, also a figure of this mystery.[7] At last that so longed-for day came, which was the twenty-fifth of March, the day on which, it is thought, our first parents were created and placed in the earthly paradise; and so on this same day, after so many years, the new Adam, Jesus Christ, was created and placed in the Marian paradise, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who was however betrothed to the glorious St. Joseph,[8] for the two had made, and always kept, a vow of chastity and lived as brother and sister with complete fidelity and love.

The manner in which the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished, or the Son of God became man, was, as the evangelist St. Luke tells us in chapter 1, as follows: *The angel Gabriel was sent by 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, coming in to where she was, said: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women. And when she heard this, she was troubled at his words, and considered what kind of greeting this might be. And the Angel said to her: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace before God; behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus* (in proof of what I am telling you). *He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father; and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be, since I know not man?* (as if to say: I have made a vow of chastity, and I wish to keep it always). *And the Angel answered and said to her:* You will not conceive by the work of man, but by the work of *the Holy Spirit*, so that *the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And therefore the Holy One*

to be born of you will be called Son of God. And in proof that this is the work of God, I tell you that *Elizabeth your kinswoman has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month for her who is called barren, for nothing is impossible with God*.[9]

This manner of bringing about the conception of the Redeemer of the world, if one looks at it well, has nothing strange about it; rather it is very fitting that it should be so. For if the first man, Adam, who by his sin corrupted the whole human race, was formed not by way of generation but by the work of God himself, and from the red and virgin earth of the Damascene field, as some Holy Fathers say, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who came to repair what the first destroyed, ought with all the more reason to be the work of God, and not by way of generation, but from the red and virgin blood of the most chaste and most pure heart of Mary.

Mary at last surrendered with all humility, and, believing most firmly what the Angel announced to her on God's behalf, she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word*.[10] And just as at the beginning of the world the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity said, *Let us make man in our image and likeness*,[11] and formed him from clay, so now the same Persons make God to be man. The authors explain the Incarnation in this way: the three divine Persons took three drops of blood from the most pure heart of Mary; from this blood they formed a body, created a rational soul and united it to that body, and to the body and soul, thus united, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity united himself; and this is what it was for the Son of God to become incarnate or become man.[12]

That radiance which comes from the Holy Spirit and ends in Most Holy Mary means that the Son of God, coming down from heaven, was conceived in the womb of the most pure Virgin Mary by the work of the same divine Spirit; that is why the Church says that *for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven*. He set up his throne in the womb of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who is *chosen as the sun*,[13] and this is what that child you see seated there means. David had already said in Psalm 18: *He has set his tabernacle in the sun*.[14]

The reason for saying that the Incarnation was the work of the Holy Spirit is that, since power is attributed to the Father, wisdom to the Son and love to the Holy Spirit, and the Incarnation was a work of love, it is therefore attributed to the Holy Spirit. It is as with a very skilful tailor who has made a well-fitting suit: even if two other tailors have worked on it, it is said to be his work; in the same way in the Incarnation, although, being a work *ad extra*, as the theologians say, all three Persons concurred in it, and it was the work of the three, nevertheless, because of the infinite love for men that this mystery shows, it is attributed to the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the doubt will come to you how it is possible, the three Persons being one and the same and only God, that the Son became incarnate, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit. To which I will answer you with this likeness: just as on a tree with three equal branches one can be grafted without grafting the others, so also the Son could become incarnate without the Father or the Holy Spirit becoming incarnate. Another likeness: just as in a sacristy there may be three priests, of whom one will vest and the other two will help him vest (I mean that the three will vest only one, and he alone will be left vested and will offer the sacrifice of the altar), so also the three Persons clothed the second, and he alone was left clothed in human nature, and offered the great sacrifice of the redemption of the human race.

If you ask me why the Father or the Holy Spirit did not become incarnate, among many reasons of fittingness I could put forward, I will confine myself to pointing out the simplest. You know already that our first parents were lost by believing the devil, the father of lies,[15] who promised them the knowledge of good and evil, telling them they would be like God, and this disordered appetite for knowledge made them fall into the snare;[16] it was therefore very fitting that the Son of God, the eternal truth, to whom wisdom is attributed, should come to break this snare; and just as Adam and Eve were lost by believing the lying devil, so their

descendants are saved by believing the Son of God, who is truth itself, as he himself assures us: *I am*, he says, *the way, the truth and the life*.[17] Consequently, if man has such a desire to know, he knows now to whom he must go to satisfy it fully: to the Son of God, who is wisdom itself. There is yet another reason: the Incarnation was in order to make us adopted children of God, and it was very fitting that this should be done by the only natural Son of God.

Do you see in the plate the birth of Jesus (no. 4)? It means that after the nine months from the Incarnation the Son of God made man was born in a cave very near Bethlehem; the Angels of heaven came down to adore him, singing: *Glory to God in the highest*;[18] the shepherds also came, and even the kings of the East.[19] And the Most Holy Virgin, although she conceived and gave birth to the Son of God made man, for which reason she is called, and is with complete propriety, Mother of God, remained nevertheless a virgin after childbirth and in childbirth, as she was before childbirth; just as the sun, passing through a pane of glass, leaves it as whole and undamaged, after passing and while passing, as it was before it passed through it, so Jesus Christ, who is called the sun of justice,[20] in being born of holy Mary, who is cleaner and more beautiful than the most beautiful and clean crystal, did not make her lose her beauty and virginal chastity (as is shown in the plate by that sun which, at her left side, passes through those panes), but rather perfected and beautified it.

Ah, my child! How many thanks we must continually give to God for so great a benefit as his becoming man himself, so that all men may be saved, making them sharers in the divine nature[21] and happy in God himself! And this for ever! Let us always love God, then, since he first loved us,[22] for not only has he created us, but he has also deigned to come down from heaven to redeem us.

— What does *was conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit* mean?

— That Most Holy Mary did not conceive him by the work of man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

— What does *and was born of holy Mary the Virgin* mean?

— That Most Holy Mary conceived and bore him without harm to her virginity; and that is why we say that Mary was always a Virgin, not only before childbirth, but also in childbirth and after childbirth.

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[1] Cf. Gen 3:15.

[2] Cf. 1 Cor 15:22.

[3] Cf. Eph 2:3.

[4] Cf. Lk 1:78.

[5] Cf. Gen 3:15.

[6] Is 11:1.

[7] Cf. Ex 7:12.

[8] Cf. Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27.

[9] Lk 1:26–37.

[10] Lk 1:38.

[11] Gen 1:26.

[12] Cf. BAC ed., *Obras completas* \[Madrid 1970\], vol. III, p. 168. *Sermo I de Nativ.*.

[13] Song 6:9 \[Vulgate\].

[14] Ps 18:5 \[Vulgate; Ps 19:4–5 in the Hebrew numbering\].

[15] Cf. Jn 8:44.

[16] Cf. Gen 2:16–17; 3:1–24.

[17] Jn 14:6.

[18] Lk 2:14.

[19] Mt 2:1–12.

[20] Mal 3:20 \[4:2 in some versions\].

[21] Cf. 2 Pet 1:4.

[22] Cf. 1 Jn 4:19.

14. On the Prayer of the Hail Mary

\[Source: Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado, Barcelona 1848, pp. 185–194.\][1]

You will already have noticed, my child, that it is the general custom to pray the Hail Mary after the Our Father, which proves the great confidence the faithful have always had in the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin, so as to obtain more easily from God, through her mediation and merits, what they have asked for in the Our Father, imitating in this those who, seeking some favour from the king, try to have the queen present their petition to him. You saw in the previous lesson that the Our Father is in fact a petition dictated by Jesus Christ, which we present to the eternal Father, King of heaven and earth; well then, in order to obtain more easily what we ask for in it, we make use of the mediation of the Most Holy Virgin or of some Saint, placing that petition in their hands for the purpose. And so you must understand that, when we pray an Our Father to St. Joseph, for example, or to our Patrons or to another Saint, we do not say, "St. Joseph, St. Anthony, who art in heaven, hallowed be ...", etc.; that is, we do not pray the Our Father to them, nor do we speak with them, but at the same time as we address God we ask the Saints, in intention and affection, to present our prayers to him, so as to obtain through their intercession the graces we desire. *The intercession of the Saints is useful*, says the holy Council of Trent; and St. Thomas states that we must ask them to pray for us, for the order of the divine law requires that we mortals obtain through their mediation the graces we need to be saved.[2] And this being true of the Saints, of how much greater value will be the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin, whose prayers can do more than those of all the Saints together?

It is certain that before God the Father we have an advocate, who is Jesus Christ, who is always interceding for us, as St. John says; and that this advocate is not only most powerful to obtain for us from the heavenly Father all the graces we need, but can also grant them to us himself; but it is also certain that he wishes us to make use of the intercession of the Saints, and above all of the most pure Virgin, in whose honour he has determined that graces should pass through their hands, especially through those of his most holy and most esteemed Mother, as St. Bernard says in these words: *Sic est voluntas ejus (Dei), qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam*: such is the will of God, who wills that all graces should pass through the hands of Mary.[3] Just as Pharaoh said to those who asked him for food, *Ite ad Joseph*, go to Joseph, because to him all the treasures of Egypt were entrusted,[4] so, in a certain sense, it seems that the eternal Father and Jesus Christ, when we present ourselves to them to obtain some grace, also say to us: *Ite ad Mariam*, go to Mary, because to her we have entrusted all the treasures of mercy; she is full of grace,[5] so that all of you may receive them from her fullness.[6] Therefore, my child, it is to Mary that we must go if we wish to obtain graces; and since so many and such great graces have been received from her by the faithful in all times, they have consequently honoured her under different titles and in different images, such as Our Lady of the Conception, of Carmel, of the Rosary, of Montserrat, of Atocha, etc. But it is essential that you understand that by this the faithful do not believe there are many Mothers of God, or that the Virgin Mary multiplies herself; no: the Mother of God is one alone, who is the Virgin Mary; for, just as there is only one God and one Jesus Christ,[7] so there is only one Mother of Jesus, and because he is God his mother is, and is called, Mother of God; and her being honoured under various titles is because her various excellences and the special graces or favours she has bestowed on us give occasion for it. So that you may place your confidence in her and be truly devoted to her, I am going to explain to you this plate of the Hail Mary.

You must first of all know, my child, that the Hail Mary is the most reverent and most honourable prayer, and the one by which we can most oblige the Most Holy Virgin. It is a wholly divine and heavenly prayer; and just as the Our Father was dictated and pronounced the first time by Jesus Christ,[8] the second Person of the most blessed Trinity, the Hail Mary may be said to have been dictated by the third, who is the Holy Spirit, and pronounced the first time by St. Gabriel, St. Elizabeth and our mother the Church, inspired by the

same divine Spirit. I told you on another occasion that the Incarnation of the Son of God was the work of the Holy Spirit.[9] Look at the plate, and in no. 1 you will see the archangel St. Gabriel represented in the act of bringing the embassy to the Most Holy Virgin, and how, as minister of the divine Spirit, who is figured there in the form of a dove, he says to her these wonderful words: *Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women*.[10] In no. 2 the most pure Virgin is represented on the occasion when, carrying her Son in her womb, she went to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth, who, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, said to her: *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*;[11] to which words the Church added *Jesus*. These words, *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Jesus*, were also dictated or added by the Catholic Church, ruled and governed by the same Holy Spirit, gathered in the holy council of Ephesus to root out the errors of Nestorius, who had the effrontery to blaspheme the Most Holy Virgin, disputing her glorious title of Mother of God; for which reason, most jealous for the honour of Mary, inspired by the divine Spirit, it broke out in these words, as honourable to her as they are consoling to us: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*.[12]

Notice, my child, in no. 3, the Most Holy Virgin kneeling before the most blessed Trinity, as Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son and Spouse of God the Holy Spirit; like another Esther at the feet of the divine Ahasuerus,[13] she is praying for her people, and because of how much the three divine Persons love her, they grant us all graces through her mediation. The figures of no. 4 represent us, the faithful who make up the Church militant, asking the Most Holy Virgin to pray to God for us, now (you see that she does so in fact) and also at the hour of our death. That of no. 5 is a dying man, whom the priest assisting him urges to put his trust in Mary, certain that he will obtain a good death. That rosary of no. 6, from which an anchor hangs, reminds us of the hope and confidence we must place in Mary, and that by means of the most holy Rosary we shall manage to be freed from the storms of this world and shall arrive happily at the harbour of eternal salvation at the hour of death. And it is not surprising that so many graces are obtained by means of the Rosary, since, as Alan de la Roche affirms, after holy Mass it is the holiest, greatest and most pleasing devotion.[14]

You know already that the whole Rosary consists of three parts, and in each of them five mysteries are recalled: some of joy, others of sorrow, and finally those of glory; and that each mystery is followed by an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be; and this is why you should not be surprised that it is so powerful a prayer, since it is made up of the holiest and most sacred things there are in the Catholic Religion. For the same reason, my child, you must try every day to pray at least one part of the most holy Rosary with full attention and devotion, without falling asleep or being distracted or doing anything improper, but thinking of the mysteries you set out to meditate, or of the Our Fathers and Hail Marys you are praying.

You will also try every day, on getting up, to pray three Hail Marys to the Most Holy Virgin, and the same on going to bed, always asking her for the three virtues of humility, chastity and charity. I advise you also to pray her a Hail Mary when you hear the clock strike the hours. Try, besides, to carry with you the rosary, scapular or medal of the Most Holy Virgin, by which you will gain many indulgences; and you will venerate it as your spiritual mother at bedtime and on rising, imitating in this well-brought-up children, who on certain occasions kiss the hand of their natural mother. If at night some temptation attacks you, call upon Mary at once, venerate her image, and I assure you that if you are constant in invoking her and resisting the temptation, she will infallibly help you and you will not sin. For this purpose try to have some image of this good Mother in your room or chamber, and on entering and leaving it you will greet her, doing so often with the Hail Mary. See, she is very courteous, and that is why St. Thomas of Villanova says that, just as a well-brought-up person returns a greeting, Mary does the same with those who greet her. Say to her, then, *Hail Mary, full of grace*;[15] and do not doubt that, even though you do not hear it, she will answer you: Since through you I am full of grace, I grant you graces, and abundantly, from my fullness.[16] What a happy lot is ours! And since this salutation is angelic, greet her as the Angels do, unite yourself with them, live like them,

be chaste like them, humble, devout, fervent like them, commend yourself to them every day, to your Guardian especially, that he may preserve you from all evil and obtain for you the grace of knowing, as he does, how to serve Mary, who is his Queen and ours.

— Why do we pray the Hail Mary after the Our Father?

— So that Most Holy Mary may obtain for us from God what we have asked for in the Our Father.

— Who is Most Holy Mary?

— She is an august lady who was conceived without the stain of original sin, full of grace and of all the virtues, Virgin Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, advocate and refuge of sinners.

— Where is Most Holy Mary, or the Mother of God?

— In heaven, body and soul.

— Who, then, is the one we see in churches and other places?

— It is her image, which represents to us the one who is in heaven.

— How many mothers of God are there?

— One, no more.

— Then why do we say Mother of God or Virgin of Carmel, of the Rosary, of Sorrows, and the other names we give her?

— It is because of the many titles and prerogatives she has; but it does not follow that there are different mothers of God, for, in the same way as God is one alone, so there is only one Mother of God.

— Is it good to be devoted to Most Holy Mary?

— Not only good but most useful, and it is a sign of predestination.

— In what does true devotion to the Virgin Mother of God consist?

— In abstaining from all sin, imitating her virtues, paying her some acts of homage, frequenting the holy Sacraments, and in doing well, gladly and with perseverance, the devotions and other things of her service.

— Say the prayer of the Hail Mary.

— 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.

— Who made the Hail Mary?

— The archangel St. Gabriel, St. Elizabeth and our mother the Church.

— What part of it did St. Gabriel make?

— This: Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.[17]

— When did he make it?

— When he brought the embassy to Most Holy Mary, telling her that she was to be Mother of the Son of God.

— What part of it did St. Elizabeth make?

— This: Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

— When did she make it?

— When Most Holy Mary, carrying the Son of God in her womb, visited her.

— What part of it did the Church make?

— This: Holy Mary, etc.

— Why did the Archangel say, Hail Mary?

— To greet the Most Holy Virgin.

— Why did he say to her, full of grace?

— Because the Virgin Mary has a singular grace, greater than that of all the other Saints.

— Why did he say to her, the Lord is with thee?

— Because the Virgin Mary is in a special way a temple of the Most Holy Trinity.

— Why did he say to her, blessed art thou among women?

— Because the Virgin Mary is more perfect than all other women.

— Why did St. Elizabeth say to her, blessed is the fruit of thy womb?

— Because the Virgin Mary is blessed and praised for having carried Jesus in her womb.

— Why does the Church add this part, Holy Mary, Mother of God, etc.?

— Because the Virgin Mary is holier than all the other Saints.

— Why does it call her Mother of God?

— Because she conceived and bore the Son of God made man.

— And with those words, pray for us, etc., what do we ask of the Most Holy Virgin?

— That she use her influence before God in our favour all through life, and especially at the hour of death.

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[1] Taken from the *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado*..., Barcelona 1848, pp. 185–194. Also published in *Compendio o breve explicación de la Doctrina Cristiana*, LR (Barcelona 1864), pp. 41–46.

[2] *In IV Sent.*, dist. 45, q. 3, a. 2.

[3] St. Bernard, *In Nativitate B. V. M.*, sermon "de aquaeductu", n. 7: PL 183, col. 441. *Obras ascéticas*, BAC \[Madrid 1952\], vol. I, p. 801.

[4] Gen 41:55.

[5] Cf. Lk 1:28.

[6] Cf. Jn 1:16.

[7] Cf. 1 Cor 8:6.

[8] Cf. Mt 6:9–13; Lk 11:2–4.

[9] Cf. *Catecismo explicado* (Barcelona 1848), p. 69.

[10] Cf. Lk 1:28, 41.

[11] Lk 1:42.

[12] The Council of Ephesus, held in 431, declared Mary Mother of God (cf. DS 252).

[13] Cf. Esth 5:1–8.

[14] Cf. M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María* \[Madrid 1866\], p. 311.

[15] Lk 1:28.

[16] Cf. Lk 1:28; Jn 1:16.

[17] Cf. note 138 above.

15. On the Prayer of the Salve Regina

\[Source: Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado, Barcelona 1848, pp. 197–207.\][1]

Dear child in Jesus Christ: I have just explained the Hail Mary to you and shown you the origin and excellence of this prayer; but now I am going to speak to you more at length about the Most Holy Virgin in the explanation of the Salve. But first I must point out to you that Mary is not only Mother of God but is ours as well, for her own natural Son Jesus Christ entrusted and handed her over to us, as by testament, before expiring on the cross, so that she might be our adoptive mother.[2] On these titles are founded her excellence and the confidence we must have in her.

To be Mother of God she was conceived without sin, adorned with all the graces, prerogatives and excellences that a pure creature can possibly have; and this is why the Evangelists give her the greatest praise that can be given to a pure creature, simply by calling her Mother of God. In her quality as our adoptive mother, so much and so great is the love she bears us that, if it were possible to gather together the love of all fathers for their children, of all husbands for their wives, and of all the men and women Saints for their devotees, we would see that they come nowhere near equalling the love the Most Holy Virgin bears each one of us.[3] And since it is well known that to love is to will good, we can infer from this how much she will be concerned for our happiness and the many graces she will grant us; for Mary, unlike natural mothers, who cannot always do for their children all they would wish, lacks neither the will nor the power.[4]

The faithful, penetrated by this tender love of the most pure Virgin, and knowing from the experience of the daily and special graces with which she favours them everywhere how great her power is, profess very great devotion to her; and this too is why they have taken and still take pains to dedicate images and altars in her honour, under various titles and scenes from her life. So that you may have a true respect and veneration for them, I will speak to you a little about these images of Mary, which the faithful place in churches, in houses and in public places, and before which they keep lamps burning and which they venerate. I should like everyone to imitate this praiseworthy custom, or at least to have a picture of this good Lady in the most public or principal place of their house, and also in the place where they usually say their devotions; for, just as on seeing a portrait of a general or of some famous man some of his victories and exploits at once come to mind, in the same way we recall the perfections and virtues of the Most Holy Virgin and of the Saints when we look at their images or pictures.[5] It will be very much to the point here to tell you what the holy council of Trent laid down on this matter in session 25: *The images of Jesus Christ, of Most Holy Mary and of the other Saints*, it says, *are to be had and kept, especially in churches, and the honour and veneration due to them are to be given them; not because it is believed that there is in them any divinity or power on account of which they are to be venerated, or because anything is to be asked of them, or because trust is to be placed in them, as the heathen once did who placed their hope in idols; but because the honour given them is referred to the originals they represent, so that through the images we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads and prostrate ourselves, we adore Jesus Christ and venerate the Saints whom they represent.*

The said holy Council, and St. Thomas too, teach moreover that the cult of sacred images produces much fruit, because they remind us of the wonders God has worked through the Saints and how these practised virtue, teaching us at the same time what we must do to be like them.[6] Given the human condition, we need these sensible things, because our soul is in the body as in a dark prison, which can perceive almost nothing except through the windows of the senses; and that is why we must make use of material images to form some idea of, and remember, things spiritual and absent; and for the same reason the faithful, so as not to forget the Most Holy Virgin, have built so many churches and dedicated so many images in her honour.

And since out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, as Jesus Christ teaches us,[7] the faithful who love Mary show her their heartfelt love not only with the angelic words of the Hail Mary, but also with other prayers and formulas they have devised to satisfy their desire to praise and venerate her. One of them is the Salve Regina, composed by a monk of St. Benedict,[8] who is represented by the figure seated in the plate beneath Mary, to whom he was very devoted. This divine Virgin granted him great wisdom, and in gratitude

for so signal a favour he honoured her with this prayer, which the Catholic Church has adopted to praise every day, even in the divine office, the sovereign Queen of heaven and earth.

I pass now to explain to you the emblems and hieroglyphs of the plate and the words of praise of Mary that the Salve contains. You see, my child, that this image of Mary holds Jesus in her arms, and this makes it plain that she is Mother of God. She also bears a sceptre and crown, to signify that she is Queen of heaven and earth, and as such that monk, her devotee, greets her; which is why in the book he has on the table (no. 1) one reads: *Salve, Regina*.

She is Mother of mercy. Do you notice up at the very top that dove (no. 2) carrying an olive branch in its beak? It is a figure of Mary; for, just as after the flood a dove showed by this sign that the waters had withdrawn,[9] so also Mary brings us the branch of her divine Son, to make plain to us that some of the punishments the Lord used to send upon the earth in former times have now abated and withdrawn. The branch is of olive because, as it is the symbol of peace, it indicates the peace that has been established between God and men by virtue of the Redemption and through the intercession of Mary, moved with compassion for our miseries, for which reason we call her Mother of mercy.

She is Life. This is what that tree (no. 3) means, which represents the tree of paradise whose fruit made immortal those who ate of it,[10] and it is the most expressive figure of Mary, since those who have the happiness of eating or receiving with due disposition Jesus Christ, the blessed fruit of her womb,[11] by means of holy Communion, will not die eternally, as the holy Gospel teaches us.[12] She is also Life because she obtains grace for sinners, perseverance for the just and relief for the souls in purgatory.

She is Sweetness. Look at that wine-press (no. 4). Just as from a leafy vine of good quality come clusters which, pressed in the press, give a generous wine that, besides being a smooth and sweet drink, serves to strengthen and gladden the heart,[13] so also Mary, as an abundant vine, *vitis abundans*,[14] brought forth for us Jesus, who is the cluster, *botrus cypri*, who, pressed in the press of his passion and death, gives us a wine of grace and devotion, the most strengthening, through the mediation of his divine Mother.

She is our Hope. In no. 5 of the plate you will see an anchor, which figures the hope we must have in Mary. Perhaps you have already heard that all ships carry anchors so as not to be lost, which they cast into the water when they suffer a storm, hoping by this means to avoid shipwreck; well then, each of us is a ship tossing on the stormy sea of this world, and consequently, if we do not want to sink or be dashed to pieces, we must always carry the sacred anchor of devotion to Mary, and by making use of it in the squalls our passions stir up we shall without doubt be saved; and if we hope, as we ought, it is most certain that our hopes will not be frustrated.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. Do you notice in no. 6 Adam and Eve with the child she holds in her lap? It signifies the human race, which inherited miseries and tribulations from its parents, and that is why it asks Mary to protect it.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Of all the names given to the world, none fits it more properly than that of valley of tears, for so in fact it is. Besides the general calamities, if we go on reflecting on the particular ones of each kingdom, province and city, and come down to each family and individual, we shall find the reverses of fortune, misfortunes, illnesses, deaths, etc., to be so many that one evil overtakes another, and that for every pleasure there are a thousand griefs that make us shed copious tears; consequently, being unable to free ourselves from one or the other, no other recourse is left us but to call upon Mary, mother of mercy, sure that she will protect us in our needs, if it is good for us. If we do this, as those in no. 7 represent, who are in great trials, we shall without doubt be helped, for we know that Mary is the comforter of all the afflicted who cry and sigh to her from the heart.

Turn then, most gracious advocate. Mary is our advocate who intercedes for us with her Son, who is to judge us; that is why we must present our petitions to her so that she may commend them, as you see this one in no. 8 doing. But do not forget that Mary will refuse to be our advocate if we do not try to imitate her virtues and lead a life in keeping with the holy law of God; for by no means can he hope for the Mother's protection who by his evil deeds renews the pains of her Son's passion, which caused her so many sorrows.

Thine eyes of mercy towards us. This is what that eye of pity and clemency in no. 8 means; for if we gain the happy lot of being looked upon by Mary, she will undoubtedly help us, because she never abandons those who call on her from the heart. Let us then strive to set our tribulations before her with fervour and humility, and she will look on us with favourable eyes.

And after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. That crown of thorns in no. 9 signifies our exile in this world because of the sin of our first parents, since which the earth brings forth thorns;[15] the two crosses signify the pains of body and soul, so common, and the skull death, which we must infallibly undergo. But after death Jesus Christ is to judge us, and that is why we beg Mary to show us, or to accompany us into, the presence of her Son, the fruit of her womb,[16] who, seeing that it is his Mother who asks and pleads for us, will heed her, and the sentence he pronounces will be favourable.

O clement! We give this title to Mary with complete propriety, because she is the one who calms the rigour of divine Justice, so that the clemency of this exalted Queen is what causes us to be judged with great indulgence; and it is so great that it surpasses beyond comparison that of all the emperors, kings and princes there have been or will be; which is shown by those crowns and sceptre in no. 10, turned downwards to indicate that they have been surpassed by Mary.

O loving! This title too is one of Mary's most honourable, for she was distinguished from all creatures by her piety; and the rosary and other objects of devotion you see in no. 11 remind us that we must imitate her in this virtue of piety to merit her love and protection.

O sweet Virgin Mary! We call finally with these words on the exalted Queen of heaven and earth, because she is sweetness and tenderness itself and because she was the most chaste and pure of all creatures. Not without reason has that beehive, no. 12, been placed beneath her feet, for bees are a symbol of virginity, inasmuch as they busy themselves only in drawing honey from flowers; all of which is applied to the Most Holy Virgin, who, forming from the beautiful and fragrant flowers of her virtues a most sweet honeycomb in which her perfection shone out and was admired, merited by it to be Mother of the Son of God. And since this prerogative is the greatest that can fall to a creature, in order to interest her more and more in what we ask of her we call on her with this glorious title, and we end the Salve with these words: *Pray for us, holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Jesus Christ our Lord*; that is, that after she has obtained for us from her dear Son Jesus Christ his friendship and grace in life, we may have a good death, so as to be able to praise the Son and the Mother eternally in heavenly glory.

All that has been said, my child, teaches you how admirable and powerful the Most Holy Virgin is. Honour her, then, every day; imitate her virtues of humility, chastity, patience and charity; frequent the holy Sacraments in her honour; flee evil and do all the good you can;[17] and as long as you are her true devotee, Mary's protection will not fail you in this world, and in the next she will obtain for you eternal life, which I wish you. Amen.

— Besides the Hail Mary, with what other prayer do we customarily go to the Most Holy Virgin?

— With the Salve Regina.

— Say it.

— Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn

then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Is this prayer very pleasing to the Most Holy Virgin?

— Yes, father, because it contains many of her praises and mysteries.

— Why do we begin by saying, Hail?

— To greet the Virgin Mary.

— Why do we call her Queen and Mother of mercy?

— Because she rules and governs us with pity and mercy.

— Why do we call her life?

— So that she may obtain for us the life of grace.

— Why do we call her sweetness?

— So that she may give us spiritual sweetness.

— Why do we call her our hope?

— Because we trust that through her intercession we shall obtain the pardon of our sins.

— When we say, To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, what do we ask of her?

— That she lift from us the exile from heaven we deserved by sin.

— When we say, To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears, what do we ask of her?

— That she console us in our afflictions.

— When we say, Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, what do we ask of her?

— That as advocate she have compassion on our miseries.

— When we say, And after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, what do we ask of her?

— That after this exile she obtain for us the glory of heaven.

— And these ejaculations, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary: why do we say them?

— To praise her with the titles of clemency, pity and sweetness.

— When we say, Pray for us, holy Mother of God, etc., what do we ask of her?

— That by her intercession she obtain for us grace in this life and glory in the next.

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[1] Taken from the *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado...*, Barcelona 1848, pp. 197–207.

[2] Cf. Jn 19:26–27.

[3] Cf. St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part I, ch. 1, § 3, BAC (Madrid 1952), p. 545.

[4] Cf. ibid., part I, ch. 8, ed. cit., p. 686.

[5] M. Menghi-D'Arville, *Anuario de María* \[Madrid 1866\], p. 265.

[6] Cf. ibid., p. 284.

[7] Mt 12:34.

[8] Other mariologists hold a contrary opinion (cf. J. M. Canal, *Salve Regina misericordiae. Historia y leyenda en torno a esta antífona*, Ed. di Storia e Letteratura \[Rome 1963\], pp. 134–142).

[9] Cf. Gen 8:8–12.

[10] Cf. Gen 3:4–5.

[11] Cf. Lk 1:42.

[12] Cf. Jn 6:50–51, 54, 58.

[13] Cf. Ps 103:15 \[Vulgate; Ps 104:15\]; Sir 31:28.

[14] Ps 127:3 \[Vulgate; Ps 128:3\].

[15] Cf. Gen 3:18.

[16] Cf. Lk 1:42.

[17] Cf. Ps 33:15 \[Vulgate; Ps 34:14\].

16. Mary, Fountain of Graces

\[Source: Reflexiones a todos los cristianos y los dos árboles, Colección de opúsculos, vol. III, 1850, pp. 87–91.\]

> *Blessed is the man who hears me and who watches daily at my gates ... whoever finds me will find life and will obtain salvation from the Lord (Prov 8:34–35).*

This is what Mary promises her true devotees; and not in vain, for in her is all hope of life and of virtue; she is full of grace, and God wills that we should all share in her fullness. Not without reason, then, Christian man or woman, do I present to you this image of Mary in a fountain of living water, which is the way she let herself be seen by that devotee of hers Maria Villani, who saw people coming to this fountain, one with a large vessel who carried away a great quantity of water; another with a small one, who carried away a small quantity; and another, finally, who, having a broken vessel, at once lost all he carried; and she understood that those who carried a large vessel were a figure of those who come to Mary with great confidence; those who carried a small one figured those who come with small confidence; and those with the broken vessel, which at once poured out the water, were those who obtain graces from Mary in their needs, illnesses, etc., but who, as soon as they have obtained what they asked for, forget the devotions, resolutions and promises they made to Mary.

Let us all go to Mary with great and persevering confidence; great, I say, and it will be so if we are persuaded that God, through his most holy Mother, wishes to grant us all the graces we ask of him; that he has deposited in her all his merits, which are of infinite value, and that for this reason he made her Mother of pity and clemency and advocate of sinners; willing also that she be called Mary, which is the same as lady of graces, the same as sea of graces.

There are authors who find a great meaning in each of the letters of which the name of Mary \[MARIA\] is composed. The M, which is the first, means *Mother* of ours; A, the second, means our *Advocate*; R, the third, *Refuge* of sinners; I, the fourth, *Illuminatrix* of sinners who lie in the shadows of death; A, the fifth, mystical *Ark* of Noah; with the understanding that, just as in Noah's ark people and animals were saved from shipwreck,[1] so also through Mary we shall all be saved, just and sinners, provided we go to her; and if from the ark there came out as brutes those who had gone into it as brutes, the same will not happen in the mystical ark Mary; for if we truly go to her, even if we have led a carnal life, she will obtain for us the grace to make a true confession, and we shall be saved, because she has assured us that she is Mother of sinners who wish to amend.

And we must go to her also with perseverance and constancy. There are people who for a few days devote themselves to certain prayers and devotions; but unhappily today they drop one, tomorrow another, and finally they drop everything. And what will be the lot of these fickle and inconstant people? That of one who today stopped eating his midday meal, tomorrow did not eat supper, and finally ate nothing at all: he would infallibly die; so also will he lose the life of grace who is not devoted to Most Holy Mary.

For this purpose, then, we will pray the prayers of the *Angelus Domini* in the morning, at midday and at night; the holy Rosary, a Hail Mary when the clock strikes the hour, etc., etc.

In honour of the Most Holy Virgin we will abstain from uttering bad words, from doing bad deeds or from sinning, and even for love of her we will abstain from certain things that would otherwise be lawful for us.

In honour of the same Virgin and in imitation of her we will practise the virtues, for example humility, chastity, patience, almsgiving, the love of God and of our neighbour.

In honour of Mary we will frequent the holy sacraments of Confession and Communion.

Finally, whatever we do, let us do it for the greater glory of God, placing it in Mary's hands; and whatever troubles us, let us suffer it for love of God and of Mary, and let us try to draw the whole world to the devotion of so kind a Mother.

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[1] Cf. Gen 6:18–19; 7:1–2, 7–9.

Part III. Missionary Archbishop (1851–1857)

17. True Devotion to Mary

\[Source: Pastoral letter to the people after the visitation of 1853, Santiago de Cuba 1853, pp. 69–71.\]

There are two reasons why we have recourse to the Saints and trust in them: one is that they are friends of God, and, as the proverb says, *qui amat me, amat et canem meum*;[1] and if we love God, we cannot but love and honour the Saints; and the other reason is that, since they honoured Jesus Christ by following him, imitating him and accompanying him in the battles of the world, they now reign with Christ in heaven and are his dear friends and companions; and it is enough for them to ask for Jesus Christ to be pleased to grant them those graces, whether by himself or because he acts as advocate with his eternal Father, as St. John says.

If we say this of the Saints in general, what can we say of Most Holy Mary in particular? It is enough to say that she is Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son and Spouse of God the Holy Spirit; and consequently the whole Most Holy Trinity is pleased that she be honoured, venerated and invoked by all generations.[2] Mary is mother of grace and dispenser of all mercies. So that, says St. Bernard, this is the will of God, who wills that all graces pass through the hands of Mary.[3] We will not stop now to enumerate and explain the very many and powerful reasons we all have for being very devoted to Most Holy Mary; we dealt with this matter at sufficient length in the days of the Missions and the pastoral Visitation. And since your hearts were like well-prepared ground, we do not doubt that this heavenly seed will bear fruit a hundredfold.[4] We remind you of only one thing, and it is that there are two kinds of devotion to Most Holy Mary: one is false, and it is like that of the Philistines, who put the ark of the Lord together with the idol of Dagon.[5] So, then, some Christians want to join devotion to Most Holy Mary, the living ark of the law of grace, with the Dagon idol of sin in which they live settled: of drunkenness, of gambling, of concubinage, or of other filthy things. This devotion is false.

True devotion to Most Holy Mary consists in abstaining from all sin, in imitating her virtues, in paying her some acts of homage, in frequenting the holy sacraments, and in doing well, gladly and with perseverance, the devotions and other things of her service. And in truth the true devotee not only abstains from all sin, but strives to imitate her virtues, according to the proverb *amor aut parem facit, aut invenit*: the lover either is, or becomes, like the beloved. The devotee of Mary always strives to become like Mary. He knows that Mary was so humble, and at once he strives with all his might to be humble in order to imitate Mary. The devotee knows that Mary was never idle, and at once he strives to be always occupied, both to imitate so great a Lady

and Teacher, and also because he knows that idleness is not a single sin but a spring of vices.[6] The true devotee knows that Most Holy Mary was a virgin and a lover of purity and chastity; and at once he strives to be chaste in honour of Mary. The devotee of Mary knows that Mary was most patient and Queen of martyrs, and this is enough for him to have patience and to restrain all fierceness of temper. And so with the other virtues.

Moreover, the true devotee loves to frequent the holy sacraments in her honour; and in truth this is one of the acts of homage Most Holy Mary likes best. That is why that great devotee Paolo Segneri the Younger so strongly urged people to offer Most Holy Mary twelve communions in memory of the twelve stars with which St. John saw her crowned, or of the twelve principal virtues. These twelve communions are distributed over the twelve months of the year, one each month. Besides this homage of communions, others can be offered her, such as are found in the novena of the Heart of Mary.

Mary is Queen of the Angels and of the Saints; be devoted, then, to her vassals and love them, celebrate their feasts and solemnities, imitate their virtues. For this reason it is very useful, for preserving Religion and increasing devotion, to read the lives of Jesus, of Most Holy Mary and of the other saints.[7]

18. Circular on the Immaculate Conception

\[*Source: printed circular, Santiago de Cuba, 20 November 1854, 4 pp.; EC I, 1046–1048.*\][1]

We, Don Antonio María Claret y Clará, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Archbishop of Cuba, Primate of the Indies, Prelate Grand Cross of the Royal American Order of Isabella the Catholic, of Her Majesty's Council, etc.

To our venerable Dean and Chapter, to our Vicars forane, Parish Priests and other members of the Clergy, and to all the faithful of our Diocese, health, grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this very moment, our beloved brethren, the Capital of the Christian World offers a great spectacle which all the faithful of both hemispheres watch with religious wonder, and whose outcome they foresee will be fitting for the greater glory of God, of his Most Holy Mother and for the good of the Church. Our Most Holy Father Pope Pius IX, in his ardent devotion to the Virgin Mary, from whose powerful mediation he hopes for the remedy of the evils that in our unhappy age afflict not only the Church but the whole of society, has determined to decide what the Holy Spirit communicates to him concerning the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

This holy thought has occupied him from the beginning of his Pontificate, so happy for the Spouse of the Lamb; and in order to proceed with all maturity and wisdom, after stirring up the devotion of the faithful to raise their prayers to the Most High, uniting their intention with his, and after consulting all the Bishops of the Catholic World, he has called to Rome two from each nation to solemnize the act in which he is to make a definition on so important a matter.[2]

Nothing is more proper to true Catholics, and above all to those who, like you, are distinguished by their devotion to the Mother of our adorable Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, than to unite themselves in spirit with the common Father of the faithful and to have recourse to the Divine Son and to the Most Holy Mother, that the Spirit of wisdom and understanding may descend upon him.[3]

To this end we have arranged that in our Holy Cathedral Church, and in all the Parish Churches and other Churches of towns of some importance, a Novena be celebrated, and in the others a Triduum, to the Immaculate Conception of Mary for the intentions indicated.

In Cuba \[Santiago\] the Novena is to begin on the thirtieth of the present month, and in the rest of the Diocese as soon as the Vicars forane and Parish Priests receive this Circular, if it is not before the day stated. The Triduum will take place on the 6th, 7th and 8th of next December. And so that we may all be united not

only in spirit and intention but even, as far as possible, in the very form of prayer, the exercise of the Novena will be as follows:

At half past six in the morning the votive Mass of the Most Pure Conception will be celebrated, solemn or said, as circumstances allow, which we hope the respective priests will apply, without stipend, for the intentions indicated. The Mass will be followed by the third part of the Most Holy Rosary in which the glorious mysteries are meditated, the morning exercise concluding with the Novena of the Immaculate Conception or, failing it, with that of the Most Pure Heart of Mary.

In the afternoon, after the ringing of the Angelus, it will begin with the same third part of the Rosary, meditating the glorious mysteries; the Novena will be repeated, then a sermon or moral talk, which the preacher may adapt, if he thinks fit, to the purpose of the Novena or to the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception; and if there is no sermon or talk, its lack will be supplied by spiritual reading, which may be chosen from *The Glories of Mary*, for example, or from another similar book. The exercise will end with the Salve sung and the *Santo Dios*.

In the Triduum the same order will be followed, with no other difference than choosing three days from the Novena at the discretion of the Parish Priests.

All the faithful of either sex who attend these holy exercises, uniting their prayers with that of the common Father of the faithful, and confessing and receiving communion on the day of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Virgin, can gain a plenary indulgence; and We grant in addition eighty days for each time they visit their respective parish churches with the same intention.

Santiago de Cuba, the twentieth of November in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-four.

Antonio María, Archbishop of Cuba.

By order of His Excellency the Most Illustrious Archbishop, my Lord,

Felipe Rovira, Pbro., Secretary.

20. On Devotion to Most Holy Mary

\[Source: Ejercicios espirituales preparatorios a la primera comunión de los niños, 3rd ed. 1857, day IX, meditation IX, pp. 82–89.\]

First point

Three things you must consider, my child, to get true devotion to Most Holy Mary right, namely: who she is, what benefits you have received and must hope for from her, and in what this true devotion consists.

As to the first, you have already been taught that Most Holy Mary is a great Lady, conceived without original sin, full of grace and of virtues, Virgin and Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth and advocate of sinners.[1]

I should like you, my child, to stop and meditate one by one on these words of the definition. Oh, how great an idea you would form of Most Holy Mary! And especially in the words Mother of God; here you will find in Most Holy Mary an almost infinite dignity, because she is Mother of the infinite being, who is God. She is Queen of heaven and earth, she is Queen of the Angels, Queen of the Patriarchs, Queen of the Prophets, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of the Martyrs, Queen of the Pontiffs, Queen of all the Saints. If a lady presented herself here who was queen of all the kingdoms and empires of the world, how much you would admire and venerate her! You must venerate Most Holy Mary more, who is universal Queen of heaven and earth, and to whose most sweet name of Mary, in heaven, on earth and in hell, every knee bends, because she is Mother of Jesus;[2] and what is due to Jesus by nature and merit, that same is given to Most Holy Mary by

grace.

Oh, how powerful, eloquent and merciful Most Holy Mary is! Only God knows who Most Holy Mary is. Ah, my child, respect her, venerate her, love her for what she is in herself; never offend her, and praise her continually as the Angels do; greet her as full of grace,[3] and you will see how from her fullness you will receive what you need to be good and to be saved.

Second point

Consider, my child, the great and countless benefits you have received from Most Holy Mary, and of themselves they will lead you to the greatest gratitude and devotion. St. Bernard says that God disposed that we should have everything through Mary.[4] And St. Germanus says that no one is saved except through Mary;[5] no one is delivered from evils except through Mary; and no one obtains favours except through her. Ah, my child, the lights and graces you receive so often, think what benefits they are, and you receive them through the intercession of Mary. If you have not fallen into mortal sin, or have not committed it in greater number and gravity, it is Mary's grace. If you have not died in sin and are not in hell like the bad angels, 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 and grace of Mary.

Not only 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.[6] She is the refuge of sinners. She is the comfort of the afflicted. She is the health of the sick. She is mother of mercy and of divine grace. She prays for you now and at the hour of death, and will always obtain and grant you all you need. Be a good child of Mary, and you will see how she will be a loving Mother to you. If a mother is so anxious for the good of her child, Most Holy Mary is much more anxious for the good of her true devotees.[7] Ah, my child, be a true devotee of Most Holy Mary; and I give you my word that you will be happy in this world, and afterwards in the next for all eternity.

Third point

Not every devotion is good; only the true one is good. You have already been taught in the Catechism, my child, in what true devotion to Most Holy Mary consists, and you know very well: in abstaining from all sin, in imitating her virtues, in paying her some acts of homage, in frequenting the holy Sacraments, and in doing well, gladly and with perseverance, the devotions and other things of her service. And you must know, my child, that devotion that does not have these marks is not true but false; it is not good but only apparent, a devotion with which the evil enemy deceives souls and carries them off to hell; for while they have some appearance of virtue outwardly, inwardly they are full of sins; and most often they use the devotion itself to give their vices and wickedness a respectable look, and want to put Most Holy Mary together with sin, just like those idolaters who put the ark of the Lord together with Dagon, the idol of the Philistines.[8]

Do not you imitate, my child, those bad Christians and false devotees who commit the greatest excesses on the days of the Virgin's feasts; you, on the contrary, on those days receive the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion; imitate the virtues you see shining in Most Holy Mary, especially humility, purity and love, besides others you will notice according to the mystery being celebrated that day. In this way you will indeed please Mary, and not by committing disorders of gluttonous feasts, dances and impurities, as if Most Holy Mary were a Venus whom the heathen feted with such wickedness. Oh, how offended the Virgin will be with such devotees! Therefore, my child, honour her, not in that way, but with virtues, not only on her feasts but continually, and besides pay her some acts of homage.

There are some young people who begin very well in devotion to Most Holy Mary; every day they pray the holy Rosary to her, morning and night they commend themselves to her with some special prayer, when the

clock strikes they always greet her with a Hail Mary, and in her honour they read spiritual books, especially those that treat of devotion to her; but after some time they begin to grow distracted; or, led astray by some bad companion, or dazzled by other things, little by little they drop everything and end by being lost, which is what the evil enemy so strives for. Do not be like that, my child; be constant in the good path you have undertaken of true devotion to Mary, and so you will always have the health of your soul, the well-being of your body and, finally, eternal life.

Resolution and fruit of the meditation

I resolve always to be a true devotee of Mary, and for this purpose I will practise the necessary means; because Most Holy Mary deserves it for her excellences; because I owe it for the benefits I have received; and because I need it in order to obtain the graces to be saved.

21. Confidence in Mary

\[Source: Ejercicios espirituales preparatorios a la primera comunión de los niños, Barcelona 1855, pp. 282–289 (reading for day IX).\][1]

> *Whoever finds me will find life and will obtain salvation from the Lord (Prov 8:35).*

Ah, dear children! What great confidence we must all have in Most Holy Mary! Here are the words the holy Church addresses to us in the name and from the mouth of this heavenly Queen: *Whoever finds me*, by means of a true devotion, *will find life*, the life of grace, which is the principle of being in the divine nature as shared,[2] *and will obtain salvation from the Lord*, or, as one reads in the Hebrew original, will obtain the favour of the Lord, or that the Lord will love him, that is, charity, which is the principle of acting according to the divine nature as shared. So that by means of devotion to Most Holy Mary we find grace and charity, which are the two things the glorious St. Ignatius so often asked of God. Give me your love, he said to him, with your grace, and I shall think myself rich enough, nor will I ask you for anything more. Such was the prayer St. Ignatius made; and what he asked for we too must ask for, and we shall obtain it if we are devoted to Mary.

After God and the holy humanity of his Son Jesus Christ, it is Mary we must honour and love, and in her we must trust, because of her high dignity as Mother of God, which raises her infinitely above all other creatures existing and even possible. Through Most Holy Mary we can obtain all the graces and helps we need. Powerful with God, she obtains from him whatever she asks of him; and supremely kind and loving towards us, she takes special pleasure in using her influence in our favour, and especially for the young. We see that mothers are naturally more tender towards their little children than towards the grown ones; they are more anxious, more watchful, more careful for the former than for the latter. This phenomenon is so general and universal that it is observed in all mothers, not only of the human race but also in every kind of animal.[3] It is the finger of God, author and preserver of nature, that has written in indelible characters on the tablets of the hearts of all mothers the law of tenderness and love for their little ones, who so need their protection and shelter. Without this maternal love, nature would lose its balance; it would sink under the weight of the misery and helplessness of the little ones.

Well, if we all see and touch this in the order of nature, what shall we say of the order of grace? God himself is the author and preserver of both; for what you see, dear children, in the order of nature, that affection, that love your mothers have for you, that need you feel of your mothers, that confidence you have in them, for without them you cannot live, since they feed you, they clothe you, you run to them, you call them in any adversity, pain and trouble: that same, and much more, happens in the order of grace. Mary is the mother of divine grace, and for this God has given her a heart wholly maternal, the most tender, the most compassionate, the most merciful; and on the tablets of that heart, which is all charity, God himself made man wrote with his bloodstained finger these words: *Behold your son*;[4] and Most Holy Mary, though always

good, at that moment began to feel such inclination to do us good, such tenderness and such love towards all of us, that St. Liguori says that if all the love that fathers and mothers have had for their children, husbands for their wives, and all the Saints for their devotees, were gathered together, it would come nowhere near the love Most Holy Mary has for each one of us.

This love we are speaking of is, then, common to all her devotees; but it belongs in a particular way to the young; the very fact of Calvary makes this evident. John was a disciple, but he was the youngest disciple of all; all Christians are disciples of Christ, and that is why they are called Christians, believing and following his teaching; but the youngest was the type of the children of Mary, and, as the smallest child, the most petted by the spiritual mother. Hence the smallest children, the young, will be the most favoured by Most Holy Mary. And the other reason why the young are dearer to Most Holy Mary is the one that runs parallel to nature: to help in the order of grace those of her children who need it most. Most Holy Mary knows that the weakness of the young is very great, that their spiritual needs are very urgent and pressing, chiefly for the preservation of chastity (so fiercely assailed at that age), of which Mary is the special protectress, guardian and friend; and this is the virtue that establishes most sympathy between Mary and her devotees. As the holy Fathers observe, Jesus Christ there on Calvary assigned the virgin Mother as Mother to the virgin disciple, and to the virgin Mother he gave the virgin disciple as son; so that, children, if you want to be loved and petted by Most Holy Mary, you must all strive to be chaste, to honour Most Holy Mary with the virtue of purity and the other virtues.

Jesus Christ says in his holy Gospel: *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*.[5] Therefore, if you love Most Holy Mary and have your heart full of love and devotion towards her, you will love to pray to her and praise her. For the same reason I charge you to pray to her morning and night that prayer *Virgin and Mother of God*, etc., with three Hail Marys.[6] More: that every hour, when you hear the clock strike, you pray her a Hail Mary, and let no day pass without praying the most holy Rosary to her with attention and devotion. You will have yourselves enrolled or entered in some confraternity; you will receive the holy Sacraments on the days or vigils of her feasts. You must also love reading books that treat of devotion to her, and in her honour you will keep away from all bad books and bad company. I also charge you always to wear a medal or scapular of Most Holy Mary on which her image is. Morning and night you will ask Mary's blessing through that image, and if you ever feel tempted, run to her. For this purpose I will tell you what I have read in history.

Boles■aw I, king of Poland, was already great-hearted as a youth, very virtuous and respectful to his father; he always carried on him a small portrait of his dear father; and each time he was tempted to commit some sin (for as a young man he felt his passions), he pressed the image of his father to his breast and said: *Absit a me, pater*. Far be it from me, my father, to do a thing like this, which is opposed to your command, to your honour and to my honour too. You will do the same, children; as children of Mary you will always carry her image, and if you ever find yourselves tempted, you will say: No, my mother, I do not want to sin; I would rather die than do a thing that so offends you and harms me.

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[7] J. Bergua, *Refranero español* \[Madrid 1984\], p. 229.

[8] Cf. Lk 1:48.

[9] St. Bernard, *In Nativitate B. V. M.*, sermon "de aquaeductu", n. 7: PL 183, col. 441.

[10] Cf. Mt 13:8, 23; Mk 4:8, 20; Lk 8:8, 15.

[11] Cf. 1 Sam 5:1–5.

[12] Cf. Sir 33:29 \[Vulgate\].

[13] *Aut.*, n. 87. *Aut.*, n. 226. Cf. *Aut.*, n. 654. *El egoísmo vencido*.

[14] Published by Fr. José María Gil in the *Epistolario Claretiano* (EC), I, 1046–1048.

[15] *Revista Católica* 25 \[1854, III\] 487–488.

[16] Cf. Is 11:2.

[17] "On the prayer of the Hail Mary", in *Catecismo explicado* (Barcelona 1848), p. 191.

[18] Cf. Phil 2:10.

[19] Lk 1:28.

[20] Cf. St. Bernard, *In Nativitate B. V. M.*, sermon "de aquaeductu", n. 7: PL 183, col. 441.

[21] Cited by St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* (ed. cit., p. 632).

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

[23] Cf. ibid.

[24] Cf. 1 Sam 5:1–5.

[1] Taken from *Ejercicios espirituales preparatorios a la primera comunión de los niños*, LR (Barcelona 1855), pp. 282–289: reading for day IX.

[2] Prov 8:35.

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

[4] Cf. Jn 19:26.

[5] Mt 12:34; Lk 6:45.

[6] *Aut.*, n. 830.