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SAINT MARGARET MARY

AND THE PROMISES OF
THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

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To those
who make known and loved
The Sacred Heart of Jesus

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PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART

O Heart of Love, I put all my trust in Thee; for I fear all things from my own weakness, but I hope for all things from Thy goodness.

—*Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque*

An indulgence of 300 days. A plenary indulgence once a month under the usual conditions, if this invocation is repeated daily with devotion, (Pius X, Rescript in his own hand, May 30, 1908, exhib. June 3, 1908; S.P. Ap., March 10, 1935.)

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SAINT
MARGARET MARY



SAINT MARGARET MARY ALAQUE
1647-1690
THE APOSTLE OF THE SACRED HEART

CHAPTER 1

A TROUBLED HOUSEHOLD

THE PLUMP, good-natured face of Father Anthony Alacoque wore a worried frown as he trudged through the fields from his parish church at Verosvres to the neighboring farm of Lhautecour. True, the crops were splendid in this year of Our Lord 1660, and he himself in excellent health. Parish finances were satisfactory, too. But things were far different at Lhautecour for his widowed sister-in-law, Madame Philiberte Alacoque, and her poor little invalid daughter Margaret.

“It’s a shame the way my own sisters are treating those two,” mumbled the priest, pausing for a moment to survey the fertile countryside. “A shame and a disgrace. Today I must give Benedicta and Catherine a good talking-to.”

But even as he neared Lhautecour and started purposefully toward the smaller of the two stone farmhouses, a woman’s shrill voice echoed angrily from the kitchen.

“Philiberte, you clumsy fool! You’ve broken another dish! What in heaven’s name is the matter with you?”

There was a moment’s silence, then a burst of uncontrolled sobbing.

"But I couldn't help it, Benedicta! Truly I couldn't . . ."

"That's a likely story! You'll go without your dinner for this, my fine lady. Mark my words. Now, clean up that mess at once, do you hear? At once!"

"But I don't feel well—"

"Listen, stupid, if you don't do what I say . . ."

There was another burst of tears. Then, after a moment: "All right, Benedicta, I'm sorry. I'll pick up the pieces. Only please don't be angry with me! It was all just an accident. Truly it was!"

Father Anthony sighed and shook his head. Poor Philiberte! Her lot in life had certainly changed for the worse since the death of her beloved Claude five years ago. Before that she had been undisputed mistress of Lhautecour, and Claude the best and most generous of husbands.

Too generous, reflected Father Anthony ruefully, picking his way past the bedraggled geese, chickens and ducks aimlessly scratching in the courtyard. Now if Claude had only been a bit more careful with his money, a bit more insistent that his law clients pay their bills and that the servants should not waste their time, Lhautecour would certainly never have gone to rack and ruin. Then sharp-tongued Benedicta Delaroche and her husband Toussaint would not have had to try to save the place from bankruptcy. Or ill-tempered Catherine either. As for Grandmother, Toussaint's crotchety old mother who had also come to live at the farm—

"Well, may the Will of God be done," murmured the priest, bracing himself for the ordeal that lay ahead. "Lord, give me the right words to say to my sisters—and to Philiberte, too."

There was good need for such a prayer. As Father Anthony pushed open the kitchen door, a frail, black-clad matron of some thirty-eight years immediately abandoned the bits of crockery which she had been trying to sweep into a pile and rushed tearfully toward him.

"Oh, Father! Thank God you've come! I . . . I'm so miserable I could die!"

The priest managed a reassuring smile. "There, there, my dear, what's the trouble? Surely you and Benedicta haven't been quarreling again!"

Across the room Benedicta Delaroche, a gaunt woman of forty-two, drew herself up to her full height. "Quarreling!" she burst out. "Anthony, if you weren't a priest of God and my own brother, I'd send you packing this very minute. As it is, will you tell Philiberte to go upstairs at once? It's high time you and I had an understanding about some things."

"Yes, and I want a few words with you, too," put in a second querulous voice. "I may not have a husband, but surely I ought to have some rights around this wretched place."

Father Anthony turned. His youngest sister Catherine, shabbily dressed and looking far older than her forty years, had followed him in from outside and now was fixing him with a suspicious glance.

"Why, Catherine! I never heard you come in."

"Of course you didn't, Anthony. I never intended that you should. Now, if you'll just send Philiberte about her business . . ."

Madame Alacoque dabbed at her reddened eyes. "Father, I don't have to go, do I? There's *so* much I want to tell you! And Margaret will want to talk to you, too, and to have your blessing. Poor little lamb,



“OH FATHER, I’M SO MISERABLE . . .”

she's dying by inches, Father, and not a soul to care for her but me . . ."

"That's a lie, Philiberte, and you know it!" snapped Benedicta Delaroche. "Margaret has had the best of treatment ever since she took sick four years ago. And who's paid for her food and medicine all that time? Who's kept a roof over her head, and yours? Why, if it weren't for all the hard work my husband and I have put in here at Lhautecour . . ."

Catherine Alacoque's thin lips trembled. "Don't forget that I've worked hard, too, Benedicta. Up early every morning, rain or shine. Scrubbing, cleaning, cooking, mending. And for what, I ask you? Oh, when I think of all that might have been . . ."

Father Anthony squirmed. Poor Catherine! An unfortunate love affair several years ago had completely soured a disposition none too cheerful by nature. Now, unless he were careful, she would begin to recount the whole miserable story for the thousandth time.

"Philiberte, I do think you'd better leave us for a while," he said hastily.

"But Father—"

"It's all right, my dear. We'll have a good visit together later on. I give you my word."

"And Margaret?"

"I'll see her, too. Never fear."

Slowly Madame Alacoque turned toward the door. "Very well," she said heavily. "I'll go."