

Words of Hope

Words of Hope

Jesus Speaks Through the Saints

Edited by Craig Turner

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A NOTE TO THE READER

The primary texts used in this book from which the locutions were taken include:

The Spiritual Doctrine of St. Catherine of Genoa, by Saint Catherine of Genoa and Don Cattaneo Marabotto. TAN Books, 1989. (CoG)

The Autobiography of Saint Margaret Mary, translated by the Sisters of the Visitation (Partridge Green, Horsham, West Sussex). TAN Books, 1986. (MMA)

Saint Teresa of Avila, Collected Works, Vol. 1, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. ICS (Institute of Carmelite Studies) Publications, 1976. (TA)

The Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude the Great (Books I–V), by Saint Gertrude the Great and the Religious of her monastery. TAN Books, 2009. (GG)

Quotes were used as they appear in the original works with the exception of some modernization of the usage of words. For example, “thee” and “thy” were updated to read “you” and “your.”

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INTRODUCTION

I WILL never forget the first time I heard that a person can hear the voice of God. In 1992, I was twenty-nine years old and in the midst of a major conversion experience that would lead me away from my strongly held atheistic convictions and into the Catholic Church. I had prided myself in my skills at debating and oratory, and had convinced some, perhaps many, that God was merely a figment of one's imagination. I was so unschooled in the topic of religion during those early months of my conversion that I didn't even know the meaning of the word "grace," and was taught its meaning while sitting in the office of a holy priest, the first Catholic cleric I would meet as an adult. As my conversion took hold during the fall of that year, a good friend introduced me to the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, the renowned stigmatist who gave up everything he owned—including the clothes on his back, which he returned to his father—to be closer to God.

The story about Saint Francis that moved me is one that has been retold many times. The story began when Francis traveled along a worn path in the Umbrian hills of Italy to pray at the church of San Damiano, a crumbling relic of stone and mortar. The church was so dilapidated and poor, that the only adornments in the building were an altar and a crucifix. While inside the church, kneeling before the large Byzantine crucifix, he distinctly heard the words, "Francis,

Francis, rebuild my church, for as you can see it is falling down.” Three times the youthful Francis heard this sentence in his heart, and when he came to himself after this experience, he first gave back to his father all he owed him, and then returned to rebuild the little decrepit church of San Damiano, overgrown with brambles and weeds. It was a difficult but glorious undertaking that took months to complete. Francis worked by day and slept in the evening on the stone floor of the church with a tattered roof, peering out through the missing timbers at the starry Italian sky before finally dozing off to sleep. When his work at San Damiano was complete, he continued to rebuild, but this time he took on the massive structure of the Catholic Church, considerably larger in both size and complexity. He worked in this vineyard until he died: the founder of a new religious order, a worker of miracles, and a bearer of the stigmata, the wounds of Christ.

During his years as a laborer for Christ, he continued to hear the voice of his master, who guarded him from temptations and directed his soul toward holiness. In one inspiring episode, Francis was tempted to give up his hard labors, being shown a false image of what he would become if he did not cease his fasting, mortifications, and work:

The ancient enemy strove to turn [Francis] away from his resolution, putting the image of a hunchback woman of Assisi in his mind, and warning him that if he did not abandon what he had undertaken, he would become like her. But Our Lord comforted him, and he heard the words, “Francis, put the bitter ahead of the sweet, and despise yourself, if you would know me.”

—The Golden Legend

What is astonishing about the locution Francis received is that Saint Bridget of Sweden, who lived more than a hundred years later, received a nearly identical locution from the Virgin Mary:

“Which of the saints,” Mary said, “had the sweetness of the Spirit without first experiencing bitterness? Therefore, one who craves sweetness must not flee from things that are bitter.”

—Life and Selected Revelations
(Fifth Book, Fifth Interrogation)

Our Lord will repeat his messages through the centuries to those who dare to listen, and while speaking to his servants, will tell them either the exact message again, or a similar communication that reveals even more. Consider the following locution received by Saint Rose of Lima, the sixteenth-century hermit of South America who is Patroness of the Americas:

Our Lord and Savior lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty, “Let all men know that without the burden of afflictions, it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gift of grace increases as the struggle increases.”

Jesus’ statement that one should not flee bitterness if one is to experience the sweetness of the Spirit becomes even more imperative: that to receive the gift of grace one must bear the burden of afflictions. For those who live lives of comfort, this statement can be a terrible thorn. But for those who suffer, the sweetness of these words can be the most succulent of nectars.

Our story, however, is not about these venerable examples of holiness—Francis of Assisi, Bridget of Sweden and Rose of Lima—but about saints whose lives were equally outstanding. In chronological order, they are: Saint Gertrude the Great (1256–1302), Saint Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510), Saint Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690).

These four saints received messages from Jesus that are of inestimable value to Christians seeking holiness. When the faithful meditate devoutly upon these locutions, and, with God's grace, apply the wisdom found therein to their daily lives, great fruit is sure to follow.

Continuity of Messages

One of the most striking proofs of the validity of the messages that Jesus gives to the saints, touched on briefly above, is the continuity of these messages. Regardless of the time, place or culture the recipients live in, and notwithstanding their gender, level of education or social status, the revelations that Jesus gives to the saints never conflict with other messages or the Gospel. Saint Faustina, for example, lived during the twentieth century, but despite the fact that she was uneducated and had not read heavy theological works, was given messages by Jesus that are identical in content to those received by other saints throughout the ages.

Consider, for example, the topic of obedience. Josefa Menendez wrote about the messages she received regarding God's great love for obedience; obedience not only to God Himself, but also to those who are our superiors here on earth. When speaking about Jesus, Josefa asserted: "He showed me

clearly that what pleases Him most is to do little acts out of obedience.”¹

Mary of the Trinity, a contemporary of Josefa Menendez, learned the exact same lesson despite the fact that the two did not know each other. The Master went so far as to tell Mary of the Trinity that obedience carries with it repercussions, not only for her, but for the entire Church and the world.

My little daughter, the least act of obedience, because it is done in union with Me, the least fidelity of your holy rule [the vows taken as a nun], has its repercussions on the entire Church. Would you believe it? In the same way your failings, the smallest of your acts of cowardice, has its repercussion on the entire world—by its consequences. Would you believe it?²

Saint Margaret Mary, living 250 years before Josefa Menendez and Mary of the Trinity, also received messages regarding obedience, and she intoned that one becomes holy through obedience as well as poverty and chastity: “He now changed His manner toward me, making me see the beauty of virtue, especially of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and telling me that by observing them one becomes holy.”³

One of the most important observations we can make is to see that regardless of the culture or time period, Jesus repeats the same message to us. The following are Jesus’

1 Gottenmoller, Bartholomew, ed. *Words of Love: Revelations of Our Lord to Three Victim Souls in the 20th Century*. Charlotte: TAN Books, 2009.

2 Ibid.

3 *The Autobiography of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque*. Charlotte: TAN Books, 2009.

words to different people during different centuries regarding obedience:

Thirteenth Century

“Whoever observes the regular [six-month] fast because of zeal for religious observance and purely for My love, and who seeks not his own advantage but Mine, I will accept it from him. . . . But if obedience and necessity obliges him to relax his fast against his will, and he submits in union with the humility with which I submitted to men when on earth for the glory of My Father, I will treat him as a friend would his dearest friend whom he had invited to his table.” (GG)

Sixteenth Century

Regarding the penance that another nun would undertake, Jesus said: “Do you see all the penance she does? I value your obedience more.” (TA)

Seventeenth Century

“But listen, believe not lightly and trust not every spirit, for Satan is enraged and will seek to deceive you. Therefore do nothing without the approval of those who guide you. Being thus under the authority of obedience, his efforts against you will be in vain, for he has no power over the obedient.” (MMA)

“I am satisfied that you should prefer the will of your superiors to Mine whenever they may forbid you to do what I command you.” (MMA)

“Therefore, not only do I desire that you should do what your superiors command, but also that you should do nothing at all that I order you without their consent. I love obedience, and without it no one can please me.” (MMA)

Twentieth Century

“Know this, that if I should ask one thing of you and your superiors another, I prefer you to obey them rather than me.”⁴

“Every time you obey, you offer Me through visible actions the invisible love with which I fill your heart.”⁵

“By obedience you give great glory to Me and gain merit for yourself.”⁶

“My daughter, know that you give Me greater glory by a single act of obedience than by long prayers and mortifications.”⁷

This final message, given to Saint Faustina during the twentieth century, is striking. Jesus indicates that long prayers and mortifications are of less value to Him than a single act of obedience. His statement does not mean that prayers and mortifications are of no value, because Jesus has spoken many

4 Josefa Menendez in *Words of Love: Revelations of Our Lord to Three Victim Souls in the 20th Century* edited by Gottenmoller, Bartholomew. Charlotte: TAN Books, 2009.

5 Mary of the Trinity in *Ibid.*

6 Saint Faustina in *Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*. Stockbridge, Mass.: Marian Press, 1987.

7 *Ibid.*

times of the beauty and worth of even the smallest prayers and sacrifices. But consider that of even greater value than these is a small act done out of obedience.

Thus, the synthesis of these messages is that Jesus values obedience to an extraordinary degree, and that the faithful Christian must live an obedient life in order to please the Master. We read in Scripture the echo of this idea, because it is through Adam and Eve's disobedience that we contract a mortal blow we refer to as "original sin."

Before we move to the actual texts, it is important to consider briefly the lives of the saints who are the basis of this book, so that we might not only marvel at their gifts, but also attempt to imitate their lives.

Saint Biographies

St. Gertrude the Great (1256–1302)

Saint Gertrude is one of the few saints, and the only female saint, to be recognized by the Catholic Church with the appellation, "the Great." She is well-known and beloved for her many writings and extraordinary holiness. Her family entrusted her to the Benedictine convent at Helfta in Saxony (now part of Germany) when she was only five years old and she subsequently made her vows at fifteen. She was elected abbess of her Benedictine monastery in 1294. She ruled with charity and zeal and was well known as an excellent spiritual guide. Starting at age twenty-five, she was blessed with many visions of Jesus and Mary, many of which have been recounted in the 500-page autobiography *The Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude the Great*. She also wrote a book of spiritual exercises

that still inspires many today. One of her closest friends also became a saint—Saint Mechtilde—and many of the anecdotes in that autobiography refer to their friendship.

Many of Saint Gertrude's prayers still inspire people today, particularly the following prayer, which Jesus told her would release a thousand souls from Purgatory each time it is said:

O eternal Father, I offer you the Most Precious Blood of your divine son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, for those in my own home and within my family. Amen.

Saint Gertrude was also among the first people to be devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on which her love was centered some 400 years before that symbol was given more concisely to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. Saint Gertrude taught many people, through her teachings and her many writings, that God is merciful and wants each person to talk to him as they would a trusted friend, a novel concept during her lifetime. At that time, the more prevalent notion was of God as a stern and distant sovereign who was to be feared rather than loved.

One exceptional favor received by the saint is referred to as her “mystical marriage” to Jesus. After receiving many graces from Our Lord which she recounts in Chapter 21 of her book *Life and Revelations*, she told Jesus that He “had not assured me of these favors by solemn contract.” To this Jesus replied, “Do not complain of this; approach and receive the confirmation of My promises.” Jesus then opened both His

hands and revealed His heart. Gertrude was told to extend her hand, and after receiving a gift, was told by Jesus that He would preserve the gifts He had given her. She said:

After these most sweet words, as I withdrew my hand,
I perceived seven golden circlets in the form of rings,
one on each finger, and three on the signet finger,
which indicated that the seven privileges were confirmed to me as I had asked.

This extraordinary favor is commemorated by the Church in Saint Gertrude's Office, which appears at the third antiphon at Lauds. It reads: "My Lord Jesus has espoused me to Him with seven rings, and crowned me as a bride."

Saint Gertrude died November 17, 1302 at the age of forty-six. Her feast day is November 16.

St. Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510)

Located about seventy-five miles South of Milan, meandering along a narrow coastal plain adjacent to the western slopes of the Apennine Mountains, lies the historic and picturesque city of Genoa, Italy. The city's western edge shares the tranquil coastline of the Ligurian Sea in Italy's northwest, between Tuscany and the border of France.

It was here in 1447, four years before the birth of Christopher Columbus in this city, that Saint Catherine of Genoa (Caterina Fieschi Adorno), wife, widow and mystic, was born. The Renaissance also began in this region: Leonardo da Vinci was born about the same time (1452) in Florence, and Michelangelo was born in Tuscany only twenty-three years later.

A member of the nobility, Catherine's father, Jacopo Fieschi, enjoyed the esteemed position of Viceroy of Naples, which he held until his death. Her mother, Francesca di Negro, also of noble birth, was the daughter of Sigismund, Marquis di Negro.

As a child, Catherine demonstrated extraordinary holiness and love of God. Even as a little girl, we are told, she earnestly dedicated herself to lengthy prayer, meditation and penance, and she was well known for her deep and single-minded love of Jesus' passion.

When she was about thirteen years of age, Catherine made known her wishes to enter a convent and dedicate her life as a religious nun. She was understandably rejected at the time, however, because of her tender years. Ever obedient and resigned to her parents and to Church authority, she did not persist in pushing her personal desires. In fact, three years later she dutifully was given in marriage to a young Genoese man, also of noble birth, Giuliano Adorno. As was the custom, Giuliano had been chosen for Catherine in a pre-arranged union.

It would be nice to relate that Catherine rode off into the sunset and lived happily ever after, but it was, unfortunately, not to be so. Catherine's marriage was disastrous. Giuliano had a violent temper, spent their money mindlessly and was persistently unfaithful to her. True to her nature, Catherine silently and stoically endured Giuliano's constant abuse for the first five years of their marriage. Although he was of a noble family, he conducted their personal and financial affairs so poorly that the couple was reduced to abject poverty.

Showing early signs of a “saintly” disposition, Catherine was always obedient and patient with Giuliano’s whims and eccentricities. At the same time, however, she suffered so much from his mercurial emotions that she was barely able to preserve her health and sanity. She finally became so exhausted and emaciated that she was as a living ghost, almost a walking object of pity.

For the first five years of her marriage Catherine lived alone and miserable most of the time because of her husband’s prolonged, wanton absences. Attempting to keep the peace and to avoid his tantrums, she never left their residence except to attend Mass. Afterwards she would rush home as quickly as possible in order to avoid upsetting Giuliano.

Catherine endured this wretched lifestyle for as long as she could, and then decided she yearned for something better than the life of an unhappy recluse. For roughly the next five years she sought comfort and solace through innocent worldly distractions, hoping to take her mind off her marital problems and her enforced loneliness. She associated with other young ladies and tried to occupy herself with worldly affairs as they did.

No happier after these five years of aimless living, and by now trapped in a bad marriage for ten years, Catherine felt completely lost. With only a lukewarm love for God by this time, she began praying in earnest for the return of her religious zeal, her love of Christ’s Passion and the strength to resume the penitential regimen she practiced as a young girl. Soon afterward she abandoned her “wandering” way of life for good. She began living with her husband in complete

continence rather than as a married couple. Yet any semblance of peace or happiness still eluded her.

Catherine had been overwhelmed with mental suffering during this time and grew to despise everything connected with the world. She shunned the company of other people and suffered from such a deep depression that it kept her from taking part in any events or activities.

Her sister, a nun, became increasingly concerned about Catherine's state of mind, and finally insisted that she go to confession at her convent since their confessor was regarded as a holy man. Catherine's sister added that if the confessor couldn't help her, at least she would receive his blessing. Very reluctantly, but realizing that she needed the help, Catherine agreed.

This difficult decision ushered in a life-changing experience for Catherine, and a true miracle. After arriving at the convent she knelt in the confessional to give her confession, but was suddenly wounded with what could only be described as "the immensity of the love of God." The experience so overwhelmed her that she lost consciousness and fell into a mystical trance.

During the confession but just before she fell into her mystical trance, the confessor was providentially called away from the confessional for a few moments to attend to another matter. By the time he returned to hear Catherine's confession, she had no ability to speak clearly—she could only mumble that she needed to put off her confession until a later time. She immediately exited the confessional and returned home.

From the moment of her mystical illumination, Saint Catherine's interior life and relationship with God were

radically changed, and would remain so for the rest of her life. While still alive, she was given the grace and realization of being placed mystically in the “Purgatory” of God’s burning love, in whose flames she was purified from every stain of sin. She would fast each Advent and Lent for thirty and forty days, subsisting on only water mixed with vinegar or salt. Remarkably, her associates noticed no change in demeanor or energy from the saint during this time.

After her miraculous experience in the confessional, not much is recorded about her exterior life. But we do know that Catherine’s husband, Giuliano, experienced his own conversion at a later time and became a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis. He subsequently incurred a fatal illness which took his life.

As Giuliano’s end drew near, Catherine withdrew to a private place to pray intensely for him. There she cried and begged Jesus for the conversion of her husband. “O Love, I beg of you this soul. I pray, give it to me, for you can do it.” She persisted intensely for thirty minutes praying in this manner, and then heard Our Lord interiorly say to her that her prayer had been answered. She returned to her husband’s chamber to find him so calm and changed that, by every word and act, he was a different man. He died a holy death in 1497.

After the death of Giuliano until her own death, Catherine devoted herself uninterruptedly to the care of the sick in Genoa’s hospital. She spent so much time there and was so proficient in her work that she eventually became manager and treasurer of the hospital. But the heavy labors and the burden of running the hospital took its toll on her health, and she died nearly exhausted in 1510. Upon opening her casket

years later, witnesses found her body incorrupt, showing no signs of decay.

Saint Catherine is the source of three celebrated works: *Dialogues of the Soul and Body*, and two uniquely insightful works entitled *The Life and Doctrine of Saint Catherine of Genoa*, and *Treatise on Purgatory*.

St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

Born under the Catholic monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella during the sixteenth century when Spain's dominance in the world was at its zenith, Saint Teresa of Avila became one of the greatest mystics of the Faith. A pious child but worldly teenager, Teresa nevertheless heard God's call and ran away from her father's house to enter the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation. Teresa's spiritual experiences began as she immersed herself in prayer. While Teresa received little guidance in prayer from her monastery other than the Divine Office, a book entitled *Third Spiritual Alphabet* by the Franciscan Osuna propelled her forward into a life of interior, or mental, prayer. This prayer she saw as "an intimate sharing between friends . . . taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us."

The friendship between God and Teresa developed to such a degree that she often heard His voice and was totally enraptured by His presence, unaware of her surroundings and unable to move. A magnificent Renaissance sculpture by Bernini called *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* sprang from her account in Chapter 29 of her autobiography of one of the most remarkable raptures of unity she experienced during her lifetime:

I saw an angel, very near me toward my left side, in bodily form. . . . His face was so shining that he seemed to be one of those highest angels called seraphs, who look as if all on fire with divine love. I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails. When he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan, and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God.

Teresa's superiors ordered her to write an account of her life, in which she describes many of her mystical experiences. She was seen at times levitating while in prayer, produced a multiplication of wine for forty workers at a construction project, was transfigured with a face "shining resplendently" on more than one occasion, and was accompanied at times by a heavenly scent so strong that, after she died, the doors and windows of the building had to be opened because the aroma was so overpowering. Like Saint Catherine of Genoa, her body did not decay after death.

Though afflicted with severe mysterious illnesses throughout her life, Teresa's apostolic activity was intense. Her apostolate was a perfect blend of contemplation and action that brought rich fruit to the life of the Carmelite Order, to the Church and to the world. Desiring to restore the Carmelite Order to its original state by minimizing all the comforts and social pleasures that had crept into the Order over the years (such as fancy meals, social time with outsiders and a

less-than-rigorous prayer life), Teresa founded a new house in Avila designed to be more austere. She was severely opposed. However, God Himself directed her work and the monastery of Saint Joseph was founded in 1562 for prayer, asceticism and austerity.

With the exception of five peaceful years Teresa spent with her sisters at Saint Joseph's and three years as prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation, Teresa responded to the call of God to found house after house throughout Spain with toil and hardship. In twenty years she founded sixteen reformed Carmelite monasteries for nuns (today referred to as convents) and had a hand in founding numerous houses for friars. Teresa was a tireless traveler and endured great physical duress on these trips.

Teresa's final foundation was in Burgos, northern Spain, in April of 1582. Weary and extremely ill after this last foundation, she traveled to Alba de Tormes to visit a friend, stopping along the way at her Carmelite houses. She was not greeted warmly and endured hostility from the prioresses until at last she arrived in early October at Alba de Tormes. Taking to bed, she received the Last Rites and died in the arms of her faithful companion, exclaiming, "O my Lord, now is the time that we shall see each other!"

It is difficult to exaggerate the greatness of this saint, who was canonized in 1622, forty years after her death, and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1970. She made full use of the gifts that God had given her: strength and courage against great odds, true humility in relying totally on God's grace, intelligence, boldness and obedience. Teresa's deep prayer life allowed her to become one of the Church's

greatest teachers; it also was the foundation of her apostolic activity in reforming the Carmelite order and founding numerous convents across Spain and Portugal. Above all, her life witnessed to the greatness of God, not only of His power, but of His love.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690)

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque was born on July 22, 1647 in Lhautecur, France, the fifth of seven children. At age four, without knowing its meaning, she found herself continually saying: “O my God, I consecrate to You my purity, and I make You a vow of perpetual chastity.” Not surprisingly, Our Lord gave her such “an awareness of the hideousness of sin” that for her “the least stain was insupportable torment.” Young Margaret also developed a great devotion to the Blessed Mother, who once, however, reprimanded her as she was reciting the rosary while seated in a chair with these words: “I am surprised, my daughter, that you serve me so negligently.”

At age eight, six months after her father died, Margaret went to a convent school, and remained there for two years, the only formal education she would receive. She made her first Holy Communion there at nine years of age but had to leave because of illness. Margaret determined then to become a nun if she was cured.

Margaret and her ill mother were forced to live under the total control of three relatives. Neither of them had “any power in the house and dared not do anything without permission,” she wrote later. It was as if they were captive slaves in their own home. Margaret accepted this trying

situation, seeking strength and consolation from the Blessed Sacrament. Unfortunately, she was often denied permission to go to church.

Although Margaret was cured shortly after leaving the convent school, she struggled until age twenty-three with the conflicting desire to become a religious and her mother's plea to marry and take care of her. This caused her great torment and she frequently vacillated between these two desires. Throughout most of her life, she also fought two constant fears: sinning and being deceived.

She eventually chose to enter the convent but refused to join the Ursulines where friends and family expected her to go. She instead joined the Visitation nuns at Paray-le-Monial, a community founded by St. Francis de Sales. This was a religious order where none of the sisters were expected to seek, desire, or manifest any extraordinary spiritual gifts. Margaret sought not to bring any attention to herself, but the spiritual gifts and struggles and physical ailments God had given her were of such a nature that many of her fellow religious thought that she was possessed.

Margaret constantly struggled between doing what she felt God was prompting her to do and what her superiors directed her to do. The two directions often conflicted and caused her great spiritual torment and uncertainty. Eventually, the Lord told her to obey her superiors and to trust Him. She followed that advice, although at times it was very difficult for her to do so.

Our Lord once told her how greatly He loved men, even those from whom He received only ingratitude and contempt, telling her:

I feel this more than all that I suffered during My passion. If only they would make Me some return for My love, I should think but little of all I have done for them and would wish, were it possible, to suffer still more. But the sole return they make for all My eagerness to do them good is to reject Me and treat Me with coldness.

Margaret agreed to console Him and make reparation on behalf of those who had rejected His love by receiving Holy Communion as often as obedience permitted it, by receiving Communion on the First Friday of each month, and by praying and reflecting on His passion every Thursday evening from eleven p.m. to midnight.

During another revelation, Our Lord showed Margaret His Sacred Heart for the first time and told her:

My Divine Heart is so inflamed with love for men, and for you in particular that, being unable any longer to contain within itself the flames of its burning charity, it must spread them abroad by your means, and manifest itself to [mankind] in order to enrich them with the precious treasures which I [reveal] to you, and which contain graces of sanctification and salvation necessary to withdraw them from the abyss of perdition.

In 1674, after allowing Margaret to repose on His Sacred Heart, Our Lord asked for her heart, placed it in His and returning it called her “the beloved disciple of My Sacred

Heart.” About one year later (June 16, 1675), Our Lord again appeared with His Sacred Heart exposed, telling Margaret:

Behold this heart, which has loved men so much, that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself in order to testify to them its love; and in return I receive from the greater number nothing but ingratitude by reason of their irreverence and sacrileges, and by the coldness and contempt which they show Me in this sacrament of love. But what I feel the most keenly is that it is hearts which are consecrated to Me, that treat Me thus.

He then asked for the First Friday devotion to be established, requesting that the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi:

Be set apart for a special feast to honor My heart, by communicating on that day and making reparation to it by a solemn act, in order to make amends for the indignities which it has received during the time it has been exposed on the altars. I promise you that My heart shall expand itself to shed upon those who shall thus honor it, and cause it to be honored.

Our Lord told Margaret to share this direction with her confessor, Saint Claude de la Colombiere, S.J., and assured her that this saintly priest would help her implement His plans. Eventually, through various signs from God, her superiors came to see that Margaret was in fact being led by Jesus and assisted her in founding the special devotions He had asked her to establish. The Church first celebrated this special feast day on August 31, 1670.

A subsequent confessor of Margaret, Father John Croiset, S.J., also helped promote this devotion through a book (recently reprinted) entitled *Devotion to the Sacred Heart*. In it, he sets forth a number of promises made by Our Lord for those who practice devotion to His Sacred Heart, including a way to bring profound graces to even the most obdurate souls, a method to obtain peace and harmony amongst people, and one of the greatest methods to conquer even the strongest passions and vices.

Saint Margaret Mary died on October 17, 1690. She was beatified in 1824 and canonized in 1920.

Words of Hope

Abandonment to God's Will

“My goodness is such that when anyone has the will to perform a good action, I count it as done and recompense it as if it were accomplished, even if human frailty prevents its accomplishment.” (GG)

“I require nothing from you but to come to Me empty, that I may fill you, for it is from Me that you receive all which makes you agreeable in My sight.” (GG)

“What bride would complain of the time spent adorning herself for her bridegroom, or regret occasions of increasing his love? For after death the soul cannot [gain] merit, nor can it suffer anything for God.” (GG)

Saint Margaret Mary prayed that Our Lord would never let anyone see what she had written in her journal about her spiritual experiences. He responded: “Abandon everything to My good pleasure and let Me accomplish My designs. Do not interfere in anything, for I will take care of it all.” (MMA)

As Saint Gertrude prayed for someone, that he might receive the full reward of his troublesome labors for the temporal good of the community. Our Lord said to her: “His will is so entirely submitted to Mine that I am always the principle cause of his actions, and for this reason he will merit an inestimable recompense for all his thoughts, his words and his works. If he applies himself to each action with a still greater purity of

intention, he will increase his merit even as gold exceeds silver in value. If he endeavors to refer all his thoughts and anxieties to Me with a yet purer intention, they will become as much more excellent as refined gold is in comparison of that which is allowed with a baser metal." (GG)

"Even as the body is composed of many members united together, so also the soul consists of affections, such as fear, grief, joy, love, hope, anger, modesty, [etc]. In the exercise of each, the more [a] man acts for My glory, the more he will find in Me that incomprehensible and ineffable joy, and that secure delight, which will prepare him for eternal happiness." (GG)

Jesus said: "When a bridegroom conducts his bride into a garden of roses to gather them for a bouquet, she takes so much pleasure in his sweet conversation that she never pauses to inquire which of the roses he would wish her to gather, but she takes whatever flower her bridegroom gives her and places it in her bouquet. So also the faithful soul, whose greatest pleasure is the accomplishment of My will and [who] delights in it as in a garden of roses, is indifferent whether I restore her health or take her out of the present life, because, being full of confidence, she abandons herself entirely to My paternal care." (GG)

"He who is constantly suffering and still conforms himself to the decrees of Providence offers Me gold enriched with very rare and precious stones." (GG)

"I am the only true Friend who in dire necessity will console the afflicted with the merit and glory of all the good works they have practiced during their whole life, whether by thoughts, words, or actions. These shall appear scattered

over My vestments like roses and lilies; while this delightful vision shall revive in the soul its hopes of eternal life, to which it beholds itself invited in recompense for its good works." (GG)

Saint Gertrude prayed for someone who said she did not seem to receive any fruit from her prayers. The Lord told her: "Let her confide in My wisdom and My divine mercy, since I am her father, her brother and her spouse, and I will obtain what will be advantageous for her body and soul with far more care and fidelity than she would for any relative. I will preserve carefully the fruit of all the prayers and desires which are addressed to Me for her until a suitable time comes to permit her to the enjoyment of them; then I will commit them to her entirely when no one will be able to corrupt them or to deprive her of them by their importunities. This is far more useful to her than to pour into her soul some sweetness which might, perhaps, be an occasion of vainglory to her or become tarnished by her pride, or than to grant her some temporal prosperity which might prove an occasion of sin." (GG)

"When anyone has lost, or fears to lose [by death] a faithful friend, if they offer Me this affliction and would rather My will should be accomplished than their friend should live, they may be assured if they form this desire in their hearts even for a single hour that I will preserve their offering in the same beauty and freshness as it was presented to Me. All those griefs and inquietudes which overwhelm man through the weakness of his human nature will only serve to make place in their souls for divine consolations after the offering of which I have spoken. I will bestow on them as many consolations as they have suffered afflictions. There is nothing which can be renounced in this life, however great,

which will not be restored a hundredfold in this life and a thousandfold in eternity.” (GG)

“If anyone desires, for love of Me, to undertake any painful work by which he fears to be hindered from his devotions, if he prefers the accomplishment of My will to his soul’s good, I will so esteem the purity of his intention as to consider it as if it had really been carried into action. Even if he never commences what he has undertaken, he will not fail to obtain the same reward from Me as if he had accomplished it and had never committed the least negligence in the matter.” (GG)

“If you desire that I should act as I will with you, give Me the key of your heart, that I may leave or take away whatever I please.” “And what is this key?” *inquired Saint Gertrude.* [*Jesus*] *answered:* “It is your will.” (GG)

Once, Our Lord said to Saint Gertrude: “If I granted you at the moment of your death the accomplishment of all the holy desires which you have entertained, it would be little in comparison with the grace I am about to confer on you. Choose whether you will die now or suffer a long sickness first, that you may know something of the infirmities of a protracted illness. *The saint replied:* “Lord, do Your holy will.” *He answered:* “You do right to submit to My decision, and if you consent, for My love, to remain longer in the body, I will establish My abode in your heart as a dove in its nest; and at the same time I will hide you in My Heart from whence I will lead you forth to eternal joys.” (GG)

After resolving to die rather than again abandon her desire for a religious life, Saint Margaret Mary heard her divine spouse ask her, “whether, considering my weakness, I would agree to

His taking possession and making Himself master of my liberty. I willingly consented, and from that time forth He took such firm hold of my liberty that I never more enjoyed the use of it." *At a later date, Jesus told her*, "I will make you understand hereafter that I am a wise and learned director, who knows how to lead souls safely when they abandon themselves to Me and forget themselves." (MMA)

Jesus said to Saint Margaret Mary: "Let Me do everything in its time. For I will have you now to be the sport of My love, treating you according to its good pleasure, as children treat their play things. You must, therefore, abandon yourself blindly and without resistance, allowing Me to please Myself at your expense. You will lose nothing thereby. . . . Be ever ready and disposed to receive Me, for henceforth, I will make My abode in you that I may be able to hold familiar converse with you." (MMA)

Saint Margaret Mary wrote: "Moreover, He willed that I should receive everything as coming from Him without procuring anything for myself; that I should abandon all to Him without disposing of anything . . . that I should thank Him for suffering as well as for enjoyment . . . that on the most painful and humiliating occasions I should consider that I not only deserve these, but even greater ones . . . that I should offer the pain I experienced for the persons who afflicted me . . . that I was always to speak of Him with great respect, of my neighbor with esteem and compassion, and of myself never, or, at least, briefly and with contempt, unless for His glory He should make Me do otherwise . . . that I was ever to attribute all the good and the glory to His sovereign greatness, and all the evil to myself; never to seek consolation out of Him, and even when He granted it to me, to renounce and offer it to

Him. I was to cling to nothing, to empty and despoil myself of everything, to love nothing but Him, in Him and for the love of Him, and to see in all things nothing but Him and the interests of His glory in complete forgetfulness of myself.” (MMA)

After making her annual confession, Saint Margaret Mary seemed to see and to feel herself stripped and, at the same time, clothed with a white robe, while hearing these words: “Behold the robe of innocence with which I clothe your soul, that you may henceforth live only the life of a man-God—that is to say, that you may live as no longer living, but allow Me to live in you—for I am your life, and you shall no longer live but in Me and by Me. My will is that you should act as no longer acting, leaving Me to act and work in you and for you, and abandoning all to My care. You must henceforth have no will, letting Me will for you in everything and everywhere as though you had none.” (MMA)

After Jesus had said this, she wrote that He continued His discourse by saying: “O children of the earth! How long will you be hard of heart?” (MMA)

Jesus said [to Saint Teresa] that “I should examine one thing in myself: whether I was totally surrendered to Him or not [and] that if I was, I should believe He would not let me go astray.” (TA) *Once, when Saint Teresa was anxiously desiring to help her order, the Carmelites, Jesus said to her: “Do what lies in your power. Surrender yourself to Me and do not be disturbed about anything. Rejoice in the good that has been given you, for it is very great. My Father takes His delight in you and the Holy Spirit loves you.”* (TA)