

# THE HOLY EUCHARIST

*Translated from the Italian of*

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE



In the tranquil embrace of the eighteenth century, amidst the ever-changing currents of human history, there emerged a luminous figure whose life and teachings continue to resonate with profound wisdom and devotion even today. This monumental five book set you now hold is a tribute to the enduring legacy of a man who remains an exemplar of piety, scholarship, and spiritual insight—Saint Alphonsus Liguori.

Born on September 27, 1696, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, during his earthly sojourn, achieved remarkable heights that would shape the course of Catholic theology and spirituality for generations to come. His sanctity and theological acumen were recognized by the Church when he was declared Venerable on May 4, 1796, followed by his beatification in 1816, and ultimate canonization in 1839. In 1871, his intellectual contributions were further acknowledged when he was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church.

July 30, a date etched in the hearts of the faithful, marks the feast day of this Doctor of the Church. Saint Alphonsus Liguori earned the sobriquet “The Prince of Moral Theologians” for his profound insights into moral theology, a body of work that has served as a guiding light for countless souls seeking ethical and spiritual clarity.

This five book set showcases the richness and depth of Saint Alphonsus's theological and spiritual writings. His literary output, spanning over one hundred books, is a testament to his dedication to sharing the treasures of the Catholic Faith with the world. Through these pages, readers will have the privilege of delving into the profound wisdom of a man whose teachings have touched hearts and transformed lives for centuries.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori's singular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary earned him the title of the "Marian Doctor of the Church." His works, such as *The Glories of Mary*, are a resplendent tribute to the Mother of God, illuminating her role in the Christian faith and her maternal intercession for all believers.

In addition to his theological contributions, Saint Alphonsus Liguori founded the Redemptorist Order, a spiritual family dedicated to imitating Christ's mission of proclaiming redemption to the most abandoned. His devotion to the Eucharist, explored in *The Holy Eucharist*, underscores the central importance of the Blessed Sacrament in the life of the Church and the believer.

This set also includes Saint Alphonsus's reflections on the passion and death of Jesus Christ, the incarnation, birth, and infancy of Jesus Christ, and *Preparation for Death*, addressing crucial aspects of Christian faith and the human experience.

As we embark on this literary journey through the works of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, may we be inspired by his unwavering faith, intellectual brilliance, and his deep love for Christ and His Church. May these volumes serve as a beacon of light, guiding readers toward a deeper understanding of their

faith, a closer relationship with God, and a more profound appreciation of the saintly legacy of Saint Alphonsus Liguori.

In the spirit of the saint himself, may these pages inspire us all to live lives of holiness, virtue, and unwavering devotion to Our Lord and His Mother, Mary.

—Conor Gallagher  
CEO and Publisher of TAN Books



PART I

THE SACRIFICE OF  
JESUS CHRIST

I acknowledge to have drawn this little treatise on the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ from a work composed by a learned French author.<sup>1</sup> His work is complete and somewhat diffuse. I

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<sup>1</sup> This is, however, not a mere abridgment that St. Alphonsus gives us. As was usual with him, he appropriated the subject and treated it after his own manner by confining himself to quoting on some points the opinion of the French author. What he ascribes to the latter is found, nearly word for word, in the book entitled “L’Idée du Sacerdoce et du Sacrifice de Jésus-Christ, par le R. P. De Condren, etc. Par un Prêtre de l’Oratoire.” We doubt, however, whether this excellent work is that which our Saint had before him; for it appears to us that such a work cannot be called anonymous, though the learned Oratorian who published it in 1677 gives in the title-page only his title, and the initials of his name in his dedication, by signing himself P. Q. (This is Father Pasquier Quesnel, who later on became unfortunately so famous.) This doubt is confirmed by the remark that we add further on, page 15, and is changed almost into certainty in view of a passage that we read on page 25, and that we have not seen in the aforesaid work. We therefore believe that there exists a more recent work in which “L’Idée” of Father De Condren is reproduced in an incomplete manner and without the name of the author.—Ed.

have composed and have published this abridgment because of the profit that may be derived from it, not only by the priests who say Mass, but by the faithful who are present at it.

My little work bears the title "The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ," for, although we distinguish by different names the Sacrifice of the Cross from the Sacrifice of the Altar, yet it is substantially the same sacrifice. In fact, we find at the altar the same victim and the same priest that one day offered himself on the cross. The Sacrifice of the Altar is a continuation or a renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and differs from it only in the manner in which it is offered.

I.  
THE SACRIFICES OF THE OLD  
LAW WERE FIGURES OF THE  
SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST



All the sacrifices of the old law were figures of the sacrifice of our divine Redeemer, and there were four kinds of these sacrifices; namely, the sacrifices of peace, of thanksgiving, of expiation, and of impetration.

1. The *sacrifices of peace* were instituted to render to God the worship of adoration that is due to him as the sovereign master of all things. Of this kind were the holocausts.

2. The *sacrifices of thanksgiving* were destined to give thanks to the Lord for all his benefits.

3. The *sacrifices of expiation* were established to obtain the pardon of sin. This kind of sacrifice was specially represented in the Feast of the Expiation by the emissary-goat,<sup>2</sup> which, having been laden with all the sins of the people, was led forth out of the camp of the Hebrews, and afterwards abandoned in the desert to be there devoured by ferocious beasts. This sacrifice was the most expressive figure of the sacrifice of the cross. Jesus Christ was laden with all the sins of men, as Isaias had foretold: *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us*

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<sup>2</sup> *Lev. xvi. 8.*

*all.*<sup>3</sup> He was afterwards ignominiously led forth from Jerusalem, whither the Apostle invites us to follow him by sharing in his opprobrium: *Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*<sup>4</sup> He was abandoned to ferocious beasts; that is to say, to the Gentiles, who crucified him.

4. Finally, the *sacrifices of impetration* had for their object to obtain from God his aid and his grace.

Now, all these sacrifices were abolished by the coming of the Redeemer, because only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was a perfect sacrifice, while all the ancient sacrifices were imperfect, was sufficient to expiate all the sins, and merit for man every grace. This is the reason why the Son of God on entering the world said to his Father: *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold, I come; in the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do Thy will, O God.*<sup>5</sup> Hence, by offering to God the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we can fulfil all our duties towards his supreme majesty, and provide for all our wants; and by this means we succeed in maintaining a holy intercourse between God and ourselves.

We must also know that the Old Law exacted five conditions in regard to the victims which were to be offered to God so as to be agreeable to him; namely, sanctification, oblation, immolation, consumption, and participation.

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<sup>3</sup> "Et posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum."—*Isa.* liii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> "Exeamus igitur ad eum extra castra, improperium ejus portantes."—*Heb.* xiii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> "Hostiam et oblationem noluisti, corpus autem aptasti mihi; holocaustomata pro peccato non tibi placuerunt; tunc dixi: Ecce venio; in capite libri scriptum est de me, ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam."—*Heb.* x. 5.

1. The victim had to be *sanctified*, or consecrated to God, so that there might not be offered to him anything that was not holy nor unworthy of his majesty. Hence, the animal destined for sacrifice had to be without stain, without defect; it was not to be blind, lame, weak, nor deformed, according to what was prescribed in the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>6</sup> This condition indicated that such would be the Lamb of God, the victim promised for the salvation of the world; that is to say, that he would be holy, and exempt from every defect. We are thereby instructed that our prayers and our other good works are not worthy of being offered to God, or at least can never be fully agreeable to him, if they are in any way defective. Moreover, the animal thus sanctified could no longer be employed for any profane usage, and was regarded as a thing consecrated to God in such a manner that only a priest was permitted to touch it. This shows us how displeasing it is to God if persons consecrated to him busy themselves without real necessity with the things of the world, and thus live in distraction and in neglect of what concerns the glory of God.

2. The victim had to be *offered* to God; this was done by certain words that the Lord himself had prescribed.

3. It had to be *immolated*, or put to death; but this immolation was not always brought about by death, properly so called; for the sacrifice of the loaves of proposition, or show-bread, was accomplished, for example, without using iron or fire, but only by means of the natural heat of those who ate of them.

4. The victim had to be *consumed*. This was done by fire. The sacrifice in which the victim was entirely consumed by fire was called holocaust. The latter was thus entirely annihilated

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<sup>6</sup> Deut. xv. 21.



in order to indicate by this destruction the unlimited power that God has over all his creatures, and that as he created them out of nothing, so he can reduce them to the nothingness from which they came. In fact, the principal end of the sacrifice is to acknowledge God as a sovereign being, so superior to all things that everything before him is purely nothing; for all things are nothing in presence of him who possesses all things in himself. The smoke that came from this sacrifice and arose in the air signified that God received it as a sweet odor,—that is to say, with pleasure,—as is written of the sacrifice of Noe: *Noe . . . offered holocausts upon the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savor.*<sup>7</sup>

5. All the people, together with the priest, had to be partakers of the victim. Hence, in the sacrifices, excepting the holocaust, the victim was divided into three parts, one part of which was destined for the priest, one for the people, and one for the fire. This last part was regarded as belonging to God, who by this means communicated in some manner with those who were partakers of the victim.

These five conditions are found reunited in the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. The Lord had commanded Moses<sup>8</sup> that, on the tenth day of the month on which the Jews had been delivered from the slavery of Egypt, a lamb of one year and without blemish should be taken and separated from the flock; and thus were verified the conditions enumerated above, namely: 1. The separation of the lamb signified that it was a victim *consecrated* to God; 2. This consecration was succeeded by the *oblation*, which took place in the Temple, where

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<sup>7</sup> “Noe . . . obtulit holocausta super altare; odoratusque est Dominus odorem suavitatis.”—*Gen.* viii. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Exod.* xii. 3.

the lamb was presented; 3. On the fourteenth day of the month the *immolation* took place, or the lamb was killed; 4. Then the lamb was roasted and divided among those present; and this was the partaking of it, or communion; 5. Finally, the lamb having been eaten, what remained of it was *consumed* by fire, and thus was the sacrifice consummated.

# THE GLORIES OF MARY

*Translated from the Italian of*

**ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI**

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Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

*Revised by*

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Late Bishop of Southwark

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## NOTICE



The present edition of *The Glories of Mary* has been revised and corrected in so far as was necessary.

The Translator of the first edition bestowed much pains and labour in verifying the numerous quotations which occur in the work; he carefully compared and corrected all the quotations with the originals from which they are taken. In the few instances in which he was unable to procure the authors or to find the quotations, he put this sign † not to denote that they do not exist, but simply to indicate that he did not pledge himself to them.

In 1862 the Rev. Father Dujardin, C.S.S.R., published a French Translation of *The Glories of Mary*. In his preface he states that he has carefully verified all the quotations, and that he vouches for their exactitude.

We have therefore gladly availed ourselves of that portion of his work, and have collated all the quotations and references given in the first English edition with those given by Father Dujardin.

Some of the Indulgences granted to certain devotions have been corrected on the authority of the *Raccolta*.


It may be remarked here that in older editions of the works of St. Anselm, the treatise *de Excellentia Virginis*,

so often quoted by St. Alphonsus, is attributed to him, but in later editions it is given as the work of another author.

R. A. C., C.SS.R.  
St. Mary's, Clapham  
August 17, 1868

\* *Œuvres complètes de St. Alphonse de Liguori*, traduites de l'Italien par Léopold J. Dujardin, de la Congrégation du Très-Saint Rédempteur. *Gloires de Marie*, tomes vii. viii. Casterman, Tournai.

## THE AUTHOR'S PROTEST

n obedience to the decrees of Urban the Eighth, I declare that I have no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular cases recorded in this book ; and the same as regards the titles of Saints and Blessed, applied to servants of God not yet canonised, except in those cases which have been confirmed by the Holy Roman Catholic Church and the Apostolical See, of which I declare myself to be an obedient son; and therefore I submit myself, and all that I have written in this book, to her judgment.

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## THE AUTHOR'S PRAYER TO JESUS AND MARY

y most loving Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, I, thy miserable servant, well knowing what pleasure he gives Thee who endeavours to exalt thy most holy Mother, whom Thou lovest so much; knowing, too, how much Thou desirest to see her loved and honoured by all, have determined to publish this work of mine, which treats of her glories. I know not, however, to whom I could better recommend it than to Thee, who hast her glory so much at heart. To Thee, therefore, do I dedicate and commend it. Accept this little homage of the love I bear Thee and thy beloved Mother. Do Thou protect it, by showering down on all who read it the light of confidence and flames of love towards this Immaculate Virgin, in whom Thou hast placed the hope and whom Thou hast made the refuge of all the redeemed. And as a reward for my poor labour, grant me, I beseech Thee, that love towards Mary, which, by the means of this book, I desire to see enkindled in all who read it.

And now I turn to thee, O my most sweet Lady and Mother Mary. Thou well knowest that, after Jesus, I have placed my entire hope of salvation in thee: for I acknowledge that everything good—my conversion, my call to renounce the world, and all the other graces that I have received from

God—all were given me through thy means. Thou knowest that in order to see thee loved by all as thou deservest, and also as some mark of gratitude for the many benefits thou hast conferred upon me, I have always endeavoured in my sermons, in public and in private, to insinuate into all thy sweet and salutary devotion. I hope to continue doing so until my last breath, but my advanced years and feeble health admonish me that I am near the end of my pilgrimage and my entry into eternity; and therefore I wish, before dying, to leave this book to the world, in order that in my place it may continue to preach thee, and encourage others to announce thy glories, and the tender compassion thou showest to thy clients. I trust, my most beloved Queen, that this little gift, which is one of love, though far beneath thy merits, will yet be acceptable to thy most gracious heart. Extend, then, that most sweet hand with which thou hast drawn me from the world and delivered me from hell, and accept it and protect it as thine own. But at the same time thou must know that I expect a reward for my little offering; and that is, that from this day forward I may love thee more than ever, and that everyone into whose hands this work may fall may at once be inflamed with love of thee; and that his desire of loving thee, and of seeing thee loved by others, may be increased, so that he may labour with all affection to preach and promote, as far as he can, thy praises, and confidence in thy most powerful intercession. Amen.

Thy most loving though vile servant,  
ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI



## TO THE READER



In order that my present work may not be condemned by the over-critical, I think it well to explain certain propositions that will be found in it, and which may seem hazardous, or perhaps obscure. I have noticed some, and should others attract your attention, charitable reader, I beg that you will understand them according to the rules of sound theology and the doctrine of the holy Roman Catholic Church, of which I declare myself a most obedient son. In the Introduction, at page 4, referring to the sixth chapter of this work, I say that it is the will of God that all graces should come to us by the hands of Mary. Now, this is indeed a most consoling truth for souls tenderly devoted to our most Blessed Lady, and for poor sinners who wish to repent. Nor should this opinion be looked upon as contrary to sound doctrine, since the father of theology, St. Augustine,<sup>1</sup> in common with most writers, says, that Mary cooperated by her charity in the spiritual birth of all members of the Church. A celebrated writer, and one who cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Mater quidem spiritu, non capitis nostri, quod est ipse Salvator, ex quo magis illa spiritaliter nata est; quia omnes, qui in eum crediderint, in quibus et ipsa est, recte filii sponsi appellantur; sed plane mater membrorum ejus (quod nos sumus), quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in ecclesia nascerentur, quæ illius capitis membra sunt.—*Lib. de Sancta Virginitate*, cap. vi.

be accused of exaggeration or of misguided devotion, says,<sup>2</sup> ‘that it was, properly speaking, on Mount Calvary that Jesus formed His Church:’ and then it is evident that the Blessed Virgin cooperated in a most excellent and especial manner in the accomplishment of this work. And in the same way it can be said, that though she brought forth the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, without pain, she did not bring forth the body of this Head without very great suffering; and so it was on Mount Calvary that Mary began, in an especial manner, to be the Mother of the whole Church. And now, to say all in a few words: God, to glorify the Mother of the Redeemer, has so determined and disposed, that of her great charity she should intercede in behalf of all those for whom His Divine Son paid and offered the superabundant price of His precious blood, in which alone “is our salvation, life, and resurrection.” On this doctrine, and on all that is in accordance with it, I ground my propositions<sup>3</sup>—propositions which the Saints have not feared to assert in their tender colloquies with Mary and fervent discourses in her honour. Hence St. Sophronius says, that ‘the plenitude of all grace which is in Christ came into Mary, though in a different way;’<sup>4</sup> meaning that the plenitude of grace was in Christ, as the Head from which it flows, as from its source; and in Mary, as in the neck through which it flows. This opinion is clearly confirmed and taught by the angelical Doctor, St.

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<sup>2</sup> Mons. Nicole, Istruzioni teologiche e morali sopra l’Orazione Domenicale, Salutatione Angelica, &c. Istruzione 3, c. 2.

<sup>3</sup> In Chapters vi. vii. viii. ix.


<sup>4</sup> In Mariam vero totius gratiæ, quæ in Christo est plenitudo venit, quamquam aliter.—Int. op. S. Hieron. *Serm. de Assump. B.V.*: ap. Coutenson, *Theol. Ment. et Cord.* 1. 10. d. 6. c. 1.

Thomas, who says: 'Of the three ways in which the Blessed Virgin is full of grace, the third is that she is so for its trans- fusion into all men;' and then he adds: 'This plenitude is great in any Saint when there is as much grace as would suffice for the salvation of many, but it is in its highest degree when there is as much as would suffice for the salvation of the world; and it was in this degree in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin: for in all dangers thou canst obtain sal- vation of this glorious Virgin; and therefore it is said in the sacred Canticles that "a thousand bucklers," that is to say, means of protection against dangers, "hang upon it." Also, in every work of virtue thou canst have her for thy helper, for she says, in the words of Ecclesiastes, "In me is all hope of life and virtue."'”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Dicitur autem beata Virgo plena gratiæ, quantum ad tria . . . Tertio, quantum ad refusionem in omnes homines. Magnum enim est in quolibet sancto, quando habet tantum de gratia, quod sufficit ad salutem multorum: sed quando haberet tantum, quod sufficeret ad salutem omnium hominum de mundo, hoc esset maximum, et hoc est in Christo et in Beata Virgine. Nam in omni periculo potes salutem obtinere ab ipsa Virgine gloriosa. Unde Canticorum iv. "mille clypei," id est remedia contra pericula, "pendent ex ea." Item, in omni opere virtutis potes eam habere in adjutorium, et ideo dicit ipsa Ecclesiastici xxiv. "In me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis."—*Exp. in Salut. Ang. Opusc.* 8.

INTRODUCTION  
WHICH IT IS NECESSARY TO READ

y beloved reader and brother in Mary. Since the devotion that led me to write, and moves you to read, this book, makes us happy children of the same good Mother, should you hear it remarked that I might have spared myself the labour, as there are already so many celebrated and learned works on the same subject, I beg that you will reply, in the words of the Abbot Francone, that 'the praise of Mary is an inexhaustible fount, the more it is enlarged the fuller it gets, and the more you fill it so much the more is it enlarged.'<sup>1</sup> In short, this Blessed Virgin is so great and sublime, that the more she is praised the more there remains to praise; so much so, says an ancient writer, 'that if all the tongues of men were put together, and even if each of their members was changed into a tongue, they would not suffice to praise her as much as she deserves.'<sup>2</sup>

I have seen innumerable works, of all sizes, which treat of the Glories of Mary; but finding that they were either

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<sup>1</sup> Laus Mariæ fons est indeficiens, qui quanto longius extenditur, tanto amplius impletur; et quanto amplius impletur, tanto latius dilatatur.—*De Grat.* lib. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Etiamsi omnium nostrum membra verterentur in linguas, eam laudare sufficeret nullus.—Int. *Op. St. Aug.* in App. tom. v.

rare, voluminous, or did not answer the object I had in view, I endeavoured to collect, from as many authors as I could lay my hands on, the choicest passages, extracted from Fathers and Theologians, and those which seemed to me to be the most to the point, and have put them together in this book, in order that the devout may with little trouble and expense be able to inflame themselves with the love of Mary, and more particularly to furnish priests with matter for their sermons, wherewith to excite others to devotion towards this Divine Mother.

Worldly lovers often speak of and praise those whom they love, in order that the object of their affections may be praised and extolled by others. There are some who pretend to be lovers of Mary, and yet seldom either speak of or endeavour to excite others to love her: their love cannot be great. It is not thus that true lovers of this amiable Lady act; they desire to praise her on all occasions, and to see her loved by the whole world, and never lose an opportunity, either in public or private, of enkindling in the hearts of others those blessed flames of love with which they themselves burn towards their beloved Queen.

That everyone may be persuaded how important it is, both for his own good and that of others, to promote devotion towards Mary, it is useful to know what Theologians say on the subject. St. Bonaventure says, that those who make a point of announcing to others the glories of Mary are certain of heaven; and this opinion is confirmed by Richard of St. Lawrence, who declares, 'that to honour this Queen of Angels is to gain eternal life;'<sup>3</sup> and he adds,

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<sup>3</sup> Honorare siquidem Mariam, thesaurizare est sibi vitam

‘that this most gracious Lady will honour in the next world those who honour her in this.’<sup>4</sup> And who is ignorant of the promise made by Mary herself, in the words of Ecclesiastes, to those who endeavour to make her known and loved here below, “they that explain me shall have life everlasting;”<sup>5</sup> for this passage is applied to her by the Church, in the office of the Immaculate Conception. ‘Rejoice, then,’ exclaims St. Bonaventure (who did so much to make the glories of Mary known), ‘rejoice, my soul, and be glad in her for many good things are prepared for those who praise her;’ and he says that the whole of the sacred Scriptures speak in praise of Mary:<sup>6</sup> let us therefore always with our hearts and tongues honour this Divine Mother, in order that we may be conducted by her into the kingdom of the blessed.

We learn from the revelations of St. Bridget, that the blessed Bishop Emingo was in the habit of always beginning his sermons with the praises of Mary. One day the Blessed Virgin herself appeared to the Saint, and desired her to tell him, that in consequence of his pious practice, ‘she would be his mother, that he would die a holy death, and that she would herself present his soul to God:’<sup>7</sup> he died like a Saint in the act of praying, and in the most heavenly peace. Mary also appeared to a Dominican friar, who

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æternam.—*De Laud. V. 1. 2.*

<sup>4</sup> Glorificabit in futuro servientes sibi et honorificantes se in præsentī.—*Ib.*

<sup>5</sup> Qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt.—*Eccl. xxiv. 31.*

<sup>6</sup> Exulta, anima mea, et lætare in illa, quia multa bona sunt laudatoribus præparata. *In Ps. xliii. B. V. Omnes scripturæ loquuntur de ea. Serm. 13, in Hex.*

<sup>7</sup> Revel. lib. iii. cap. xiii.

always concluded his sermons by speaking of her; when on his deathbed the Blessed Virgin defended him from the devils, consoled him, and then she herself carried off his happy soul.<sup>8</sup> The devout Thomas à Kempis represents us Mary recommending a soul who had honoured her to her Son, and saying, 'My most loving Son, have mercy on the soul of this servant of Thine, who loved and extolled me.'<sup>9</sup>

Next, as to the advantage of this devotion for all, St. Anselm says, that as the most sacred womb of Mary was the means of salvation for sinners, the hearing of her praises must necessarily convert them, and thus also be a means of their salvation: 'how can it be otherwise than that the salvation of sinners should come from the remembrance of her praises, whose womb was made the way through which the Saviour came to save sinners?'<sup>10</sup>

And if the opinion is true, and I consider it as indubitably so (as I shall show in the sixth chapter), that all graces are dispensed by Mary, and that all who are saved are saved only by the means of this Divine Mother, it is a necessary consequence that the salvation of all depends upon preaching Mary, and exciting all to confidence in her intercession. It is well known that it was thus that St. Bernardine of Sienna sanctified Italy, and that St. Dominic converted so many provinces. St. Louis Bertrand never omitted in his

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<sup>8</sup> Ap. P. Auriem, *Aff. scamb.* p. 1, c. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Fili mi amantissime, miserere animæ famuli tui amatoris et laudatoris mei.—*Pars 3, Serm. 2, ad Nov.*

<sup>10</sup> Quomodo fieri potest, ut ex memoria laudum ejus salus non proveniat peccatorum, cujus uterus factus est via ad sanandum peccatores venienti Salvatore?—*S. Ans. de Exc. V. cap. 1.*

sermons to exhort all to love Mary; and how many others have done the same.

I find that Father Paul Segneri the younger, who was a very celebrated missionary, in every mission preached a sermon on devotion to Mary, and always called it his beloved sermon. And in our own missions, in which it is an inviolable rule to do the same, we can attest, with all truth, that in most cases no sermon is more profitable, or produces so much compunction in the hearts of the people, as the one on the mercy of Mary. I say, on her mercy; for, in the words of St. Bernard, 'we praise her virginity, we admire her humility; but because we are poor sinners, mercy attracts us more and tastes sweeter; we embrace mercy more lovingly; we remember it oftener, and invoke it more earnestly;'<sup>11</sup> and for this reason I here leave other authors to describe the other prerogatives of Mary, and confine myself for the most part to that of her mercy and powerful intercession; having collected, as far as I was able, and with the labour of many years, all that the holy Fathers and the most celebrated writers have said on this subject; and as I find that the mercy and power of the most Blessed Virgin are admirably portrayed in the prayer 'Salve Regina,' the recital of which is made obligatory for the greater part of the year on all the clergy, secular and regular, I shall divide and explain this most devout prayer in separate chapters. In addition to this, I thought that I should be giving pleasure to Mary's devout clients, by adding discourses on the principal festivals and

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<sup>11</sup> Laudamus virginitatem, humilitatem miramur; sed miseris sapit dulcius misericordia; misericordiam amplectimur carius, recordamur sæpius, crebrius invocamus.—*Serm. 4, de Ass.*




virtues of this Divine Mother, and by placing at the end of the work the devotions and pious practices most used by her servants, and most approved of by the Church.

Devout reader, should this work, as I trust it will, prove acceptable to you, I beg that you will recommend me to the Blessed Virgin, that she may give me great confidence in her protection. Ask this grace for me; and I promise you, whoever you may be, that I will ask the same for you who do me this charity. O, blessed are they who bind themselves with love and confidence to these two anchors of salvation, Jesus and Mary. Certainly they will not be lost. Let us then both say, devout reader, with the pious Alphonsus Rodriguez, 'Jesus and Mary, my most sweet loves, for you may I suffer, for you may I die; grant that I may be in all things yours and in nothing mine.'<sup>12</sup> Let us love Jesus and Mary, and become Saints; we can neither expect nor hope anything better. Farewell, then, until we meet in Paradise, at the feet of this most sweet Mother and of this most loving Son; there to praise them, to love them face to face for all eternity. Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> Jesu et Maria, amores mei dulcissimi, pro vobis patiar, pro vobis moriar, sim totus vester, sim nihil meus.—*Ap. Auriem, Aff. sc.*

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN  
TO OBTAIN A GOOD DEATH

ary, sweet refuge of miserable sinners, when my soul is on the point of leaving this world, O, my most sweet Mother, by that sorrow which thou didst endure when assisting at the death of thy Son on the cross, assist me with thy mercy. Drive the infernal enemy far from me, and do thou come and take my soul to thyself, and present it to the eternal Judge. My Queen, abandon me not. Thou, after Jesus, hast to be my comfort in that terrible moment. Entreat thy beloved Son, in His goodness, to grant me the grace to die clinging to thy feet, and to breathe forth my soul in His wounds, saying. 'Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.'



PART THE FIRST

**ON THE SALVE  
REGINA**

**In Which the Many and Abundant  
Graces Dispensed by the Mother  
of God to Her Devout Clients Are  
Treated of, Under Different Heads,  
Taken From the Salve Regina**

CHAPTER I  
HAIL, HOLY QUEEN,  
MOTHER OF MERCY

SECTION I—HOW GREAT SHOULD  
BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY,  
WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY



As the glorious Virgin Mary has been raised to the dignity of Mother of the King of kings, it is not without reason that the Church honours her, and wishes her to be honoured by all, with the glorious title of Queen. 'If the Son is a King,' says an ancient writer, 'the Mother who begot him is rightly and truly considered a Queen and Sovereign.'<sup>1</sup> 'No sooner had Mary,' says St. Bernardine of Sienna, 'consented to be Mother of the Eternal Word, than she merited by this consent to be made Queen of the world and of all creatures.'<sup>2</sup> 'Since the flesh of Mary,' remarks the Abbot Arnold of Chartres, 'was not different from that of Jesus, how can the royal dignity of the Son be

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<sup>1</sup> Siquidem is ipse qui ex Virgine natus est, rex est, et ipse Dominus Deus. Mater, quæ ipsum genuit, Regina, Domina, et Deipara proprie ac vere prædicatur.— *Serm. de Deip. int. op. S. Athan.*

<sup>2</sup> Hæc autem Virgo in illo admirando consensu meruit dominum et primatum totius orbis.—Tom. iv. 90.

denied to the Mother?<sup>3</sup> 'Hence we must consider the glory of the Son, not only as being common to, but as one with, that of His Mother.'<sup>4</sup>

And if Jesus is the King of the universe, Mary is also its Queen. 'And as Queen,' says the Abbot Rupert, 'she possesses, by right, the whole kingdom of her Son.'<sup>5</sup> Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna concludes that 'as many creatures as there are who serve God, so many there are who serve Mary: for as angels and men, and all things that are in heaven and on earth, are subject to the empire of God, so are they also under the dominion of Mary.'<sup>6</sup> The Abbot Guarricus, addressing himself to the Divine Mother on this subject, says: 'Continue, Mary, continue to dispose with confidence of the riches of thy Son; act as Queen, Mother, and Spouse of the King: for to thee belongs dominion and power over all creatures.'<sup>7</sup>

Mary, then, is a Queen: but, for our common consolation, be it known that she is a Queen so sweet, clement, and so ready to help us in our miseries, that the holy Church wills

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<sup>3</sup> Nec a dominatione et petestate filii Mater potest esse sejuncta. Una est Mariæ et Christi caro.—*De Laud. Virg.*

<sup>4</sup> Filii gloriam cum Matre non tam communem judico, quam eandem.—*Ib.*

<sup>5</sup> Prædicabitur de te quod sis . . . Regina cœlorum totum jure possidens Filii regnum.—*In Cant.* 1. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Tot creaturæ serviunt gloriosæ Virgini, quot serviunt Trinitati; omnes namque creaturæ, sive angeli sive homines, et omnia quæ sunt in cœlo et in terra, quæ omnia sunt divino imperio subjugata, gloriosæ Virgini sunt subjectæ.—Tom. iv. Serm. 5, *de B.V.* c. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Perge, Maria, perge segura in bonis filii tui, fiducialiter age tamquam Regina, Mater regis et sponsa; tibi debetur regnum et potestas.—*Serm.* 3, *in Ass. B.M.*

that we should salute her in this prayer under the title of Queen of Mercy. 'The title of Queen,' remarks B. Albert the Great, 'differs from that of Empress, which implies severity and rigour, in signifying compassion and charity towards the poor.' 'The greatness of kings and queens,' says Seneca, 'consists in relieving the wretched;'<sup>8</sup> and whereas tyrants, when they reign, have their own good in view, kings should have that of their subjects at heart. For this reason it is that, at their consecration, kings have their heads anointed with oil, which is the symbol of mercy, to denote that, as kings, they should, above all things, nourish in their hearts feelings of compassion and benevolence towards their subjects.

Kings should, then, occupy themselves principally in works of mercy, but not so as to forget the just punishments that are to be inflicted on the guilty. It is, however, not thus with Mary, who, although a Queen, is not a queen of justice, intent on the punishment of the wicked, but a queen of mercy, intent only on commiserating and pardoning sinners. And this is the reason for which the Church requires that we should expressly call her 'the Queen of Mercy.' The great Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, in his Commentary on the words of David: "These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee, O Lord,"<sup>9</sup> says, that the kingdom of God, consisting in justice and mercy, was divided by our Lord: the kingdom of justice He reserved for Himself, and that of mercy He yielded to Mary, ordaining at the same time that all mercies that

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<sup>8</sup> Hoc reges habent magnificum, prodesse miseris.

<sup>9</sup> Duo hæc audivi, quia potestas Dei est, et tibi, Domine, misericordia.—Ps. lxi. 12, 13.

are dispensed to men should pass by the hands of Mary, and be disposed of by her at will. These are Gerson's own words: 'the kingdom of God consists in power and mercy; reserving power to Himself, He, in some way, yielded the empire of mercy to His Mother.'<sup>10</sup> This is confirmed by St. Thomas, in his Preface to the Canonical Epistles, saying, 'that when the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word in her womb, and brought Him forth, she obtained half the kingdom of God; so that she is Queen of Mercy, as Jesus Christ is King of Justice.'<sup>11</sup>

The Eternal Father made Jesus Christ the King of justice, and consequently universal Judge of the world: and therefore the royal prophet sings: "Give to the King Thy judgment, O God, and to the King's Son Thy justice."<sup>12</sup> Here a learned interpreter takes up the sentence, and says: 'O Lord, Thou hast given justice to Thy Son, because Thou hast given mercy to the King's Mother.' And, on this subject, St. Bonaventure, paraphrasing the words of David, thus interprets them: 'Give to the King Thy judgment, O God, and Thy mercy to the Queen His Mother.'<sup>13</sup> Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also remarks, 'that the Eternal Father gave the office of judge and avenger to the Son, and

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<sup>10</sup> Regnum Dei consistit in potestate et misericordia: potestate Domino remanente, cessit quodammodo misericordiæ pars Christi Matri sponsæque regnanti.—*P. 3, Tr. 4, s. Magnif.*

<sup>11</sup> Quando filium Dei in utero concepit, et postmodum peperit, dimidiam partem regni Dei impetravit, ut i sa sit Regina misericordiæ, ut Christus est Rex justitiæ.

<sup>12</sup> Deus, judicium tuum Regi da, et justitiam tuam filio Regis.—*P. lxxi. 2.*

<sup>13</sup> Deus, judicium tuum Regi da, et misericordiam tuam Reginae Matri ejus.—*In Ps. lxii, de B.V.*

that of showing mercy and relieving the necessitous to the Mother.<sup>14</sup> This was foretold by the prophet David himself; for he says that God (so to speak) consecrated Mary Queen of mercy, anointing her with the oil of gladness (“God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness”).<sup>15</sup> In order that we miserable children of Adam might rejoice, remembering that in heaven we have this great Queen, overflowing with the unction of mercy and compassion towards us; and thus we can say with St. Bonaventure, ‘O Mary, thou art full of the unction of mercy and of the oil of compassion;’<sup>16</sup> therefore God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness. And how beautifully does not B. Albert the Great apply to this subject the history of Queen Esther, who was herself a great type of our Queen Mary. We read, in the 4th chapter of the Book of Esther, that in the reign of Assuerus, a decree was issued, by which all Jews were condemned to death. Mardochai, who was one of the condemned, addressed himself to Esther, in order that she might interpose with Assuerus, and obtain the revocation of the decree, and thus be the salvation of all. At first Esther declined the office, fearing that such a request might irritate the king still more; but Mardochai reproved her, sending her word that she was not to think only of saving herself, for God had placed her on the throne to obtain the salvation of all the Jews: “think not that thou mayst save thy life only, because thou

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<sup>14</sup> Pater omne iudicium dedit Filio, misericordiæ vero officium dedit Matri.

<sup>15</sup> Unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ.—*Ps.* xlv. 8 .

<sup>16</sup> Maria plena est unctione misericordiæ et oleo pietatis.—*Speculum B.M. Virg.* lect. 7.



art in the king's house, more than all the Jews."<sup>17</sup> Thus did Mardochai address Queen Esther. And so can we poor sinners address our Queen Mary, should she show any repugnance to obtain of God our delivery from the chastisement we have justly deserved: 'Think not, O Lady, that God has raised thee to the dignity of Queen of the world, only to provide for thy good; but in order that, being so great, thou mightest be better able to compassionate and assist us miserable creatures.'

As soon as Assuerus saw Esther standing before him, he asked her, with love, what she came to seek. 'What is thy request?' The queen replied, "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, give me my people, for which I request."<sup>18</sup> Assuerus granted her request, and immediately ordered the revocation of the decree. And now, if Assuerus, through love for Esther, granted, at her request, salvation to the Jews, how can God refuse the prayers of Mary, loving her immensely as He does, when she prays for poor miserable sinners, who recommend themselves to her, and says to Him, 'My King and my God, if ever I have found favour in Thy sight' (though the Divine Mother well knows that she was the blessed, the holy one, the only one of the human race who found the grace lost by all mankind well does she know that she is the beloved one of her Lord, loved more than all the saints and angels together), 'give me my people for which I ask.' If thou lovest me, she says, 'give me, O Lord, these sinners, for whom I entreat Thee.' Is it possible

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<sup>17</sup> Ne putes, quod animam tuam tantum liberet, quia in domo Regis es præ cunctis Judæis.—*Est.* iv. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Quæ est petitio tua? . . . Dona mihi . . . populum meum pro quo obsecro.—*Esth.* c. vii. 2, 3.

that God should refuse her? And who is ignorant of the power of the prayers of Mary with God? "The law of clemency is on her tongue."<sup>19</sup> Each of her prayers is, as it were, an established law for our Lord, that He should show mercy to all for whom she intercedes. St. Bernard asks why the Church calls Mary 'the Queen of Mercy'? And he replies, that 'it is because we believe that she opens the abyss of the mercy of God to whomsoever she wills, when she wills, and as she wills; so that there is no sinner, however great, who is lost if Mary protects him.'<sup>20</sup>

But perhaps we may fear that Mary would not deign to interpose for some sinners, on account of their being so overloaded with crimes? Or perhaps we ought to be overawed at the majesty and holiness of this great Queen? 'No,' says St. Gregory the Seventh; 'for the higher and more holy she is, the greater is her sweetness and compassion towards sinners, who have recourse to her with the desire to amend their lives.'<sup>21</sup> Kings and queens, with their ostentation of majesty, inspire terror, and cause their subjects to fear to approach them: but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the miserable have to approach this Queen of Mercy, for she inspires no terror, and shows no severity, to those who come to her, but is all sweetness and gentleness. 'Why should human frailty fear to go to

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<sup>19</sup> Lex clementiæ in lingua ejus.—*Prov.* xxxi. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Quod divinæ pietatis abyssum, cui vult, quando vult, et quomodo vult, creditur aperire; ut quivis enormis peccator non pereat, cui sancta sanctorum patrocinii sui suffragia præstat.—*S. Bern. in Salve Reg.*

<sup>21</sup> Maria quanto altior et sanctior, tanto clementior et dulcior circa conversos peccatores.—*Lib. i. Ep. 47.*

Mary? In her there is no austerity, nothing terrible: she is all sweetness, offering milk and wool to all.<sup>22</sup> Mary is not only willing to give, but she herself offers milk and wool to all: the milk of mercy to animate our confidence, and the wool of her protection against the thunderbolts of Divine justice.

Suetonius<sup>23</sup> relates of the Emperor Titus that he could never refuse a favour, so much so that he sometimes promised more than he could grant, and when admonished of this he replied, that a prince should never send away any person whom he admitted to his audience dissatisfied. Titus spoke thus, but in reality he must often have deceived or failed in his promises. Our Queen cannot deceive, and can obtain all that she wills for her clients. Moreover, 'our Lord has given her so benign and compassionate a heart,' says Lanspergius, 'that she cannot send away anyone dissatisfied who prays to her.'<sup>24</sup> But how, to use the words of St. Bonaventure, canst thou, O Mary, who art the Queen of Mercy, refuse to succour the miserable? And 'who,' asks the Saint, 'are the subjects for mercy, if not the miserable? And since thou art the Queen of Mercy,' he continues, 'and I am the most miserable of sinners, it follows that I am the first of thy subjects. How, then, O Lady, canst thou do otherwise than exercise thy mercy on me?'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Quid ad Mariam accedere trepidet humana fragilitas? Nihil austerum in ea, nihil terribile; tota suavis est, omnibus offerens lac et lanam.—*Super Sign. Magn.*

<sup>23</sup> Tit. c. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Adeo feci eam . . . benignam, ut neminem a se redire tristem sinat.—*Op. Min.* lib. i. *Alloq.* can. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Tu es Regina misericordiæ, et qui misericordiæ subditi nisi

Have pity on us, then, O Queen of Mercy, and take charge of our salvation. 'Say not, O holy Virgin,' exclaims St. George of Nicomedia, 'that thou canst not assist us on account of the number of our sins, for thy power and compassion is such, that no number of sins, however great, can outweigh it. Nothing resists thy power, for our common Creator, honouring thee as His Mother, considering thy glory as His own;<sup>26</sup> and the Son, 'exulting in it, fulfils thy petitions as if He were paying a debt;<sup>27</sup> meaning thereby, that although Mary is under an infinite obligation to the Son for having chosen her to be His Mother, yet it cannot be denied but that the Son is under great obligation to her for having given Him His humanity; and therefore Jesus, to pay as it were what He owes to Mary, and glorying in her glory, honours her in a special manner by listening to and granting all her petitions.

How great, then, should be our confidence in this Queen, knowing her great power with God, and that she is so rich and full of mercy, that there is no one living on the earth, who does not partake of her compassion and favour. This was revealed by our Blessed Lady herself to St. Bridget, saying, 'I am the Queen of heaven and the Mother of Mercy;

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miseri? Sed Regina misericordiæ es, et ego miserrimus peccatorum, subditorum maximus. Quomodo ergo, Domina, non exercebis in memetipsum tuæ miserationie affectum?—*Stim Am.p. 3, in Salv. Reg.*

<sup>26</sup> Habes insuperabilem potentiam; habes vim inexpugnabilem. Ne rogo multa nostra peccata, immensam tuæ miserationis vim superent . . . Nihil enim resistit tuæ potentiæ . . . quippe suam Filius tuus, tuam existimat gloriam.—*Or. de Ingressu B.V.*

<sup>27</sup> Eaque tanquam Filius exultans, postulata ceu debitor implet.—*Ib.*

I am the joy of the just, and the door through which sinners are brought to God. There is no sinner on earth so accursed as to be deprived of my mercy; for all, if they receive nothing else through my intercession, receive the grace of being less tempted by the devils than they would otherwise have been;<sup>28</sup> 'No one,' she adds, 'unless the irrevocable sentence has been pronounced' (that is, the one pronounced on the damned), 'is so cast off by God, that he will not return to Him, and enjoy His mercy, if he invokes my aid.'<sup>29</sup> 'I am called by all the Mother of Mercy, and truly the mercy of my Son towards men has made me thus merciful towards them;<sup>30</sup> and she concludes by saying, 'and therefore miserable will he be, and miserable will he be to all eternity, who, in this life, having it in his power to invoke me, who am so compassionate to all, and so desirous to assist sinners, is miserable enough not to invoke me, and so is damned.'<sup>31</sup>

Let us, then, fly, and fly always, to the feet of this most sweet Queen, if we would be certain of salvation; and if we are alarmed and disheartened at the sight of our sins, let us remember that it is in order to save the greatest and most abandoned sinners, who recommend themselves to

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<sup>28</sup> Ego Regina cœli, ego mater misericordiæ: ego justorum gaudium, et aditus peccatorum ad Deum. Nullus est adeo maledictus, qui quamdiu vivit careat misericordia mea; quia propter me levius tentatur a dæmonibus, quam alias tentaretur.—*Rev.* lib. vi. cap. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Nullus ita alienatus est de Deo, nisi omnino fuerit maledictus, qui, si me invocaverit, non revertatur ad Deum, et habebit misericordiam.—*Ib.*

<sup>30</sup> Ego vocor ab omnibus mater misericordiæ, vere filia misericordiae Filii mei misericordem me fecit.—*Rev.* lib. ii. cap. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Ideo miser erit, qui ad misericordiam, cum possit, non accedit.—*Rev.* Lib. ii. cap. 23.

her, that Mary is made the Queen of Mercy. Such have to be her crown in heaven; according to the words addressed to her by her Divine Spouse: "Come from Libanus, my spouse; come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned . . . from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards."<sup>32</sup> And what are these dens of beasts, but miserable sinners, whose souls have become the home of sin, the most frightful monster that can be found. 'With such souls,' says the Abbot Rupert, addressing our Blessed Lady, 'saved by thy means, O great Queen Mary, wilt thou be crowned in heaven; for their salvation will form a diadem worthy of, and well becoming, a Queen of Mercy.'<sup>33</sup> On this subject read the following.

### Example

We read, in the life of Sister Catherine of St. Augustine, that in the place where she resided, there was a woman, of the name of Mary, who in her youth was a sinner, and in her old age continued so obstinate in wickedness, that she was driven out of the city, and reduced to live in a secluded cave; there she died, half consumed by disease, and without the sacraments, and was consequently interred in a field like a beast. Sister Catherine, who always recommended the souls of those who departed from this world, with great fervour, to God, on hearing the unfortunate end of this poor old

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<sup>32</sup> Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni, coronaberis . . . de oubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum.—*Cant.* iv. 8.

<sup>33</sup> De talium leonum cubilibus taliorumque pardorum montibus tu, amica mea, coronaberis . . . Eorum salus corona tua erit.—*In Cant.* lib. iii.

woman, never thought of praying for her, and she looked upon her (as did everyone else) as irrevocably lost. One day, four years afterwards, a suffering soul appeared to her, and exclaimed: 'How unfortunate is my lot, Sister Catherine! thou recommendest the souls of all those that die to God: on my soul alone thou hast not compassion.' 'And who art thou?' asked the servant of God. 'I am,' she replied, 'that poor Mary, who died in the cave.' 'And art thou saved?' said Catherine. 'Yes,' she answered, 'by the mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary.' 'And how?' 'When I saw myself at the point of death, loaded with sins, and abandoned by all, I had recourse to the Mother of God, saying, Lady, thou art the refuge of abandoned creatures: behold me, at this moment, abandoned by all; thou art my only hope; thou alone canst help me: have pity on me. The Blessed Virgin obtained me the grace to make an act of contrition. I died, and am saved; and besides this, she, my Queen, obtained that my purgatory should be shortened, by enduring, in intensity, that which otherwise would have lasted for many years: I now only want a few masses to be entirely delivered; I beg thee to get them said; and on my part, I promise always to pray for thee to God and to Mary.' Sister Catherine immediately had the masses said; and after a few days that soul again appeared to her, shining like the sun, and said: 'I thank thee, Catherine: behold, I go to Paradise, to sing the mercies of my God, and to pray for thee.'

### Prayer

O, Mother of my God, and my Lady Mary: as a beggar, all wounded and sore, presents himself before a great queen, so do I present myself before thee, who art the Queen of

heaven and earth. From the lofty throne on which thou sittest, disdain not, I implore thee, to cast thine eyes on me, a poor sinner. God has made thee so rich that thou mightest assist the poor, and has constituted thee Queen of Mercy in order that thou mightest relieve the miserable. Behold me then, and pity me: behold me, and abandon me not, until thou seest me changed from a sinner into a saint. I know well that I merit nothing; nay more, that I deserve, on account of my ingratitude, to be deprived of the graces that, through thy means, I have already received from God. But thou, who art the Queen of Mercy, seekest not merits, but miseries, in order to help the needy. But who is more needy than I?

O, exalted Virgin, well do I know that thou, who art Queen of the universe, art already my queen; yet am I determined to dedicate myself more especially to thy service, in order that thou mayest dispose of me as thou pleasest. Therefore do I address thee in the words of St. Bonaventure:<sup>34</sup> 'Do thou govern me, O my Queen, and leave me not to myself.' Command me; employ me as thou wilt, and chastise me when I do not obey; for the chastisements that come from thy hands will to me be pledges of salvation. I value more the being thy servant than being ruler of the earth. "I am thine; save me."<sup>35</sup> Accept me, O Mary, for thine own, and as thine, take charge of my salvation. I will no longer be mine; to thee do I give myself. If, during the time past I have served thee ill, and lost so many

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<sup>34</sup> Domina, me totaliter tuæ dominationi committo, ut me plenarie regas et gubernes. Non mihi me relinquas.—*In Salve Reg.*

<sup>35</sup> Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.—*Ps.* cxviii. 94.



occasions of honouring thee, for the future I will be one of thy most loving and faithful servants. I am determined that from this day forward no one shall surpass me in honouring and loving thee, my most amiable Queen. This I promise; and this, with thy help, I hope to execute. Amen.

## SECTION II—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED FROM THE FACT OF HER BEING OUR MOTHER

It is not without a meaning, or by chance, that Mary's clients call her Mother; and indeed they seem unable to invoke her under any other name, and never tire of calling her Mother. Mother, yes! for she is truly our Mother; not indeed carnally, but spiritually; of our souls and of our salvation. Sin, by depriving our souls of Divine grace, deprived them also of life. Jesus our Redeemer, with an excess of mercy and love, came to restore this life by His own death on the cross, as He Himself declared: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly."<sup>36</sup> He says more abundantly; for, according to theologians, the benefit of redemption far exceeded the injury done by Adam's sin. So that by reconciling us with God He made Himself the Father of Souls in the law of grace, as it was foretold by the prophet Isaias: "He shall be called the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."<sup>37</sup> But if Jesus is the Father of our Souls, Mary is also their Mother; for she, by giving us

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<sup>36</sup> Veni, ut vitam habeant, et abundantius habeant.—*Joan.* x. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Pater futuri sæculi, princeps pacis.—*Is.* ix. 6.

Jesus, gave us true life; and afterwards, by offering the life of her Son on Mount Calvary for our salvation, she brought us forth to the life of grace.

On two occasions, then, according to the holy Fathers, Mary became our spiritual Mother. And the first, according to Blessed Albert the Great,<sup>38</sup> was when she merited to conceive in her virginal womb the Son of God. St. Bernadine of Sienna says the same thing more distinctly, for he tells us, 'that when at the Annunciation the most Blessed Virgin gave the consent which was expected by the Eternal Word before be coming her Son, she from that moment asked our salvation of God with intense ardour, and took it to heart in such a way, that from that moment, as a most loving mother, she bore us in her womb.'<sup>39</sup> In the second chapter of St. Luke, the Evangelist, speaking of the birth of our Blessed Redeemer, says that Mary "brought forth her first-born son."<sup>40</sup> Then, remarks an author, 'since the Evangelist asserts that on this occasion the most Holy Virgin brought forth her first-born, must we suppose that she had afterwards other children?' But then he replies to his own question, saying, 'that as it is of faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh than Jesus, she must have had other spiritual children, and we are those

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<sup>38</sup> De Laud. B. M. I. 6, c. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Virgo per hunc consensum in Incarnatione filii omnium electorum salutem vigorosissime expetiit et procuravit: et omnium salutem et eorum salvationem per hunc consensum se singularissime dedicavit; ita ut ex tunc omnes in suis visceribus bajularet, tanquam verissima mater filios suos.—*Tr. de B.V.* Serm, viii.

<sup>40</sup> Peperit filium suum primogenitum.—*Luc.* ii. 7.

children.<sup>41</sup> This was revealed by our Lord to St. Gertrude,<sup>42</sup> who was one day reading the above text, and was perplexed and could not understand how Mary, being only the Mother of Jesus, could be said to have brought forth her first-born. God explained it to her, saying, that Jesus was Mary's first-born according to the flesh, but that all mankind were her second-born according to the Spirit.

From what has been said, we can understand that passage of the sacred Canticles: "Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies,"<sup>43</sup> and which applies to Mary. And it is explained by St. Ambrose, who says: "That although in the most pure womb of Mary there was but one grain of corn, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of wheat, because all the elect were virtually contained in it;"<sup>44</sup> and as Mary was also to be their Mother, in bringing forth Jesus, He was truly and is called the first-born of many brethren. And the Abbot St. William writes in the same sense, saying, 'that Mary, in bringing forth Jesus, our Saviour and our Life, brought forth many unto salvation; and by giving birth to Life itself, she gave life to many.'<sup>45</sup>

The second occasion on which Mary became our spiritual Mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace, was when

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<sup>41</sup> Si primogenitus, ergo alii filii secuti sunt secundogeniti . . . Carnales nullos habuit Beata Virgo præter Christum; ergo spirituales habeat necesse est.—*Spann. Polyanth.* litt. m. t. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Insin. 1. 4, c. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Venter tunc sicut acervus tritici vallatus liliis.—*Cant.* vii. 2.

<sup>44</sup> In quo virginis utero . . . acervus tritici . . . germinabat; quoniam . . . granum tritici generabat . . . Sed . . . de uno grano tritici acervus est factus—*S. Ambr. de Instit. Virg.*

<sup>45</sup> In illo uno fructu, in uno Salvatore omnium Jesu plurimos Maria peperit ad salutem. Pariendo vitam, multos peperit ad

she offered to the Eternal Father the life of her beloved Son on Mount Calvary, with such bitter sorrow and suffering. So that St. Augustine declares, that 'as she then coöperated by her love in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became the spiritual Mother of all who are members of the one Head, Christ Jesus.'<sup>46</sup> This we are given to understand by the following verse of the sacred Canticles, and which refers to the most Blessed Virgin: "They have made me the keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept."<sup>47</sup> St. William says, that 'Mary, in order that she might save many souls, exposed her own to death;<sup>48</sup> meaning, that to save us, she sacrificed the life of her Son. And who but Jesus was the soul of Mary? He was her life, and all her love. And therefore the prophet Simeon foretold that a sword of sorrow would one day transpierce her own most blessed soul.<sup>49</sup> And it was precisely the lance which transpierced the side of Jesus, who was the soul of Mary. Then it was that this most Blessed Virgin brought us forth by her sorrows to eternal life: and thus we can all call ourselves the children of the sorrows of Mary. Our most loving Mother was always, and in all, united to the will of God. 'And therefore,' says St. Bonaventure, 'when she saw the

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vitam.—*Delrio in Cant.* iv. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Plane mater membrorum ejus (quod nos sumus) quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in Ecclesia nascerentur.—*De S. Virginitate*, cap vi.

<sup>47</sup> Posuit me custodem in vineis; vineam meam non custodivi.—*Cant.* i 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ut multas animas salvas faceret, animam suam morti exposuit.—*Delrio in Cant.* i. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius—*Luc.* ii. 35.

love of the Eternal Father towards men to be so great that, in order to save them, He willed the death of His Son; and, on the other hand, seeing the love of the Son in wishing to die for us: in order to conform herself to this excessive love of both the Father and the Son towards the human race, she also with her entire will offered, and consented to, the death of her Son, in order that we might be saved.<sup>50</sup>

It is true that, according to the prophecy of Isaias, Jesus, in dying for the redemption of the human race, chose to be alone. "I have trodden the winepress alone;"<sup>51</sup> but, seeing the ardent desire of Mary to aid in the salvation of man, He disposed it so that she, by the sacrifice and offering of the life of her Jesus, should coöperate in our salvation, and thus become the Mother of our souls. This our Saviour signified, when, before expiring, He looked down from the cross on His Mother and on the disciple St. John, who stood at its foot, and, first addressing Mary, He said, "Behold thy Son;"<sup>52</sup> as it were saying, Behold, the whole human race, which by the offer thou makest of My life for the salvation of all, is even now being born to the life of grace. Then, turning to the disciple, He said, "Behold thy Mother."<sup>53</sup> 'By these words,' says St. Bernardine of Sienna, 'Mary, by reason of the love she bore them, became the Mother, not only of St. John, but of all men.'<sup>54</sup> And Silveira remarks, that St.

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<sup>50</sup> Nullo modo dubitandum est, quin Mariæ animus voluerit etiam traders filium suum pro salute generis humani, ut mater per omnia conformis fieret Patri et Filio.—*S. Bon. in Sent.* lib. i. d. 48, a. 2, q. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Torcular calcavi solus.—*Is.* lxiii. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ecce filius tuus.—*Joan.* xix. 26.

<sup>53</sup> Deinde dicit discipulo: Ecce mater tua.—*Joan.* xix. 27.

<sup>54</sup> In Joanne intelligimus omnes, quorum B. Virgo per dilectionem

John himself, in stating this fact in his Gospel, says: "Then He said to the disciple, Behold thy Mother." Here observe well that Jesus Christ did not address Himself to John, but to the disciple, in order to show that He then gave Mary to all who are His disciples, that is to say, to all Christians, that she might be their Mother. 'John is but the name of one, whereas the word disciple is applicable to all; therefore our Lord makes use of a name common to all, to show that Mary was given as a Mother to all.'<sup>55</sup>

The Church applies to Mary these words of the sacred Canticles: "I am the mother of fair love;"<sup>56</sup> and a commentator explaining them, says, that the Blessed Virgin's love renders our souls beautiful in the sight of God, and also makes her as a most loving mother receive us as her children, 'she being all love towards those whom she has thus adopted.'<sup>57</sup> And what mother, exclaims St. Bonaventure, loves her children, and attends to their welfare, as thou lovest us and carest for us, O most sweet Queen! 'For dost thou not love us and seek our welfare far more without comparison than any earthly mother?'<sup>58</sup> O, blessed are they who live under the protection of so loving and powerful a mother! The prophet David, although she was not yet born, sought salvation from

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facts est Mater.—Tom. i. Serm. 51.

<sup>55</sup> Joannes nomen est particulare . . . discipulus nomen est commune, utitur ergo hic nomine communi omnibus, ut denotetur, quod ipsa Virgo Maria omnibus dabatur in matrem.—*In Evang.* lib. viii. cap. 17, quæst. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis.—*Eccles.* xxiv. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Quia tota est amor erga nos quos in filios recepit.—*Pacciuch. in Ps.* lxxxvi. exc. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Nonne plus sine comparatione nos diligis, ac bonum nostrum procuras, amplius quam mater carnalis?—*In Salv. Reg.*

God by dedicating himself as a son of Mary, and thus prayed: "Save the son of thy handmaid."<sup>59</sup> 'Of what handmaid?' asks St. Augustine; and he replies: 'Of her who said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'<sup>60</sup> 'And who,' says Cardinal Bellarmine, 'would ever dare to snatch these children from the bosom of Mary, when they have taken refuge there? What power of hell, or what temptation, can overcome them, if they place their confidence in the patronage of this great Mother, the Mother of God, and of them?'<sup>61</sup> There are some who say that when the whale sees its young in danger, either from tempests or pursuers, it opens its mouth and swallows them. This is precisely what Novarinus asserts of Mary: 'When the storms of temptations rage, the most compassionate Mother of the faithful, with maternal tenderness, protects them as it were in her own bosom until she has brought them into the harbour of salvation.'<sup>62</sup> O most loving Mother! O most compassionate Mother! be thou ever blessed; and ever blessed be God, who has given thee to us for our Mother, and for a secure refuge in all the dangers of this life. Our Blessed Lady herself, in a vision addressed these words to St. Bridget: 'As a mother on seeing her son in the midst of the swords of his enemies would use every effort to save him, so do I, and will do for all

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<sup>59</sup> *Salvum fac filium ancillæ tuæ.—Ps. lxxxv. 16.*

<sup>60</sup> *Cujus ancillæ . . . quæ ait. Ecce ancilla Domini.—In Ps. lxxxv.*

<sup>61</sup> *Quam bene nobis erit sub præsidio tantæ Matris? Quis nos detrahare audebit de sinu ejus? Quæ nos tentatio, quæ tribulatio superare poterit, confidentes in patrocinio Matris Dei et nostræ?—Bellarm. de Sept. Verb. 1, i. c. 12.*

<sup>62</sup> *Fidelium piïssima Mater, furente tentationum tempestate, materno affectu eos velut intra viscera propria receptos protegit, donec in beatum portum reponat.—V. cap. xiv. exc. 81.†*

sinner who seek my mercy.’<sup>63</sup> Thus it is that in every engagement with the infernal powers we shall always certainly conquer by having recourse to the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, saying and repeating again and again: ‘We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God: we fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God.’ O, how many victories have not the faithful gained over hell, by having recourse to Mary with this short but most powerful prayer! Thus it was that that great servant of God, Sister Mary the Crucified, of the Order of St. Benedict, always overcame the devils.

Be of good heart, then, all you who are children of Mary. Remember that she accepts as her children all those who choose to be so. Rejoice! Why do you fear to be lost, when such a Mother defends and protects you? ‘Say, then, O my soul, with great confidence: I will rejoice and be glad; for whatever the judgment to be pronounced on me may be, it depends on and must come from my Brother and Mother.’<sup>64</sup> ‘Thus,’ says St. Bonaventure, ‘it is that each one who loves this good Mother, and relies on her protection, should animate himself to confidence, remembering that Jesus is our Brother, and Mary our Mother.’ The same thought makes St. Anselm cry out with joy, and encourage us, saying: ‘O, happy confidence! O, safe refuge! the Mother of God is my Mother. How firm, then, should be our confidence, since our salvation depends on the judgment of a good Brother

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<sup>63</sup> Ita ego facio, et faciam omnibus peccatoribus misericordiam meam a filio meo petentibus.—*Rev.* lib. iv. cap. 138.

<sup>64</sup> Die, anima mea, cum magna fiducia: exultabo et lætabor, quia quicquid judicabitur de me, pendet ex sententia fratris et matris meæ.—*S. Bonav. Soli.* c. 1.



and a tender Mother!<sup>65</sup> It is, then, our Mother who calls us, and says, in these words of the Book of Proverbs: "He that is a little one, let him turn to me."<sup>66</sup> Children have always on their lips their mother's name, and in every fear, in every danger, they immediately cry out, Mother, mother! Ah, most sweet Mary! ah, most loving Mother! this is precisely what thou desirest: that we should become children, and call on thee in every danger, and at all times have recourse to thee, because thou desirest to help and save us, as thou hast saved all who have had recourse to thee.

### Example

In the history of the foundations of the Society of Jesus in the kingdom of Naples,<sup>67</sup> we read the following account of a young Scotch nobleman, named William Elphinstone. He was related to king James, and lived for some time in the heresy in which he was born. Enlightened by Divine grace, he began to perceive his errors, and having gone to France, with the help of a good Jesuit father, who was also a Scotchman, and still more by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, he at length discovered the truth, abjured his heresy, and became a Catholic. From France he went to Rome; and there a friend, finding him one day weeping and in great affliction, inquired the cause of his grief. He replied, that during the night his mother, who was lost, appeared to him,

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<sup>65</sup> O beata fiducia, O tutum refugium! Mater Dei est Mater nostra . . . Qua igitur certitudine debemus sperare . . . quorum sive salus sive damnatio, de boni fratris et de piæ matris pendent arbitrio?—*Or. li. ad B.V.*

<sup>66</sup> Si quia est parvulus, veniat ad me.—*Prov. ix. 4.*

<sup>67</sup> Lib. v. c. 7.

and said: 'It is well for thee, son, that thou hast entered the true Church; for as I died in heresy, I am lost.' From that moment he redoubled his devotion towards Mary, choosing her for his only Mother, and by her he was inspired with the thought of embracing the religious state, and he bound himself to do so by vow. Being in delicate health, he went to Naples for change of air, and there it was the will of God that he should die, and die as a religious; for shortly after his arrival, finding himself at the last extremity, by his prayers and tears he moved the superiors to accept him, and in presence of the most Blessed Sacrament, when he received it as viaticum, he pronounced his vows, and was declared a member of the Society of Jesus. After this it was most touching to hear with what tenderness he thanked his Mother Mary for having snatched him from heresy, and led him to die in the true Church, and in the house of God, surrounded by his religious brethren. This made him exclaim: 'O, how glorious is it to die in the midst of so many angels!' When exhorted to repose a little, 'Ah,' he replied, 'this is no time for repose, now that I am at the close of my life.' Before expiring, he said to those who surrounded him: 'Brothers, do you not see the angels of Heaven here present who assist me?' One of the religious having heard him mutter some words, asked him what he said. He replied, that his guardian angel had revealed to him that he would remain but a very short time in purgatory, and that he would soon go to heaven. He then entered into a colloquy with his sweet Mother Mary, and like a child that abandons itself to rest in the arms of its mother, he exclaimed, '*Mother, mother!*' and sweetly expired. Shortly afterwards a devout religious learnt by revelation that he was already in heaven.

### Prayer

O most holy Mother Mary, how is it possible that I, having so holy a Mother, should be so wicked? a Mother all burning with the love of God, and I loving creatures; a Mother so rich in virtue, and I so poor? Ah, amiable Mother, it is true that I do not deserve any longer to be thy son, for by my wicked life I have rendered myself unworthy of so great an honour. I am satisfied that thou shouldst accept me for thy servant; and in order to be admitted amongst the vilest of them, I am ready to renounce all the kingdoms of the world. Yes, I am satisfied. But still thou must not forbid me to call thee Mother. This name consoles and fills me with tenderness, and reminds me of my obligation to love thee. This name excites me to great confidence in thee. When my sins and the Divine justice fill me most with consternation, I am all consoled at the thought that thou art my Mother. Allow me then to call thee Mother, my most amiable Mother. Thus do I call thee, and thus will I always call thee. Thou, after God, must be my hope, my refuge, my love, in this valley of tears. Thus do I hope to die, breathing forth my soul into thy holy hands, and saying, My Mother, my Mother Mary, help me, have pity on me! Amen.

### SECTION III—ON THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE WHICH THIS MOTHER BEARS US

Since Mary is our Mother, we may consider how great is the love she bears us; love towards our children is a necessary

impulse of nature; and St. Thomas<sup>68</sup> says that this is the reason why the Divine law imposes on children the obligation of loving their parents; but gives no express command that parents should love their children, for nature itself has so strongly implanted it in all creatures, that, as St. Ambrose remarks, 'we know that a mother will expose herself to danger for her children,'<sup>69</sup> and even the most savage beasts cannot do otherwise than love their young.<sup>70</sup> It is said that even tigers, on hearing the cry of their cubs taken by hunters, will go into the sea and swim until they reach the vessel in which they are. Since the very tigers, says our most loving Mother Mary, cannot forget their young, how can I forget to love you, my children? And even, she adds, were such a thing possible as that a mother should forget to love her child, it is not possible that I should cease to love a soul that has become my child: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee."<sup>71</sup> Mary is our Mother, not, as we have already observed, according to the flesh, but by love; "I am the Mother of fair love;"<sup>72</sup> hence it is the love only that she bears us that makes her our Mother; and therefore some one remarks, 'that she glories in being a Mother of love, because she is all love towards

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<sup>68</sup> De Dil. Chr. c. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Scimus quia mater pro filiis se offert periculo.—L. vi. Exp. Ev. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Natura hoc bestiis infundit, ut catulos propios ament.—*S. Ambros.: Exam.* 1. 6, c. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Numquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui? Et si ilia oblita fuerit, ego tamen non obliviscar tui.—*Is.* xlix. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis.—*Eccles.* xxiv. 24.

us whom she has adopted for her children.<sup>73</sup> And who can ever tell the love that Mary bears us miserable creatures? Arnold of Chartres tells us that ‘at the death of Jesus Christ, she desired with immense ardour to die with her Son, for love of us;’<sup>74</sup> so much so, adds St. Ambrose, that whilst ‘her Son hung on the cross, Mary offered herself to the executioners,<sup>75</sup> to give her life for us.

But let us consider the reasons of this love; for then we shall be better able to understand how much this good Mother loves us. The first reason for the great love that Mary bears to men, is the great love that she bears to God; love towards God and love towards our neighbour belong to the same commandment, as expressed by St. John: “this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother;”<sup>76</sup> so that as the one becomes greater the other also increases. What have not the Saints done for their neighbour in consequence of their love towards God! Read only the account of the labours of St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, where, in order to aid the souls of these poor barbarians and bring them to God, he exposed himself to a thousand dangers, clambering amongst the mountains, and seeking out these poor creatures in the caves in which they

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<sup>73</sup> Se dilectionis esse matrem merito gloriatur, quia tota est amor erga nos, quos in filios recepit.—*Pacciuch. in Ps. 86, Exc. xxii. n. 5.*

<sup>74</sup> Optabat quidem ipsa, ad sanguinem animæ, et carnis suæ addere sanguinem . . . et cum Domino Jesu corporali morte redemptionis nostræ consummare mysterium.—*De sept. verb. Dom.*

<sup>75</sup> Pendebat in cruce filius, mater persecutoribus se offerebat.—*De Inst. Virg. c. 7.*

<sup>76</sup> Hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligit Deum, diligat et fratrem suum.—*1 Joan. iv. 21.*

dwelt like wild beasts. See a St. Francis of Sales, who, in order to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, risked his life every morning, for a whole year, crawling on his hands and feet over a frozen beam, in order that he might preach to them on the opposite side of a river; a St. Paulinus, who delivered himself up as a slave, in order that he might obtain liberty for the son of a poor widow; a St. Fidelis, who, in order to draw the heretics of a certain place to God, persisted in going to preach to them, though he knew it would cost him his life. The Saints, then, because they loved God much, did much for their neighbour: but who ever loved God as much as Mary? She loved Him more in the first moment of her existence than all the saints and angels ever loved Him, or will love Him; but this we shall explain at length, when treating of her virtues. Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to Sister Mary the Crucified, that the fire of love with which she was inflamed towards God was such, that if the heavens and earth were placed in it, they would be instantly consumed; so that the arduours of the seraphim, in comparison with it, were but as fresh breezes. And as amongst all the blessed spirits, there is not one that loves God more than Mary, so we neither have nor can have anyone who, after God, loves us as much as this most loving Mother; and if we concentrate all the love that mothers bear their children, husbands and wives one another, all the love of angels and saints for their clients, it does not equal the love of Mary towards a single soul. Father Nieremberg<sup>77</sup> says that the love that all mothers have ever had for their children is but a shadow in comparison with the love that

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<sup>77</sup> *De Aff. erga B. V.* c. 14.

Mary bears to each one of us; and he adds, that she alone loves us more than all the angels and saints put together.

Moreover, our Mother loves us much, because we were recommended to her by her beloved Jesus, when He before expiring said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" for we were all represented in the person of St. John, as we have already observed: these were His last words; and the last recommendations left before death by persons we love are always treasured and never forgotten. But again, we are exceedingly dear to Mary on account of the sufferings we cost her; mothers generally love those children most, the preservation of whose lives has cost them the most suffering and anxiety; we are those children for whom Mary, in order to obtain for us the life of grace, was obliged to endure the bitter agony of herself offering her beloved Jesus to die an ignominious death, and had also to see Him expire before her own eyes in the midst of the most cruel and unheard-of torments. It was then by this great offering of Mary that we were born to the life of grace; we are therefore her very dear children, since we cost her so great suffering. And thus, as it is written of the love of the Eternal Father towards men, in giving His own Son to death for us, that "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son."<sup>78</sup> 'So also,' says St. Bonaventure, 'we can say of Mary, that she has so loved us as to give her only-begotten Son for us.'<sup>79</sup> And when did she give Him? She gave Him, says Father Nieremberg,<sup>80</sup> when she granted Him permission to deliver Himself up

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<sup>78</sup> Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.—  
*Joan.* iii. 16.

<sup>79</sup> Sic Maria dilexit nos, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.W

<sup>80</sup> Ut sup.

to death; she gave Him, when, others neglecting to do so, either out of hatred or from fear, she might herself have pleaded for the life of her Son before the judges; and well may it be supposed that the words of so wise and loving a mother would have had great weight, at least with Pilate, and might have prevented him from sentencing a man to death whom he knew and had declared to be innocent. But no, Mary would not say a word in favour of her Son, lest she might prevent that death on which our salvation depended. Finally, she gave Him a thousand and a thousand times, during the three hours preceding His death, and which she spent at the foot of the cross; for during the whole of that time she unceasingly offered, with the extreme of sorrow and the extreme of love, the life of her Son in our behalf, and this with such constancy, that St. Anselm and St. Antoninus<sup>81</sup> say, that if executioners had been wanting, she herself would have crucified Him, in order to obey the Eternal Father, who willed His death for our salvation. If Abraham had such fortitude as to be ready to sacrifice with his own hands the life of his son, with far greater fortitude would Mary (far more holy and obedient than Abraham) have sacrificed the life of hers. But let us return to the consideration of the gratitude we owe to Mary for so great an act of love as was the painful sacrifice of the life of her Son, which she made to obtain eternal salvation for us all. God abundantly rewarded Abraham for the sacrifice he was prepared to make of his son Isaac; but we, what return can we make to Mary for the life of her Jesus, a Son far more noble and beloved than the son of Abraham? ‘This love of Mary,’

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<sup>81</sup> P. 4. t. 15. o. 41. §1.



says St. Bonaventure, 'has indeed obliged us to love her; for we see that she has surpassed all others in love towards us, since she has given her only Son, whom she loved more than herself, for us.'<sup>82</sup>

From this arises another motive for the love of Mary towards us; for in us she beholds that which has been purchased at the price of the death of Jesus Christ. If a mother knew that a servant had been ransomed by a beloved son at the price of twenty years of imprisonment and suffering, how greatly would she esteem that servant, if on this account alone! Mary well knows that her Son came into the world only to save us poor creatures, as He Himself protested, "I am come to save that which was lost."<sup>83</sup> And to save us He was pleased even to lay down His life for us, "having become obedient unto death."<sup>84</sup> If, then, Mary loved us but little, she would show that she valued but little the blood of her Son, which was the price of our salvation. To St. Elizabeth of Hungary it was revealed, that Mary, from the time she dwelt in the Temple, did nothing but pray for us, begging that God would hasten the coming of His Son into the world to save us. And how much more must we suppose that she loves us, now that she has seen that we are valued to such a degree by her Son, that He did not disdain to purchase us at such a cost. And because all men have been redeemed by Jesus, therefore Mary loves and protects them all. It was she who was seen by St. John

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<sup>82</sup> Nulla post eam creatura ita per amorem nostrum exardescet, quæ filium suum unicum, quem multo plus se amavit, nobis dedit, et pro nobis obtulit.—*S. Bonav. de B.V.M.* s. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Salvum facere quod perierat.—*Luc.* xix. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Factus obediens usque ad mortem.—*Phil.* ii. 8.

in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun."<sup>85</sup> She is said to be clothed with the sun, because as there is no one on earth who can be hidden from the heat of the sun—"There is no one that can hide himself from his heat"<sup>86</sup>—so there is no one living who can be deprived of the love of Mary. "From its heat," that is, as blessed Raymond Jordano applies the words, 'from the love of Mary.'<sup>87</sup> 'And who,' exclaims St. Antoninus, 'can ever form an idea of the tender care that this most loving Mother takes of all of us,'<sup>88</sup> 'offering and dispensing her mercy to everyone,'<sup>89</sup> for our good Mother desired the salvation of all, and coöperated in obtaining it. 'It is evident,' says St. Bernard, 'that she was solicitous for the whole human race.'<sup>90</sup> Hence the custom of some of Mary's clients, spoken of by Cornelius à Lapide, and which consists in asking our Lord to grant them the graces that our Blessed Lady seeks for them, succeeds most advantageously: they say, Lord, grant me that which the most Blessed Virgin Mary asks for me. 'And no wonder,' adds the same writer, 'for our Mother desires for us better things than we can possibly desire ourselves.'<sup>91</sup> The

<sup>85</sup> Et signum magnum apparuit in cœlo, mulier amicta sole.—*Apoc.* xii. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Non est qui se abscondit a calore ejus.—*Ps.* xviii. 7.

<sup>87</sup> A calore ejus, id est a dilectione Mariæ.—*Contempl. de V.M.* in prol.

<sup>88</sup> Oh quanta est cura B. Virgini matri de nobis!—*Tom.* iv. Tit. 15, c. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Omnibus aperit sinum misericordiæ suæ.—*Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Constat pro universo genere humano fuisse sollicitam.—*In Assump. B.M.* Serm. iv.

<sup>91</sup> Ipsa enim majora optat, quam nos optare possumus. †

devout Bernardine da Busto says, that Mary 'loves to do us good, and dispense graces to us far more than we to receive them.'<sup>92</sup> On this subject Blessed Albert the Great applies to Mary the words of the Book of Wisdom: "She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them."<sup>93</sup> Mary anticipates those who have recourse to her by making them find her before they seek her. 'The love that this good Mother bears us is so great,' says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'that as soon as she perceives our wants, she comes to our assistance. She comes before she is called.'<sup>94</sup>

And now, if Mary is so good to all, even to the ungrateful and negligent, who love her but little, and seldom have recourse to her, how much more loving will she be to those who love her and often call upon her! "She is easily found by them that seek her."<sup>95</sup> 'O, how easy,' adds the same Blessed Albert, 'is it for those who love Mary to find her, and to find her full of compassion and love!' In the words of the Book of Proverbs, "I love them that love me,"<sup>96</sup> she protests that she cannot do otherwise than love those who love her. And although this most loving Lady loves all men as her children, yet, says St. Bernard, 'she recognises and loves,'<sup>97</sup> that is, she loves in a more special manner, those

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<sup>92</sup> Plus enim desiderat ipsa facere tibi bonum et largiri aliquam gratiam, quam tu accipere concupiscas.—*Marial.* P. ii. *Serm.* 5, *de Nat. B.V.*

<sup>93</sup> Præoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se prior ostendat.—*Sap.* vi. 14.

<sup>94</sup> Velocius occurit ejus pietas quam invocetur.—*Exp. in Cant.* c. xxiii.

<sup>95</sup> Facile . . . invenitur ab his qui quærunt illam.—*Sap.* vi. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Ego diligentes me diligo.—*Prov.* viii. 17.

<sup>97</sup> *In Salve Reg.* s. 1.

who love her more tenderly. Blessed Raymond Jordano asserts that these happy lovers of Mary are not only loved but even served by her; for he says that those who find the most Blessed Virgin Mary, find all; for she loves those who love her, nay more, she serves those who serve her.<sup>98</sup>

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Dominic it is related that one of the friars named Leonard used to recommend himself two hundred times a day to this Mother of Mercy, and that when he was attacked by his last illness, he saw a most beautiful queen by his side, who thus addressed him: 'Leonard, wilt thou die, and come and dwell with my Son and with me?' 'And who art thou?' he replied. 'I am,' said the most Blessed Virgin, for she it was, 'I am the Mother of Mercy: thou hast so many times invoked me, behold, I am now come to take thee; let us go together to Paradise.' On the same day Leonard died, and, as we trust, followed her to the kingdom of the blessed.

'Ah, most sweet Mary!' exclaimed the venerable brother John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, 'blessed is he who loves thee! If I love Mary, I am certain of perseverance, and shall obtain whatever I wish from God.' Therefore the devout youth was never tired of renewing his resolution, and of repeating often to himself: 'I will love Mary; I will love Mary.' O, how much does the love of this good Mother exceed that of all her children! Let them love her as much as they will, Mary is always amongst lovers the most loving. Let them love her like a St. Stanislaus Kostka,

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<sup>98</sup> Inventa . . . Virgine Maria, invenitur omne bonum; ipsa namque dillgit diligentes se, immo sibi servientibus servit.—*De Contempl. Virg.* in prol.

who loved this dear Mother so tenderly, that in speaking of her he moved all who heard him to love her: he had made new words and new titles with which to honour her name. He never did anything without first turning to her image to ask her blessing. When he said her office, the Rosary, or other prayers, he did so with the same external marks of affection as he would have done had he been speaking face to face with Mary; when the *Salve Regina* was sung, his whole soul, and even his whole countenance, was all inflamed with love. On being one day asked by a father of the Society who was going with him to visit a picture of the Blessed Virgin, how much he loved Mary,—‘Father,’ he replied, ‘what more can I say? she is my mother.’ ‘But,’ adds the father, ‘the holy youth uttered these words with such tenderness in his voice, with such an expression of countenance, and at the same time it came so fully from his heart, that it no longer seemed to be a young man, but rather an angel speaking of the love of Mary.’

Let us love her like a blessed Hermann, who called her the spouse of his love, for he was honoured by Mary herself with this same title. Let us love her like a St. Philip Neri, who was filled with consolation at the mere thought of Mary, and therefore called her his delight. Let us love her like a St. Bonaventure, who called her not only his Lady and Mother, but to show the tenderness of his affection, even called her his heart and soul: ‘Hail, my Lady, my Mother; nay, even my heart, my soul!’<sup>99</sup> Let us love her like that great lover of Mary, who loved this his sweet Mother

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<sup>99</sup> Ave Domina mea, mater mea; imo cor meum et anima mea.—  
*Stim. am Med. in Salut. Ang.*

so much that he called her the ravisher of hearts;<sup>100</sup> and to express the ardent love he bore her, added: 'for hast thou not ravished my heart, O Queen?'<sup>101</sup> Let us call her our beloved, like a St. Bernardine of Sienna, who daily went to visit a devotional picture of Mary, and there, in tender colloquies with his Queen, declared his love; and when asked where he went each day, he replied, that he went to visit his beloved. Let us love her like a St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose love for Mary burnt so unceasingly, that whenever he heard the sweetest name of his Mother mentioned, his heart was instantly inflamed, and his countenance lighted up with a fire that was visible to all. Let us love her like a St. Francis Solano, who, maddened as it were (but with a holy madness) with love for Mary, would sing before her picture, and accompany himself on a musical instrument, saying, that like worldly lovers, he serenaded his most sweet Queen.

Finally, let us love her as so many of her servants have loved her, who never could do enough to show their love. Father Jerome of Texo, of the Society of Jesus, rejoiced in the name of slave of Mary; and as a mark of servitude, went often to visit her in some church dedicated in her honour. On reaching the church, he poured out abundant tears of tenderness and love for Mary; then, prostrating, he licked and rubbed the pavement with his tongue and face, kissing it a thousand times, because it was the house of his beloved Lady. Father Diego Martinez, of the same Society, who for his devotion to our blessed Lady on her feasts was carried

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<sup>100</sup> O raptrix cordium!—*Ib.*

<sup>101</sup> Nonne cor meum, Domina, rapuisti?—*Ib.*

by angels to Heaven to see how they were kept there, used to say, 'Would that I had the hearts of all angels and saints, to love Mary as they love her—would that I had the lives of all men, to give them all for her love!' O that others could come to love her as did Charles the son of St. Bridget, who said that nothing in the world consoled him so much as the knowledge that Mary was so greatly loved by God. And he added, that he would willingly endure every torment rather than allow Mary to lose the smallest degree of her glory, were such a thing possible; and that if her glory was his, he would renounce it in her favour, as being far more worthy of it. Let us moreover desire to lay down our lives as a testimony of our love for Mary, as Alphonsus Rodriguez desired it. Let us love her as did those who even cut the beloved name of Mary on their breasts with sharp instruments, as a Frances Binanzio and a Radagundis, wife of king Clothaire, or as did those who could imprint this loved name on their flesh with hot irons, in order that it might remain more distinct and lasting, as did her devout servants Baptist Archinto and Augustine d'Espinosa, both of the Society of Jesus, driven thereto by the vehemence of their love.

Let us, in fine, do or desire to do all that it is possible for a lover to do, who intends to make his affection known to the person loved. For be assured that the lovers of Mary will never be able to equal her in love. 'I know, O Lady,' says St. Peter Damian, 'that thou art most loving, and that thou lovest us with an invincible love.'<sup>102</sup> I know, my Lady, that among those that love thee thou lovest the most, and that

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<sup>102</sup> Scio, Domina, quia benignissima es, et amas nos amore invincibili—*Serm. 1 de Nat. B.V.*

thou lovest us with a love that can never be surpassed. The blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, once prostrate before an image of Mary, felt his heart inflamed with love towards this most Holy Virgin, and burst forth into the following exclamation: 'My most beloved Mother, I know that thou lovest me, but thou dost not love me as much as I love thee.' Mary, as it were offended and piqued on the point of love, immediately replied from the image: 'What dost thou say, Alphonsus—what dost thou say? O, how much greater is the Love that I bear thee, than any love that thou canst have for me! Know that the distance between heaven and earth is not so great as the distance between thy love and mine.'

St. Bonaventure, then, was right in exclaiming: Blessed are they who have the good fortune to be faithful servants and lovers of this most loving Mother. 'Blessed are the hearts of those who love Mary; blessed are they who are tenderly devoted to her.'<sup>103</sup> Yes; for 'in this struggle our most gracious Queen never allows her clients to conquer her in love. She returns our love and homage, and always increases her past favours by new ones.'<sup>104</sup> Mary, imitating in this our most loving Redeemer Jesus Christ, returns to those who love her their love doubled in benefits and favours. Then will I exclaim, with the enamoured St. Anselm, 'May my heart languish and my soul melt and be consumed with your love, O my beloved Saviour Jesus, and

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<sup>103</sup> Beati quorum corda te diligunt, Virgo Maria.—*In Ps. xxxi. de B. V.* Beati qui devote ei famulantur.—*In Ps. cxviii. de B. V.*

<sup>104</sup> Numquam tamen in hoc eximio certamine a nobis ipsa vincetur. Etenim et amorem et honorem redhibet, et præterita beneficia novis semper adauget.—*Pacciuchelli in Ps. lxxxvi. Exit. 2.*



my dear Mother Mary! But, as without your grace I cannot love you, grant me, O Jesus and Mary, grant my soul, by your merits and not mine, the grace to love you as you deserve to be loved. O God, lover of men, thou couldst love guilty men even unto death. And canst thou deny Thy love and that of Thy Mother to those who ask it?<sup>105</sup>

### Example

Father Auriemma<sup>106</sup> relates that there was a certain poor shepherdess, whose sole delight was to go to a little chapel of our Blessed Lady, situated on a mountain, and there, whilst her flocks browsed, converse with and honour her dear Mother. Seeing that the little image of Mary (which was carved in relief) was unadorned, she set to work to make her a mantle; and one day, having gathered a few flowers in the fields, she made a garland, and climbing on the altar of the little chapel, placed it on the head of the image, saying: 'My Mother, I would place a crown of gold and precious stones on thy brow, but, as I am poor, receive this crown of flowers, and accept it as a mark of the love that I bear thee.' With this and other acts of homage, the pious maiden always endeavoured to serve and honour our beloved Lady. But let us now see how the good Mother

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<sup>105</sup> Vestro continuo amore langueat cor meum: liquefiant omnia ossamea . . . Date itaque piissimi, date, obsecro, supplicanti animæ meæ, non propter meritum meum, sed propter meritum vestrum, date illi quanto digni estis, amorem vestrum . . . O amator et miserator hominum, tu potuisti reos tuos et usque ad mortem amare: et poteris te roganti amorem tui et matris tuæ negare?—*In Depr.* li. *ad B. V.*

<sup>106</sup> *Affetti Scamb.* tom. ii. c. 8.

on her part recompensed the visits and the affection of her child. She fell ill, and was brought to the point of death. It so happened that two religious were passing that way, and, fatigued with their journey, sat down under a tree to rest: one fell asleep, and the other remained awake; but both had the same vision. They saw a troop of most beautiful ladies, and amongst these was one who in beauty and majesty far surpassed them all. One of the religious addressed himself to her: 'Lady, who art thou, and where art thou going by these rugged ways?' 'I am,' she replied, 'the Mother of God, and am going with these holy virgins to a neighbouring cottage to visit a dying shepherdess who has so often visited me.' Having said these words, all disappeared. At once these two good servants of God said, 'Let us go also to see her.' They immediately started, and having found the cottage of the dying virgin, they entered it and found her stretched on a little straw. They saluted her, and she said, 'Brothers, ask our Lord to let you see the company that is assisting me.' They immediately knelt, and saw Mary by the side of the dying girl, holding a crown in her hand, and consoling her. All at once the virgins began to sing, and at the sound of this sweet harmony her blessed soul left her body. Mary placed the crown on her head, and taking her soul, led it with her to Paradise.

### Prayer

'O Lady, O ravisher of hearts!' will I exclaim with St. Bonaventure:<sup>107</sup> 'Lady, who with the love and favour thou showest thy servants dost ravish their hearts, ravish also my

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<sup>107</sup> O Domina, quæ rapis corda.—*Stim. am. Med. in Salve Reg.*

miserable heart, which desires ardently to love thee. Thou, my Mother, hast enamoured a God with thy beauty, and drawn Him from heaven into thy chaste womb; and shall I live without loving thee? No, I will never rest until I am certain of having obtained thy love; but a constant and tender love towards thee, my Mother, who hast loved me with so much tenderness,<sup>108</sup> even when I was ungrateful towards thee. And what should I now be, O Mary, if thou hadst not obtained so many mercies for me? Since, then, thou didst love me so much when I loved thee not, how much more may I not now hope from thee, now that I love thee? I love thee, O my Mother, and I would that I had a heart to love thee in place of all those unfortunate creatures who love thee not. I would that I could speak with a thousand tongues, that all might know thy greatness, thy holiness, thy mercy, and the love with which thou lovest all who love thee. Had I riches, I would employ them all for thy honour. Had I subjects, I would make them all thy lovers. In fine, if the occasion presented itself, I would lay down my life for thy glory. I love thee, then, O my Mother; but at the same time I fear that I do not love thee as I ought; for I hear that love makes lovers like the person loved. If, then, I see myself so unlike thee, it is a mark that I do not love thee. Thou art so pure, and I defiled with many sins; thou so humble, and I so proud; thou so holy, and I so wicked. This, then, is what thou hast to do, O Mary; since thou lovest me, make me like thee. Thou hast all power to change hearts; take, then, mine and change it. Show the

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<sup>108</sup> Nunquam quiescam, donec habuero tenerum amorem erga matrem meam Mariam.—*B. John Berchmans, S.J.*

world what thou canst do for those who love thee. Make me a saint; make me thy worthy child. This is my hope.

## SECTION IV—MARY IS THE MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS

Our Blessed Lady told St. Bridget that she was the Mother not only of the just and innocent, but also of sinners, provided they were willing to repent.<sup>109</sup> O how prompt does a sinner (desirous of amendment, and who flies to her feet) find this good Mother to embrace and help him, far more so than any earthly mother! St. Gregory the Seventh wrote in this sense to the princess Matilda, saying: ‘Resolve to sin no more, and I promise that undoubtedly thou wilt find Mary more ready to love thee than any earthly mother.’<sup>110</sup> But whoever aspires to be a child of this great Mother, must first abandon sin, and then may hope to be accepted as such. Richard of St. Lawrence, on the words of Proverbs, “up rose her children,” remarks that first comes ‘up rose’ and then children,<sup>111</sup> to show that no one can be a child of Mary without first endeavouring to rise from the fault into which he has fallen; for he who is in mortal sin is not worthy to be called the son of such a Mother.<sup>112</sup> And

<sup>109</sup> Ego etiam quasi sum Mater omnium peccatorum volentium se emendare,—*Rev.* lib. iv. c. 138.

<sup>110</sup> Pone finem in voluntate peccandi, et invenies Mariam (indubitanter promitto) promptiorem carnali matre in tui dilectione.—*Lib.* i. ep. 47.

<sup>111</sup> Surrexerunt filii ejus.—*Prov.* xxxi. 28.

<sup>112</sup> Nec dignus est, qui in mortali peccato est, vocari filius tantæ Matris.—*De Laud. Virg.* lib. ii. c. 5.

St. Peter Chrysologus says that he who acts in a different manner from Mary, declares thereby that he will not be her son. 'He who does not the works of his Mother abjures his lineage.'<sup>113</sup> Mary humble, and he proud; Mary pure, and he wicked; Mary full of love, and he hating his neighbour. He gives thereby proof that he is not, and will not be, the son of this Holy Mother. The sons of Mary, says Richard of St. Lawrence, are her imitators, and this chiefly in three things: in 'chastity, liberality, and humility; and also in meekness, mercy, and such, like.'<sup>114</sup> And whilst disgusting her by a wicked life, who would dare even to wish to be the child of Mary? A certain sinner once said to Mary, 'Show thyself a Mother;' but the Blessed Virgin replied, 'Show thyself a son.'<sup>115</sup> Another invoked the Divine Mother, calling her the Mother of mercy, and she answered: 'You sinners, when you want my help, call me Mother of mercy, and at the same time do not cease by your sins to make me a Mother of sorrows and anguish.'<sup>116</sup> "He is cursed of God," says Ecclesiastes, "that angereth his mother."<sup>117</sup> 'That is Mary,'<sup>118</sup> says Richard of St. Lawrence. God curses those who by their wicked life, and still more by their obstinacy in sin, afflict this tender Mother.

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<sup>113</sup> Qui genitoris non facit opera, negat genus.—*Ib.*

<sup>114</sup> Filii ejus (Mariæ), id est imitatores, maxime in tribus, castitate, largitate, humilitate . . . mansuetudine, misericordia, et hujusmodi.—*Ib.*

<sup>115</sup> Monstra te esse matrem . . . monstra te esse filium.—*Ap. Aur. Aff. Scamb.* p. 3, c. 12.

<sup>116</sup> *Ap. Pelb. Stell.* lib. xii. p. ult. c. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Est maledictus a Deo qui exagperat matrem.—*Ecll.* iii. 18.

<sup>118</sup> Matrem, id est Mariam.—*De Laud. B.M.* lib. ii. p. 1.

I say, by their obstinacy; for if a sinner, though he may not as yet have given up his sin, endeavours to do so, and for this purpose seeks the help of Mary, this good mother will not fail to assist him, and make him recover the grace of God. And this is precisely what St. Bridget heard one day from the lips of Jesus Christ, who, speaking to his Mother, said, 'Thou assistest him who endeavours to return to God, and thy consolations are never wanting to anyone.'<sup>119</sup> So long, then, as a sinner is obstinate, Mary cannot love him; but if he (finding himself chained by some passion which keeps him a slave of hell) recommends himself to the Blessed Virgin, and implores her, with confidence and perseverance, to withdraw him from the state of sin in which he is, there can be no doubt but this good Mother will extend her powerful hand to him, will deliver him from his chains, and lead him to a state of salvation. The doctrine that all prayers and works performed in a state of sin are sins was condemned as heretical by the sacred Council of Trent.<sup>120</sup> St. Bernard says,<sup>121</sup> that although prayer in the mouth of a sinner is devoid of beauty, on account of its being unaccompanied by charity, nevertheless it is useful, and obtains grace to abandon sin; for, as St. Thomas teaches,<sup>122</sup> the prayer of a sinner, though without merit, is an act which obtains the grace of forgiveness, since the power of impetration is founded not on the merits of him who asks, but on the divine goodness, and the merits and promises of Jesus Christ, who has said, "Everyone

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<sup>119</sup> Conanti surgere ad Deum tribuis auxilium, et neminem relinquit vacuum a consolatione tua.—Lib. iy. c. 19.

<sup>120</sup> Sess. 6. can. 7.

<sup>121</sup> *De Div.* s. 81.

<sup>122</sup> 2a, 2æ, qu. 178. a. 2. ad 1.

that asketh receiveth."<sup>123</sup> The same thing must be said of prayers offered to the divine Mother. 'If he who prays,' says St. Anselm, 'does not merit to be heard, the merits of the Mother, to whom he recommends himself, will intercede effectually.'<sup>124</sup> Therefore, St. Bernard exhorts all sinners to have recourse to Mary, invoking her with great confidence; for though the sinner does not himself merit the graces which he asks, yet he receives them, because this Blessed Virgin asks and obtains them from God, on account of her own merits. These are his words, addressing a sinner: 'Because thou wast unworthy to receive the grace thyself, it was given to Mary, in order that, through her, thou mightest receive all.'<sup>125</sup> 'If a mother,' continues the same Saint, 'knew that her two sons bore a mortal enmity to one another, and that each plotted against the other's life, would she not exert herself to her utmost in order to reconcile them? This would be the duty of a good mother. And thus it is,' the Saint goes on to say, 'that Mary acts; for she is the Mother of Jesus, and the Mother of men. When she sees a sinner at enmity with Jesus Christ, she cannot endure it, and does all in her power to make peace between them. O happy Mary, thou art the Mother of the criminal, and the Mother of the judge; and being the Mother of both, they are thy children, and thou canst not endure discords amongst them.'<sup>126</sup> This most

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<sup>123</sup> Omnis enim qui petit, accipit.—*Luc.* xi. 10.

<sup>124</sup> Etsi merita invocantis non merentur, ut exaudiatur, merita tamen Matris intercedunt, ut exaudiatur.—*De Exc. Virg.* c. vi.

<sup>125</sup> Quia indignus eras, cui donaretur, datum est Mariæ, ut per illam acciperes quicquid haberes.—*Serm. 3 in Vig. Nat.*

<sup>126</sup> O felix Maria, tu mater rei, tu mater iudicis: cum sis mater utriusque, discordias inter tuos filios nequis sustinere.—*Apud S. Bonav.*

benign Lady only requires that the sinner should recommend himself to her, and purpose amendment. When Mary sees a sinner at her feet, imploring her mercy, she does not consider the crimes with which he is loaded, but the intention with which he comes; and if this is good, even should he have committed all possible sins, the most loving Mother embraces him, and does not disdain to heal the wounds of his soul; for she is not only *called* the Mother of Mercy, but is so truly and indeed, and shows herself such by the love and tenderness with which she assists us all. And this is precisely what the Blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget: 'However much a man sins, I am ready immediately to receive him when he repents; nor do I pay attention to the number of his sins, but only to the intention with which he comes; I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds; for I am called, and truly am, the Mother of Mercy.'<sup>127</sup>

Mary is the Mother of sinners who wish to repent, and as a Mother she cannot do otherwise than compassionate them; nay more, she seems to feel the miseries of her poor children as if they were her own. When the Canaanitish woman begged our Lord to deliver her daughter from the devil who possessed her, she said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously

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*Spec. B.V.* lect. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Ego quantumcumque homo peccat, si ex toto corde et vera emendatione ad me reversus fuerit, statim parata sum recipere reverentem. Nec attendo quantum peccaverit, sed cum quali intentione et voluntate redit.—*Rev.* 1. ii. c. 23. Quicumque invocaverit me, ego non dedignor tangere, et ungere, et sanare plagas suas.—*Rev.* 1. vi. c. 117. Ego vocor ab omnibus mater misericordiæ, vere filia, misericordia Filii mei fecit me misericordem.—*Rev.* 1. ii. c. 23.



troubled by a devil."<sup>128</sup> But since the daughter, and not the mother, was tormented, she should rather have said, 'Lord, take compassion *on my daughter*:' and not, 'Have mercy on me; but no, she said, 'Have mercy on me' and was right; for the sufferings of children are felt by their mothers as if they were their own. And it is precisely thus, says Richard of St. Lawrence, that Mary prays to God when she recommends a sinner to Him who has had recourse to her; she cries out for the sinful soul, 'Have mercy on *me*!'<sup>129</sup> 'My Lord,' she seems to say, 'this poor soul that is in sin is my daughter, and therefore, pity, not so much her, as me, who am her Mother.' Would that all sinners had recourse to this sweet Mother! for then certainly all would be pardoned by God. 'O Mary,' exclaims St. Bonaventure, in rapturous astonishment, 'thou embracest with maternal affection a sinner despised by the whole world, nor dost thou leave him until thou hast reconciled the poor creature with his judge;<sup>130</sup> meaning, that the sinner whilst in a state of sin is hated and loathed by all, even by inanimate creatures; fire, air, and earth would chastise him, and avenge the honour of their outraged Lord. But if this unhappy creature flies to Mary, will Mary reject him? O, no: provided he goes to her for help, and in order to amend, she will embrace him with the

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<sup>128</sup> Miserere mei, Domine, fili David; filia mea male dæmonic vexatur.—*Matt.* xv. 22.

<sup>129</sup> Quæ clamat ad Deum pro filia, id est peccatrice anima, cujus etiam per sonam misericorditer in se transformatur, dicens, Miserere mei, fili David.—*De Laud. B.V.* 1. vi. c. 9.

<sup>130</sup> Maria, tu peccatorem toti mundo despectum materno affectu complecteris, foves, nec deseris, quousque horrendo judici miserum reconcilies.—*In Spec. B.V.* lect. v.

affection of a mother, and will not let him go, until, by her powerful intercession, she has reconciled him with God, and reinstated him in grace.

In the second book of Kings<sup>131</sup> we read that a wise woman of Thecua addressed King David in the following words: "My Lord, I had two sons, and for my misfortune, one killed the other; so that I have now lost one, and justice demands the other, the only one that is left; take compassion on a poor mother, and let me not be thus deprived of both." David, moved with compassion towards the mother, declared that the delinquent should be set at liberty and restored to her. Mary seems to say the same thing when God is indignant against a sinner who has recommended himself to her. 'My God,' she says, 'I had two sons, Jesus and man; man took the life of my Jesus on the cross, and now Thy justice would condemn the guilty one. O Lord, my Jesus is already dead, have pity on me, and if I have lost the one, do not make me lose the other also.' And most certainly God will not condemn those sinners who have recourse to Mary, and for whom she prays, since He Himself commended them to her as her children. The devout Lanspergius supposes our Lord speaking in the following terms: 'I recommended all, but especially sinners, to Mary as her children, and therefore is she so diligent and so careful in the exercise of her office, that she allows none of those committed to her charge, and especially those who invoke her, to perish; but as far as she can, brings all to Me.'<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Reg. c. xiv.

<sup>132</sup> Mariæ . . . omnes, potissime autem peccatores, in persona Joannis in filios commendavi . . . Propterea adeo est diligens adeo sedula, ut officio suo satisfaciens, neminem eorum, quantum in se

‘And who can ever tell,’ says the devout Blossius, ‘the goodness, the mercy, the compassion, the love, the benignity, the clemency, the fidelity, the benevolence, the charity of this Virgin Mother towards men? It is such that no words can express it.’<sup>133</sup> ‘Let us, then,’ says St. Bernard, ‘cast ourselves at the feet of this good Mother, and embracing them, let us not depart until she blesses us, and thus accepts us for her children.’<sup>134</sup> And who can ever doubt the compassion of this Mother? St. Bonaventure used to say, ‘Even should she take my life, I would still hope in her; and, full of confidence, would desire to die before her image, and be certain of salvation.’<sup>135</sup> And thus should each sinner address her when he has recourse to this compassionate Mother: he should say, ‘My Lady and Mother, on account of my sins I deserve that thou shouldst reject me, and even that thou shouldst thyself chastise me according to my deserts; but shouldst thou reject me, or even take my life, I will still trust in thee, and hope with a firm hope that thou wilt save me. In thee is all my confidence; only grant me the consolation of dying before thy picture, recommending myself to thy mercy, and then I am convinced that I shall not be lost, but that I shall go and praise thee in heaven, in company with so many of

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est, qui sibi commissi sunt, præcipue se invocantium, perire sinat, sed, quantum valet, omnes mihi reducat.—*Lib. i. Alloq. can. 12.*

<sup>133</sup> Hujus Virginis Matris bonitas, misericordia, pietas, amicitia, benignitas, clementia, fidelitas, benevolentia, et caritas erga homines tanta est, ut nullis verbis explicari possit.—*Sac. An. Fid. P. iii. c. 5.*

<sup>134</sup> Beatissimus illius pedibus provolvamur. Teneamus eam, nec dimittamus, donec benedixerit nobis.—*In Sig. Magn.*

<sup>135</sup> Etiamsi occiderit me, sperabo in eam, et totus confidens juxta ejus imaginem mori desidero, et salvus ero.✠

thy servants who left this world calling on thee for help, and have all been saved by thy powerful intercession.' Read the following example, and then say if any sinner can doubt of the mercy and love of this good Mother.

### Example

Vincent of Beauvais relates, that, in an English city, about the year 1430, there was a young nobleman, called Ernest, who, having distributed the whole of his patrimony to the poor, became a monk, and in the monastery to which he retired led so perfect a life, that he was highly esteemed by his superiors, and this esteem was greatly increased by their knowledge of his tender devotion to the most Blessed Virgin. It happened that the city was attacked by the plague, and the inhabitants had recourse to the monastery, in order that the religious might help them by their prayers. The abbot commanded Ernest to go and pray before the altar of Mary, forbidding him to leave it until he should have received an answer from our Blessed Lady. The young man, after remaining for three days in prayer, received an answer from Mary to the effect, that certain prayers were to be said: this was done, and the plague ceased. After a time Ernest cooled in his devotion towards Mary: the devil attacked him with many temptations, and particularly with those against purity, and also to leave his monastery. From not having recommended himself to Mary, he unfortunately yielded to the temptation, and resolved to escape by climbing over a wall. Passing before an image of Mary which was in the corridor, the Mother of God addressed him, saying, 'My son, why dost thou leave me?' Ernest, thunderstruck and repentant, sunk to the ground, and replied, 'But, Lady, dost

thou not see that I can no longer resist, why dost thou not assist me?' 'And why hast thou not invoked me?' said our Blessed Lady. 'If thou hadst recommended thyself to me, thou wouldst not have fallen so low; but from henceforth do so, and fear nothing.' Ernest returned to his cell; his temptations recommenced; again he neglected to recommend himself to Mary, and at last fled from his monastery. He then gave himself up to a most wicked life, fell from one sin into another, and at length became an assassin; for having hired an inn, during the night he used to murder the poor travellers who slept there. Amongst others, he one night killed the cousin of the governor of the place. For this crime he was tried and sentenced to death. It so happened that before he was made a prisoner, and whilst evidence was being collected, a young nobleman arrived at the inn. The wicked Ernest, as usual, determined to murder him, and entered the room at night for this purpose—but, lo, instead of finding the young man, he beheld a crucifix on the bed, all covered with wounds. The image cast a look of compassion on him, and exclaimed, 'Ungrateful wretch! is it not enough that I have died once for thee? Wilt thou again take my life? Be it so. Raise thy hand,—strike!' Filled with confusion, poor Ernest began to weep, and sobbing, said, 'Behold me, Lord; since thou showest me such mercy, I will return to Thee.' Immediately he left the inn to return to his monastery there to do penance for his crimes; but on the road he was taken by the ministers of justice, was led before the judge, and acknowledged all the murders he had committed. He was sentenced to be hung, without having even the time given him to go to confession. He recommended himself to Mary, and was thrown from the ladder;

but the Blessed Virgin preserved his life, and she herself loosened the rope, and then addressed him, saying, 'Go, return to thy monastery, do penance, and when thou seest a paper in my hands, announcing the pardon of thy sins, prepare for death. Ernest returned, related all to his abbot, and did great penance. After many years, he saw the paper in the hands of Mary, which announced his pardon; he immediately prepared for death, and in a most holy manner breathed forth his soul.

### Prayer

O my sovereign Queen and worthy Mother of my God, most holy Mary; I, seeing myself, as I do, so despicable and loaded with so many sins, ought not to presume to call thee Mother, or even to approach thee; yet I will not allow my miseries to deprive me of the consolation and confidence that I feel in calling thee Mother; I know well that I deserve that thou shouldst reject me; but I beseech thee to remember all that thy Son Jesus has endured for me, and then reject me if thou canst. I am a wretched sinner, who, more than all others, have despised the infinite majesty of God: but the evil is done. To thee have I recourse; thou canst help me: my Mother, help me. Say not that thou canst not do so; for I know that thou art all-powerful, and that thou obtainest whatever thou desirest of God; and if thou sayest that thou wilt not help me, tell me at least to whom I can apply in this my so great misfortune. 'Either pity me' will I say, with the devout St. Anselm, 'O my Jesus, and forgive me, and do thou pity me, my Mother Mary, by interceding for me, or at least tell me to whom I can have recourse, who is more compassionate, or in whom I can have greater

confidence than in thee.<sup>136</sup> O, no; neither on earth nor in heaven can I find anyone who has more compassion for the miserable, or who is better able to assist me, than thou canst, O Mary. Thou, O Jesus, art my Father, and thou, Mary, art my Mother. You both love the most miserable, and go seeking them in order to save them. I deserve hell, and am the most miserable of all. But you need not seek me, nor do I presume to ask so much. I now present myself before you with a certain hope that I shall not be abandoned. Behold me at your feet; my Jesus, forgive me; my Mother Mary, help me.

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<sup>136</sup> Aut miseremini miseri, tu parcendo, tu interveniendo; aut ostendite, ad quos tutius fugiam misericordiores; et monstrate, in quibus certius confidam potentiores?—*In Depr. L. ad B.V.*

# THE PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

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## INVOCATION OF JESUS AND MARY



Saviour of the world, O Love of souls, O Lord most lovely of all beings! Thou by Thy Passion didst come to win to Thyself our hearts, by showing us the immense love that Thou didst bear to us in accomplishing a redemption which has brought to us a sea of benedictions, and which cost Thee a sea of pains and ignominies. It was principally for this end that Thou didst institute the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in order that we might have a perpetual memorial of Thy Passion: "That we might have forever a perpetual memorial of so great a benefit," says St. Thomas, "He gives his body to be the food of the faithful,"<sup>1</sup> which St. Paul had already said. *As often as you shall eat this bread, you shall show the death of the Lord.*<sup>2</sup> Oh, how many holy souls hast Thou persuaded by these prodigies of love, consumed by the flames of Thy love, to renounce all earthly goods, in order to dedicate themselves entirely to loving Thee alone, O most amiable Saviour! O my Jesus! I pray Thee make me always remember Thy Passion; and grant that I also, a miserable sinner, overcome at last by so many loving devices, may return to love Thee, and to show Thee, by my poor love,

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<sup>1</sup> "Ut autem tanti beneficii jugis in nobis maneret memoria, corpus suum in cibum fidelibus dereliquit."—*Off Corp. Chr.* 1. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis."—1 *Cor.* xi. 26.

some mark of gratitude for the excessive love which Thou, my God and my Saviour, hast borne to me. Remember, my Jesus, that I am one of those sheep of Thine, to save which Thou didst come down on the earth and didst sacrifice Thy divine life. I know that, after having redeemed me by Thy death, Thou hast not ceased to love me, and that Thou dost still bear to me the same love that Thou hadst for me when Thou didst die for my sake. Oh, permit me no longer to lead a life of ingratitude towards Thee, my God, who dost so much deserve to be loved, and hast done so much to be loved by me!


And thou, O most holy Virgin Mary, who didst take so great a part in the Passion of thy Son, obtain for me, I beseech thee, through the merits of thy sorrows, the grace to experience a taste of that compassion which thou didst so sensibly feel at the death of Jesus, and obtain for me also a spark of that love which wrought all the martyrdom of thy afflicted heart. Amen.

“Let my mind, O Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech Thee, be absorbed in the fiery and honeyed sweetness of Thy love, that I may die for love of the love of Thee, who wert pleased to die for love of the love of me”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Absorbeat, quæso, Domine Jesu Christe, mentem meam ignita et melliflua vis amoris tui, ut amore amoris tui moriar, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es mori.”—*Prayer of St. Francis Assisi.*

## TO THE READER

n my book on the *Glories of Mary*, I promised to write for you another that should treat of the love of Jesus Christ; but on account of my corporal infirmities, my Director would not permit me to keep my promise. I have been scarcely able to publish these short Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ. These Reflections, however, contain the gist of what I had gathered for my subject, withholding only what had reference to the Incarnation and birth of our Saviour, as I intended to compose from it a little work for the Novena of Christmas, which I shall afterwards publish, if I obtain permission. Nevertheless, I hope that the little work that I offer you to-day will be pleasing to you, especially since it will put before you, in regular order, the passages of Holy Scripture referring to the love that Jesus Christ showed us in his death; for there is nothing more apt to stimulate a Christian to the love of God than the word of God itself that is drawn from Holy Writ.

Let us, therefore, love Jesus Christ, who is our Saviour, our God, and our supreme good. This is the reason why I invite you to cast a glance at the Passion; for you will find therein all the motives that we can have to hope for eternal life and to love God; and in this our salvation consists.

All the saints cherished a tender devotion towards Jesus Christ in his Passion; this is the only means by which they




sanctified themselves. Father Balthasar Alvarez, as we read in his life, used to say that one should not think of having done anything so long as one has not succeeded in constantly keeping in one's heart Jesus crucified. His method of prayer consisted in placing himself at the feet of Jesus crucified, by meditating especially on his poverty, his humiliations, sorrows, and by listening to the lesson that our Lord made him hear from the height of the cross. You may also hope to sanctify yourself if you continue in like manner to consider what your divine Redeemer has done and suffered for you.

Ask him, without ceasing, to give you his love; and this grace you should never weary to ask from your Queen, the Blessed Virgin, who is called the Mother of beautiful love. And when you ask this great gift for yourself, ask it also for me, who have desired to contribute to your sanctification in offering you this little work. I promise to do the same thing for you in order that, one day, in paradise, we may embrace each other in a holy charity, and may recognize each other as devoted servants of our most amiable Saviour, finding ourselves united there in the society of the elect to see forever, face to face, and love for all eternity, Jesus, our Saviour and our love. Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

# HOW USEFUL IT IS TO MEDITATE ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

he lover of souls, our most loving Redeemer, declared that he had no other motive in coming down upon earth to become man than to enkindle in the hearts of men the fire of his holy love: *I am come to cast fire on earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?*<sup>1</sup> And, oh, what beautiful flames of love has he not enkindled in so many souls, especially by the pains that he chose to suffer in his death, in order to prove to us the immeasurable love which he still bears to us!

Oh, how many souls, happy in the wounds of Jesus, as in burning furnaces of love, have been so inflamed with his love that they have not refused to consecrate to him their goods, their lives, and their whole selves, surmounting with great courage all the difficulties which they had to encounter in the observance of the divine law, for the love of that Lord who, being God, chose to suffer so much for the love of them! This was just the counsel that the Apostle gave us, in order that we might not fail, but make great advances in the way of salvation: *Think diligently upon Him who endureth*

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<sup>1</sup> “Ignem veni mittere in terram; et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?”—*Luke*, xii. 49.

*such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.*<sup>2</sup>

Wherefore St. Augustine, all inflamed with love at the sight of Jesus nailed on the cross, prayed thus sweetly: "Imprint, O Lord, Thy wounds in my heart, that I may read therein suffering and love: suffering, that I may endure for Thee all suffering; love, that I may despise for Thee all love."<sup>3</sup> Write, he said, my most loving Saviour, write on my heart Thy wounds, in order that I may always behold therein Thy sufferings and Thy love. Yes, because, having before my eyes the great sufferings that Thou, my God, didst endure for me, I may bear in silence all the sufferings that it may fall to my lot to endure; and at the sight of the love which Thou didst exhibit for me on the cross, I may never love or be able to love any other than Thee."

And from what source did the saints draw courage and strength to suffer torments, martyrdom, and death, if not from the sufferings of Jesus crucified? St. Joseph of Leonesa, a Capuchin, on seeing that they were going to bind him with cords, for a painful incision that the surgeon was to make in his body, took into his hands his crucifix and said, "Why these cords? why these cords? Behold, these are my chains—my Saviour nailed to the cross for love of me. He, through his sufferings, constrains me to bear every trial for his sake." And thus he suffered the amputation without

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<sup>2</sup> "Recogitate enim eum, qui talem sustinuit a peccatoribus adversum semetipsum contradictionem, ut ne fatigemini, animis vestris deficientes."—*Heb.* xii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Scribe, Domine, vulnera tua in corde meo, ut in eis legam dolorem et amorem: dolorem, ad sustinendum pro te omnem dolorem; amorem, ad contemnendum pro te omnem amorem."

a complaint; looking upon Jesus, who, *as a lamb before his shearers, was dumb, and did not open His mouth.*<sup>4</sup>

Who, then, can ever complain that he suffers wrongfully, when he considers Jesus, who was *bruised for our sins*? Who can refuse to obey, on account of some inconvenience, when Jesus *became obedient unto death*? Who can refuse ignominies, when they behold Jesus treated as a fool, as a mock king, as a disorderly person; struck, spit upon on his face, and suspended upon an infamous gibbet?

Who could love any other object besides Jesus when they see him dying in the midst of so many sufferings and insults, in order to captivate our love? A certain devout solitary prayed to God to teach him what he could do in order to love him perfectly. Our Lord revealed to him that there was no more efficient way to arrive at the perfect love of him than to meditate constantly on his Passion. St. Teresa lamented and complained of certain books which had taught her to leave off meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ, because this might be an impediment to the contemplation of his divinity; and the saint exclaimed, "O Lord of my soul, O my Jesus crucified, my treasure! I never remember this opinion without thinking that I have been guilty of great treachery. And is it possible that Thou, my Lord, couldst be an obstacle to me in the way of a greater good? Whence, then, do all good things come to me, but from Thee?" And she then added, "I have seen that, in order to please God, and to induce him to grant us great graces, he wills that they should all pass through the hands of this most sacred humanity, in which his divine majesty declared that he took pleasure."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Et non aperuit os suum."—*Isa.* liii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Life, chap. 22.

For this reason, Father Balthasar Alvarez said that ignorance of the treasures that we possess in Jesus was the ruin of Christians; and therefore his most favorite and usual meditation was on the Passion of Jesus Christ. He meditated especially on three of the sufferings of Jesus,—his poverty, contempt, and pain; and he exhorted his penitents to meditate frequently on the Passion of our Redeemer, telling them that they should not consider that they had done anything at all, until they had arrived at retaining Jesus crucified continually present in their hearts.

“He who desires,” says St. Bonaventure, “to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus.”<sup>6</sup> And he adds that “there is no practice more profitable for the entire sanctification of the soul than the frequent meditation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

St. Augustine also said that a single tear shed at the remembrance of the Passion of Jesus is worth more than a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or a year of fasting on bread and water. Yes, because it was for this end that our Saviour suffered so much, in order that we should think of his sufferings; because if we think on them, it is impossible not to be inflamed with divine love: *The charity of Christ presseth us*,<sup>8</sup> says St. Paul. Jesus is loved by few, because few consider the pains he has suffered for us; but he that frequently considers them cannot live without loving Jesus. “The charity of Christ

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<sup>6</sup> “Si vis, homo, de virtute in virtutem, de gratia in gratiam proficere, quotidie mediteris Domini passionem.”

<sup>7</sup> “Nihil enim in anima ita operatur universalem sanctificationem, sicut meditatio passionis Christi.”

<sup>8</sup> “Charitas enim Christi urget nos.”—2 *Cor.* v. 14.

presseth us." He will feel himself so constrained by his love that he will not find it possible to refrain from loving a God so full of love, who has suffered so much to make us love him.

Therefore the Apostle said that he desired to know nothing but Jesus, and Jesus crucified; that is, the love that he has shown us on the cross: *I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*<sup>9</sup> And, in truth, from what books can we better learn the science of the saints—that is, the science of loving God—than from Jesus crucified? That great servant of God, Brother Bernard of Corlione, the Capuchin, not being able to read, his brother religious wanted to teach him, upon which he went to consult his crucifix; but Jesus answered him from the cross, "What is reading? what are books? Behold, I am the book wherein thou mayst continually read the love I have borne thee." O great subject to be considered during our whole life and during all eternity! A God dead for the love of us! A God dead for the love of us! O wonderful subject!

St. Thomas Aquinas was one day paying a visit to St. Bonaventure, and asked him from what book he had drawn all the beautiful lessons he had written. St. Bonaventure showed him the image of the Crucified, which was completely blackened by all the kisses that he had given it, and said, "This is my book whence I receive everything that I write; and it has taught me whatever little I know."

In short, all the saints have learned the art of loving God from the study of the crucifix. Brother John of Alvernia, every time that he beheld Jesus wounded, could not restrain his tears. Brother James of Tuderto, when he heard

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<sup>9</sup> "Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum."—1 *Cor.* ii. 2.

the Passion of our Redeemer read, not only wept bitterly, but broke out into loud sobs, overcome with the love with which he was inflamed toward his beloved Lord.

It was this sweet study of the crucifix which made St. Francis become a great seraph. He wept so continually in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that he almost entirely lost his sight. On one occasion, being found crying out and weeping, he was asked what was the matter with him. "What ails me?" answered the saint. "I weep over the sorrows and insults inflicted on my Lord; and my sorrow is increased when I think of those ungrateful men who do not love him, but live without any thought of him." Every time that he heard the bleating of a lamb, he felt himself touched with compassion at the thought of the death of Jesus, the Immaculate Lamb, drained of every drop of blood upon the cross for the sins of the world. And therefore this loving saint could find no subject on which he exhorted his brethren with greater eagerness than the constant remembrance of the Passion of Jesus.

This, then, is the book—Jesus crucified—which, if we constantly read it, will teach us, on the one hand, to have a lively fear of sin, and, on the other hand, will inflame us with love for a God so full of love for us; while we read in these wounds the great malice of sin, which reduced a God to suffer so bitter a death in order to satisfy the divine justice, and the love which our Saviour has shown us in choosing to suffer so much in order to prove to us how much he loved us.

Let us beseech the divine Mother Mary to obtain for us from her Son the grace that we also may enter into these furnaces of love, in which so many loving hearts are

consumed, in order that, our earthly affections being there burned away, we also may burn with those blessed flames, which render souls holy on earth and blessed in heaven. Amen.





PART I

REFLECTIONS AND  
AFFECTIONS ON  
THE PASSION OF  
JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER I

THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST IN  
BEING WILLING TO SATISFY THE  
DIVINE JUSTICE FOR OUR SINS

I.



We read in history of a proof of love so prodigious that it will be the admiration of all ages.

There was once a king, lord of many kingdoms, who had one only son, so beautiful, so holy, so amiable, that he was the delight of his father, who loved him as much as himself. This young prince had a great affection for one of his slaves; so much so that, the slave having committed a crime for which he had been condemned to death, the prince offered himself to die for the slave; the father, being jealous of justice, was satisfied to condemn his beloved son to death, in order that the slave might remain free from the punishment that he deserved: and thus the son died a malefactor's death, and the slave was freed from punishment.

This fact, the like of which has never happened in this world, and never will happen, is related in the Gospels, where we read that the Son of God, the Lord of the universe, seeing that man was condemned to eternal death in

punishment of his sins, chose to take upon himself human flesh, and thus to pay by his death the penalty due to man: *He was offered because it was His own will.*<sup>1</sup> And his Eternal Father caused him to die upon the cross to save us miserable sinners: *He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.*<sup>2</sup> What dost thou think, O devout soul, of this love of the Son and of the Father?

Thou didst, then, O my beloved Redeemer, choose by Thy death to sacrifice Thyself in order to obtain the pardon of my sins. And what return of gratitude shall I then make to Thee? Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee; I should indeed be most ungrateful to Thee if I did not love Thee with my whole heart. Thou hast given for me Thy divine life; I, miserable sinner that I am, give Thee my own life. Yes, I will at least spend that period of life that remains to me only in loving Thee, obeying Thee, and pleasing Thee.

## II.

O men, men! let us love this our Redeemer, who, being God, has not disdained to take upon himself our sins, in order to satisfy by his sufferings for the chastisement which we have deserved: *Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit."—*Isa.* liii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> "Proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum."—*Rom.* viii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> "Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit."—*Isa.* liii. 4.

St. Augustine says that our Lord in creating us formed us by virtue of his power, but in redeeming us he has saved us from death by means of his sufferings: "He created us in his strength; he sought us back in his weakness."<sup>4</sup>

How much do I not owe Thee, O Jesus my Saviour! Oh, if I were to give my blood a thousand times over,—if I were to spend a thousand lives for Thee,—it would yet be nothing. Oh, how could any one that meditated much on the love which Thou hast shown him in Thy Passion, love anything else but Thee? Through the love with which Thou didst love us on the cross, grant me the grace to love Thee with my whole heart. I love Thee, infinite Goodness; I love Thee above every other good; and I ask nothing more of Thee but Thy holy love.

"But how is this?" continues St. Augustine. How is it possible, O Saviour of the world, that Thy love has arrived at such a height that when I had committed the crime, Thou shouldst have to pay the penalty? "Whither has Thy love reached? I have sinned; Thou art punished."<sup>5</sup>

And what could it then signify to Thee, adds St. Bernard, that we should lose ourselves and be chastised, as we well deserved to be; that Thou shouldst choose to satisfy with Thy innocent flesh for our sins, and to die in order to deliver us from death! "O good Jesus, what doest Thou? We ought to have died, and it is Thou who diest. We have sinned and Thou sufferest. A deed without precedent,

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<sup>4</sup> "Condidit nos fortitudine sua, quæsit nos infirmitate sua."—*In Jo. tr.* 15.

<sup>5</sup> "Quo tuus attingit amor? Ego inique egi, tu pœna mulctaris."—*Medit.* c. 7.

grace without merit, charity without measure.”<sup>6</sup> O deed which never has had and never will have its match! O grace which we could never merit! O love which can never be understood!

### III.

Isaias had already foretold that our blessed Redeemer should be condemned to death, and as an innocent lamb brought to the sacrifice: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.*<sup>7</sup> What a cause of wonder it must have been to the angels, O my God, to behold their innocent Lord led as a victim to be sacrificed on the altar of the cross for the love of man! And what a cause of horror to heaven and to hell, the sight of a God extended as an infamous criminal on a shameful gibbet for the sins of his creatures!

*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree): that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.*<sup>8</sup> “He was made a curse upon the cross,” says St. Ambrose, “that thou mightest be blessed in the kingdom of God.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “O bone Jesu! quid tibi est? Mori nos debuimus, et tu solvis? Nos peccavimus, et tu luis?—Opus sine exemplo, gratia sine merito, charitas sine modo!”—*Apud Lobn. Bibl.* tit. 110, § 3.

<sup>7</sup> “Sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur.”—*Isa.* liii. 7.

<sup>8</sup> “Christus nos redemit de maledicto legis, factus pro nobis maledictum, quia scriptum est: Maledictus omnis qui pendet in ligno; ut in gentibus benedictio Abrahæ fieret in Christo Jesu.”—*Gal.* iii. 13.

<sup>9</sup> “Ille maledictum in cruce factus est, ut tu benedictus esses in Dei regno.”—*Epist.* 47.

O my dearest Saviour! Thou wert, then, content, in order to obtain for me the blessing of God, to embrace the dishonor of appearing upon the cross accursed in the sight of the whole world, and even forsaken in Thy sufferings by Thy Eternal Father,—a suffering which made Thee cry out with a loud voice, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*<sup>10</sup> Yes, observes Simon of Cassia, it was for this end that Jesus was abandoned in his Passion in order that we might not remain abandoned in the sins which we have committed: “Therefore Christ was abandoned in his sufferings that we might not be abandoned in our guilt.”<sup>11</sup> O prodigy of compassion! O excess of love of God towards men! And how can there be a soul who believes this, O my Jesus, and yet loves Thee not?

#### IV.

*He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.*<sup>12</sup> Behold, O men, how far the love of Jesus for us has carried him, in order to cleanse us from the filthiness of our sins. He has even shed every drop of his blood that he might prepare for us in this his own blood a bath of salvation: “He offers his own blood,” says a learned writer,

<sup>10</sup> “Deus meus! Deus meus! ut quid dereliquisti me?”—*Matt.* xxvii. 46.

<sup>11</sup> “Ideo Christus derelictus est in pœnis, ne nos derelinquamur in culpis.”—*Lib. xiii. de Pass. D.*

<sup>12</sup> “Dilexit nos, et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo.”—*Apoc. i. 5.*

“speaking better than the blood of Abel: for that cried for justice; the blood of Christ for mercy.”<sup>13</sup>

Whereupon St. Bonaventure exclaims, “O good Jesus, what hast Thou done?”<sup>14</sup> O my Saviour, what indeed hast Thou done? How far hath Thy love carried Thee? What hast Thou seen in me which hath made Thee love me so much? “Wherefore hast Thou loved me so much? Why, Lord, why? What am I?”<sup>15</sup> Wherefore didst Thou choose to suffer so much for me? Who am I that Thou wouldst win to Thyself my love at so dear a price? Oh, it was entirely the work of Thy infinite love! Be Thou eternally praised and blessed for it.

*O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.*<sup>16</sup> The same seraphic Doctor, considering these words of Jeremias as spoken of our blessed Redeemer while he was hanging on the cross dying for the love of us, says, “Yes, Lord, I will attend and see if there be any love like unto Thy love”<sup>17</sup> By which he means, I do indeed see and understand, O my most loving Redeemer, how much Thou didst suffer upon that infamous tree; but what most constrains me to love Thee is the thought of the affection which Thou hast shown me in suffering so much, in order that I might love Thee.

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<sup>13</sup> “Offert sanguinem melius clamantem quam Abel; quia iste justitiam, sanguis Christi misericordiam interpellabat.”—*Contens.* l. 10, d. 4, c. 1, *sp.* 1.

<sup>14</sup> “O bone Jesu! quid fecisti?”

<sup>15</sup> “Quid me tantum amasti? quare, Domine, quare? quid sum ego?”—*Slim. div. am.* p. 1, c. 13.

<sup>16</sup> “O vos omnes qui transitis per viam! attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.”—*Lam.* i. 12.

<sup>17</sup> “Imo, Domine, attendam, et videbo si est amor sicut amor tuus.”

## V.

That which most inflamed St. Paul with the love of Jesus was the thought that he chose to die, not only for all men, but for him in particular: *He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*<sup>18</sup> Yes, he has loved me, said he, and for my sake he gave himself up to die. And thus ought every one of us to say; for St. John Chrysostom asserts that God has loved every individual man with the same love with which he has loved the world: "He loves each man separately with the same measure of charity with which he loves the whole world."<sup>19</sup> So that each one of us is under as great obligation to Jesus Christ for having suffered for every one, as if he had suffered for him alone.

For supposing, my brother, Jesus Christ had died to save you alone, leaving all others to their original ruin, what a debt of gratitude you would owe to him! But you ought to feel that you owe him a greater obligation still for having died for the salvation of all. For if he had died for you alone, what sorrow would it not have caused you to think that your neighbors, parents, brothers, and friends would be damned, and that you would, when this life was over, be forever separated from them? If you and your family had been slaves, and some one came to rescue you alone, how would you not entreat of him to save your parents and brothers together with yourself! And how much would you thank him if he did this to please you! Say, therefore, to Jesus:

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<sup>18</sup> "Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me."—*Gal.* ii. 20.

<sup>19</sup> "Adeo singulum quemque hominum pari charitatis modo diligit, quo diligit universum orbem."—*In Gal.* ii. 20.



O my sweetest Redeemer! Thou hast done this for me without my having asked Thee; Thou hast not only saved me from death at the price of Thy blood, but also my parents and friends, so that I may have a good hope that we may all together enjoy Thy presence forever in paradise. O Lord! I thank Thee, and I love Thee, and I hope to thank Thee for it, and to love Thee forever in that blessed country.

## VI.

Who could ever, says St. Laurence Justinian, explain the love which the divine Word bears to each one of us, since it surpasses the love of every son towards his mother, and of every mother for her son? "The intense charity of the Word of God surpasses all maternal and filial love; neither can human words express how great his love is to each one of us!"<sup>20</sup> So much so, that our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that he would be ready to die as many times as there were souls damned, if they were yet capable of redemption: "I would die as many deaths as there are souls in hell."<sup>21</sup>

O Jesus, O treasure more worthy of love than all others! why is it that men love Thee so little? Oh! do Thou make known what Thou hast suffered for each of them, the love that Thou bearest them, the desire Thou hast to be loved by them, and how worthy Thou art of being loved. Make Thyself known, O my Jesus, make Thyself loved.

<sup>20</sup> "Peæcellit omnem maternum ac filialem affectum Verbi Dei immensa charitas; neque humano valet explicare eloquio, quo circa unumquemque moveatur amore."—*De Tr. Chr. Ag.* c. 5.

<sup>21</sup> "Tories morerer, quot sunt animæ in inferno."—*Rev.* l. 7, c. 19.

## VII.

*I am the good shepherd*, said our Redeemer; *the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.*<sup>22</sup> But, O my Lord, where are there in the world shepherds like unto Thee? Other shepherds will slay their sheep in order to preserve their own life. Thou, O too loving Shepherd, didst give Thy divine life in order to save the life of Thy beloved sheep. And of these sheep, I, O most amiable Shepherd, have the happiness to be one. What obligation, then, am I not under to love Thee, and to spend my life for Thee, since Thou hast died for the love of me in particular! And what confidence ought I not to have in Thy blood, knowing that it has been shed to pay the debt of my sins! *And thou shalt say in that day, I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord. Behold, God is my Saviour; I will deal confidently, and will not fear.*<sup>23</sup> And how can I any longer mistrust Thy mercy, O my Lord, when I behold Thy wounds? Come, then, O sinners, and let us have recourse to Jesus, who hangs upon that cross as it were upon a throne of mercy. He has appeased the divine justice, which we had insulted. If we have offended God, he has done penance for us; all that is required for us is contrition for our sins. O my dearest Saviour, to what have Thy pity and love for me reduced Thee? The slave sins, and Thou, Lord, payest the penalty for him. If, therefore, I think of my sins, the thought of the punishment I deserve must make me tremble; but when I think of Thy death, I find I

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<sup>22</sup> "Ego sum Pastor bonus. Bonus Pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis."—*John*, x. 11.

<sup>23</sup> "Et dices in die illa: Confitebor tibi, Domine! . . . Ecce Deus Salvator meus; fiducialiter agam, et non timebo."—*Isa.* xii. 1.

have more reason to hope than to fear. O blood of Jesus! thou art all my hope.

### VIII.

But this blood, as it inspires us with confidence, also obliges us to give ourselves entirely to our Blessed Redeemer. The Apostle exclaims, *Know you not that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price.*<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, O my Jesus, I cannot any longer, without injustice, dispose of myself, or of my own concerns, since Thou hast made me Thine by purchasing me through Thy death. My body, my soul, my life are no longer mine; they are Thine, and entirely Thine. In Thee alone, therefore, will I hope. O my God, crucified and dead for me, I have nothing else to offer Thee but this soul, which Thou hast bought with Thy blood; to Thee do I offer it. Accept of my love, for I desire nothing but Thee, my Saviour, my God, my love, my all. Hitherto I have shown much gratitude towards men; to Thee alone have I, alas! been most ungrateful. But now I love Thee, and I have no greater cause of sorrow than my having offended Thee. O my Jesus, give me confidence in Thy Passion; root out of my heart every affection that belongs not to Thee. I will love Thee alone, who dost deserve all my love, and who hast given me so much reason to love Thee. And who, indeed, could refuse to love Thee, when they see Thee, who art the beloved of the Eternal Father, dying so bitter and cruel a

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<sup>24</sup> "An nescitis quoniam . . . non estis vestri? Empti enim estis pretio magno."—1 *Cor.* vi. 19.

death for our sake? O Mary, O Mother of fair love, I pray thee, through the merits of thy burning heart, obtain for me the grace to live only in order to love thy Son, who, being in himself worthy of an infinite love, has chosen at so great a cost to acquire to himself the love of a miserable sinner like me. O love of souls, O my Jesus! I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; but still I love Thee too little. Oh, give me more love, give me flames that may make me live always burning with Thy love! I do not myself deserve it; but Thou dost well deserve it, O infinite Goodness. Amen. This I hope, so may it be.

**THE INCARNATION,  
BIRTH, AND INFANCY OF  
JESUS CHRIST**

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THE MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH<sup>1</sup>  
THE INCARNATION

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<sup>1</sup> By a *Novena* we mean the nine days that precede a feast; the first day of the novena of Christmas is, therefore, the 16th of December.

These discourses may serve either for meditation or for spiritual reading. After the discourses will be found novenas of meditations and of prayers. There is also added a list of the indulgences attached to this exercise.—ED.


# DISCOURSES FOR THE NOVENA OF CHRISTMAS

## DISCOURSE I. The Eternal Word Is Made Man

*Ignem veni mittere in terram; et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?*

“I am come to cast fire on the earth; and  
what will I but that it be kindled?”

—*Luke, xii. 49*

he Jews solemnized a day called by them *dies ignis*,<sup>1</sup> the day of fire, in memory of the fire with which Nehemias consumed the sacrifice, upon his return with his countrymen from the captivity of Babylon. Even so, and indeed with more reason, should Christmas-day be called the day of fire, on which a God came as a little child to cast the fire of love into the hearts of men.

*I came to cast fire on the earth:* so spoke Jesus Christ; and truly so it was. Before the coming of the Messias, who loved God upon earth? Hardly was he known in a nook of the world, that is, in Judea; and even there how very few loved him when he came! As to the rest of the world, some worshipped the sun, some the brutes, some the very stones, and others again even viler creatures still. But after the coming of

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<sup>1</sup> *2 Mach. i. 18.*

Jesus Christ, the name of God became everywhere known, and was loved by many. After the Redeemer was born, God was more loved by men in a few years than he had before been in the lapse of four thousand years, since the creation of man.

It is a custom with many Christians to anticipate the arrival of Christmas a considerable time beforehand by fitting up in their homes a crib to represent the birth of Jesus Christ; but few there are who think of preparing their hearts, in order that the Infant Jesus may be born in them, and there find his repose. Among these few, however, we would be reckoned, in order that we too may be made worthy to burn with that happy flame which gives contentment to souls on this earth, and bliss in heaven.

Let us consider on this first day how the Eternal Word had no other end in becoming man than to inflame us with his divine love. Let us ask light of Jesus Christ and of his most holy Mother, and so let us begin.

## I.

Adam, our first parent, sins; ungrateful for the great benefits conferred on him, he rebels against God, by a violation of the precept given him not to eat of the forbidden fruit. On this account God is obliged to drive him out of the earthly paradise in this world, and in the world to come to deprive not only Adam, but all the descendants of this rebellious creature, of the heavenly and everlasting paradise which he had prepared for them after this mortal life.

Behold, then, all mankind together condemned to a life of pain and misery, and forever shut out from heaven. But hearken to God, who, as Isaias tells us in his fifty-second chapter, would seem, after our manner of understanding, to give vent



to his affliction in lamentations and wailings: *And now what have I here, saith the Lord, for My people is taken away gratis.*<sup>2</sup> “And now,” says God, “what delight have I left in heaven, now that I have lost men, who were my delight?” *My delights were to be with the children of men.*<sup>3</sup> But how is this, O Lord? Thou hast in heaven so many seraphim, so many angels; and canst Thou thus take to heart having lost men? Indeed, what need hast Thou of angels or of men to fill up the sum of Thy happiness? Thou hast always been, and Thou art in Thyself, most happy; what can ever be wanting to Thy bliss, which is infinite? “That is all true,” says God; “but” (and these are the words of Cardinal Hugo on the above text of Isaias)—“but, losing man, I deem that I have nothing;”<sup>4</sup> I consider that I have lost all, since my delight was to be with men; and now these men I have lost, and, poor hapless creatures, they are doomed to live forever far away from me.”

But how can the Lord call men his delight? Yes, indeed, writes St. Thomas, God loves man just as if man were his god, and as if without man he could not be happy; “as if man were the god of God himself, and without him he could not be happy.”<sup>5</sup> St. Gregory of Nazianzen adds, moreover, that God, for the love he bears to men, seems beside himself: “we are bold to say it, God is out of himself by reason of his immense love;”<sup>6</sup> so runs the proverb, “Love puts the lover beside himself.”

<sup>2</sup> “Et nunc, quid mihi est hic, dicit Dominus, quoniam ablatus est populus meus gratis?”—*Isai.* lii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> “Deliciæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum.”—*Prov.* viii. 31.

<sup>4</sup> “Non reputo aliquid me habere.”

<sup>5</sup> “Quasi homo Dei Deus esset, et sine ipso beatus esse non posset.”—*Opusc.* 63, c. 7.

<sup>6</sup> “Audemus dicere quod Deus, præ magnitudine amoris, extra se sit.”—*De Div. Nom.* c. 4.

“But no,” then said the Lord, “I will not lose man; straight-way let there be found a Redeemer who may satisfy my justice in behalf of man, and so rescue him from the hands of his enemies and from the eternal death due to him.”

And here St. Bernard, in his contemplations on this subject, imagines a struggle to ensue between the justice and the mercy of God. Justice says: “I no longer exist if Adam be not punished; I perish if Adam die not.”<sup>7</sup> Mercy, on the other hand, says: “I am lost if man be not pardoned; I perish if he does not obtain forgiveness.”<sup>8</sup> In this contest the Lord decides, that in order to deliver man, who was guilty of death, some innocent one must die: “Let one die who is no debtor to death.”<sup>9</sup>

On earth, there was not one innocent. “Since, therefore,” says the Eternal Father, “amongst men there is none who can satisfy My justice, let him come forward who will go to redeem man.” The angels, the cherubim, the seraphim, all are silent, not one replies; one voice alone is heard, that of the Eternal Word, who says, *Lo, here am I; send Me.*<sup>10</sup> “Father,” says the only-begotten Son, “Thy majesty, being infinite, and having been injured by man, cannot be fittingly satisfied by an angel, who is purely a creature; and though Thou mightest accept of the satisfaction of an angel, reflect that, in spite of so great benefits bestowed on man, in spite of so many promises and threats, we have not yet been able to gain his love, because he is not yet aware of the love we bear him. If we would oblige him without fail to love us, what better

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<sup>7</sup> “Perii, si Adam non moriatur.”

<sup>8</sup> “Perii, nisi misericordiam consequatur.”

<sup>9</sup> “Moriatur, qui nihil debeat morti.”—*In Annunt. B. M. s. 1.*

<sup>10</sup> “Ecce ego, mitte me.”—*Isai. vi. 8.*

occasion can we find than that, in order to redeem him, I, Thy Son, should go upon earth, should there assume human flesh, and pay by my death the penalty due by him. In this manner Thy justice is fully satisfied, and at the same time man is thoroughly convinced of our love!" "But think," answered the Heavenly Father—"think, O my Son, that in taking upon Thyself the burden of man's satisfaction, Thou wilt have to lead a life full of sufferings!" "No matter," replied the Son: "*Lo, here am I, send Me.*" "Think that Thou wilt have to be born in a cave, the shelter of the beasts of the field; thence Thou must flee into Egypt whilst still an infant, to escape the hands of those very men who, even from Thy tenderest infancy, will seek to take away Thy life." "It matters not: *Lo, here am I, send Me.*" "Think that, on Thy return to Palestine, Thou shalt there lead a life most arduous, most despicable, passing Thy days as a simple boy in a carpenter's shop." "It matters not: *Lo, here am I, send Me.*" "Think that when Thou goest forth to preach and to manifest Thyself, Thou wilt have indeed a few, but very few, to follow Thee; the greater part will despise Thee and call Thee impostor, magician, fool, Samaritan; and, finally, they will persecute Thee to such a pass that they will make Thee die shamefully on a gibbet by dint of torments." "No matter: *Lo, here am I, send Me.*"

The decree then being passed that the Divine Son should be made man, and so become the Redeemer of men, the Archangel Gabriel speeds on his way to Mary. Mary accepts him for her Son: *And the Word was made flesh.*<sup>11</sup> And thus behold Jesus in the womb of Mary; having now made his entry into the world in all humility and obedience, he says: "Since, O my Father, men cannot make atonement to Thy

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<sup>11</sup> "Et Verbum caro factum est."—*John*, i. 14.

offended justice by their works and sacrifices, behold me, Thy Son, now clothed in mortal flesh, behold me ready to give Thee in their stead satisfaction with my sufferings and with my death!" *Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to me. . . . Then said I, Behold, I come. . . . It is written of Me that I should do Thy will.*<sup>12</sup>

So, then, for us miserable worms, and to captivate our love, has a God deigned to become man? Yes, it is a matter of faith, as the Holy Church teaches us: *For us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven . . . and was made man.*<sup>13</sup> Yes, indeed, so much has God done in order to be loved by us.

Alexander the Great, after he had conquered Darius and subdued Persia, wished to gain the affections of that people, and so went about dressed in the Persian costume. In like manner would our God appear to act; in order to draw towards him the affections of men, he clothed himself completely after the human fashion, and appeared made man: *in shape found as a man.*<sup>14</sup> And by this means he wished to make known the depth of the love which he bore to man: *The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men.*<sup>15</sup>

Man does not love me, would God seem to say, because he does not see me. I wish to make myself seen by him and

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<sup>12</sup> "Ideo ingrediens mundum dicit: Hostiam et oblationem noluisti; corpus autem aptasti mihi. . . . Tunc dixi: Ecce venio, . . . ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam."—*Heb.* x. 5.

<sup>13</sup> "Propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de cœlis. . . . et homo factus est."—*Symb. Nic. et Const.*

<sup>14</sup> "Habitum inventus ut homo."—*Phil.* ii. 7.

<sup>15</sup> "Apparuit gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri omnibus hominibus."—*Tit.* ii. 11.

to converse with him, and so make myself loved: *He was seen upon earth, and conversed with men.*<sup>16</sup>

The divine love for man was extreme, and so it had been from all eternity: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.*<sup>17</sup> But heretofore it had not appeared how great and inconceivable it was. Then it truly appeared, when the Son of God showed himself a little one in a stable on a bundle of straw: *The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared.*<sup>18</sup> The Greek text reads: *The singular love of God towards men appeared.* St. Bernard says that from the beginning the world had seen the power of God in the creation, and his wisdom in the government of the world; but only afterwards, in the Incarnation of the Word, was seen how great was his mercy.<sup>19</sup> Before God was seen made man upon earth, men could not conceive an idea of the divine goodness; therefore did he take mortal flesh, that, appearing as man, he might make plain to men the greatness of his benignity.<sup>20</sup>

And in what manner could the Lord better display to thankless man his goodness and his love? Man, by despising God, says St. Fulgentius, put himself aloof from God

<sup>16</sup> "In terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est."—*Baruch*, iii. 38.

<sup>17</sup> "In charitate perpetua dilexi te; ideo attraxi te, miserans."—*Jer.* xxxi. 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Benignitas et humanitas apparuit Salvatoris nostri Dei."—*Tit.* iii. 4.

<sup>19</sup> "Apparuerat ante potentia in rerum creatione; apparebat sapientia in earum gubernatione; sed benignitas misericordiæ maxime apparuit in humanitate."—*In Nat. D.* s. 1.

<sup>20</sup> "Priusquam appareret humanitas, latebat benignitas. Sed, unde tanta agnosci poterat? Venit in carne, ut, apparente humanitate, benignitas agnosceretur."—*In Epiph.* s. 1.

forever; but as man was unable to return to God, God came in search of him on earth.<sup>21</sup> And St. Augustine had already said as much: "Because we could not go to the Mediator, he condescended to come to us."<sup>22</sup>

*I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.*<sup>23</sup> Men allow themselves to be drawn by love; the tokens of affection shown to them are a sort of chain which binds them, and in a manner forces them to love those who love them. For this end the Eternal Word chose to become man, to draw to himself by such a pledge of affection (a stronger than which could not possibly be found) the love of men: "God was made man, that God might be more familiarly loved by man."<sup>24</sup> It seems that our Redeemer wished to signify this very thing to a devout Franciscan called Father Francis of St. James, as is related in the Franciscan Diary for the 15th of December. Jesus frequently appeared to him as a lovely infant: but the holy friar longing in his fervor to hold him in his arms, the sweet child always fled away; wherefore the servant of God lovingly complained of these departures. One day the divine Child again appeared to him; but how? He came with golden chains in his hands, to give him to understand that now he came to make him his prisoner, and to be himself imprisoned by him, nevermore to be separated. Francis, emboldened at this, fastened the chains to the foot

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<sup>21</sup> "Homo, Deum contemnens, a Deo discessit; Deus, hominem diligens, ad homines venit."—*S. de Dupl. Nat. Chr.*

<sup>22</sup> "Quia ad medicum venire non poteramus, ipse ad nos venire dignatus est."—*Serm.* 88, *E. B.*

<sup>23</sup> "In funiculis Adam traham eos, in vinculis charitatis."—*Osee*, xi. 4.

<sup>24</sup> "Deus homo factus est, ut familiarius ab homine diligeretur."—*Misc.* l. i. tit. 87.

of the Infant, and bound him round his heart; and, in good truth, from that time forward it seemed to him as if he saw the beloved Child in the prison of his heart made a perpetual prisoner. That which Jesus did with this his servant on this occasion, he really has done with all men when he was made man; he wished with such a prodigy of love to be, as it were, enchained by us, and at the same time to enchain our hearts by obliging them to love him, according to the prophecy of Osee: *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.*<sup>25</sup>

In divers ways, says St. Leo, had God already benefited man; but in no way has he more clearly exhibited the excess of his bounty than in sending him a Redeemer to teach him the way of salvation, and to procure for him the life of grace. "The goodness of God has imparted gifts to the human race in various ways; but it surpassed the ordinary bounds of its abundant kindness when, in Christ, mercy itself came down to those who were in sin, truth to those wandering out of the way, and life to those who were dead."<sup>26</sup>

St. Thomas asks why the Incarnation of the Word is called the work of the Holy Ghost: *And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost.*<sup>27</sup> It is certain that all God's works, styled by theologians *opera ad extra*, or external works, are the works of all the three divine Persons. And why, therefore, should the Incarnation be attributed solely to the Person of the Holy Ghost? The chief reason which the Angelic Doctor assigns

<sup>25</sup> "In funiculis Adam traham eos, in vinculis charitatis."—*Osee*, xi. 4.

<sup>26</sup> "Diversis modis humano generi Bonitas Divina munera imperitiit; sed abundantiam solitæ benignitatis excessit, quando in Christo ipsa ad peccatores Misericordia, ad errantes Veritas, ad mortuos Vita descendit."—*De Nat.* s. 4.

<sup>27</sup> "Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto."

for it is because all the works of divine love are attributed to the Holy Ghost, who is the substantial love of the Father and of the Son; and the work of the Incarnation was purely the effect of the surpassing love which God bears to man: "But this proceeded from the very great love of God, that the Son of God should assume flesh to himself in the womb of the Virgin."<sup>28</sup> And this the prophet would signify when he says, *God will come from the south*;<sup>29</sup> that is, observes the Abbot Rupert, "From the great charity of God, he has shone upon us."<sup>30</sup> For this purpose, again writes St. Augustine, the Eternal Word came upon earth, to make known to man how dearly God loved him.<sup>31</sup> And St. Laurence Justinian: "In no instance has he so clearly manifested his amiable charity to men as when God was made man."<sup>32</sup>

But what still more evinces the depth of the divine love towards the human race is, that the Son of God should come in search of him, whilst man was fleeing away from him. This the Apostle declares in these words, *Nowhere doth He take hold of the angels; but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold*.<sup>33</sup> On which St. John Chrysostom thus comments: "He says not, he received, but he seized hold of; from the figure of those who are in pursuit of fugitives, that they may effect

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<sup>28</sup> "Hoc autem ex maximo Dei amore provenit, ut Filium Dei carnem sibi assumeret in utero Virginis."—P. 3, q. 32, a. 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Deus ab austro veniet."—*Hab.* iii. 3.

<sup>30</sup> "A magna charitate Dei in nos effulsit."

<sup>31</sup> "Maxime propterea Christus advenit, ut cognosceret homo quantum eum diligit Deus."—*De catech. rud.* c. 4.

<sup>32</sup> "In nullo sic amabilem suam hominibus patefecit charitatem, sicut cum Deus homo factus est."—*De Casto Conn.* c. 23.

<sup>33</sup> "Nusquam enim Angelos apprehendit, sed semen Abrahamæ apprehendit."—*Heb.* ii. 16.



their capture.”<sup>34</sup> Thus God came from heaven to arrest, as it were, ungrateful man in his flight from him. It is as if he had said, “O man! behold, it is nothing but the love of thee that has brought me on earth to seek after thee. Why wilt thou flee from me? Stay with me, love me; do not avoid me, for I greatly love thee.”

God came, then, to seek lost man; and that man might the more easily comprehend the love of this his God for him, and might surrender his love in return to one who so deeply loved him, he willed, the first time of his appearance under a visible form, to show himself as a tender infant, laid upon straw. “O blessed straw, fairer than roses or lilies,” exclaims St. Peter Chrysologus, “what favored land produced you? Oh, what an enviable lot is yours, to serve as a bed for the King of Heaven! But, alas!” continues the saint, “alas! you are but cold for Jesus; for you know not how to warm him in that damp cavern, where he is now shivering with cold; but you are fire and flames for us, since you supply us with a flame of love which rivers of water shall never quench.”<sup>35</sup>

It was not enough, says St. Augustine, for the divine love to have made us to his own image in creating the first man Adam; but he must also himself be made to our image in redeeming us.<sup>36</sup> Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, beguiled by the serpent, which suggested to Eve that if she

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<sup>34</sup> “Non dixit: Suscepit,—sed: Apprehendit;—ex metaphora insequentium eos qui aversi sunt, ut fugientes apprehendere valeant.”—*In Heb. hom.*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> “O felices paleas, rosis et liliis pulchriores! quæ vos genuit tellus? Non palearum momentaneum, sed perpetuum vos suppeditatis incendium, quod nulla flumina exstinguent.”

<sup>36</sup> “In primo homine, fecit nos Deus ad imaginem suam; in hac die, factus est ad imaginem nostram.”—*Serm.* 119, *E. B. app.*

ate of that fruit she should become like to God, acquiring the knowledge of good and evil; and therefore the Lord then said, *Behold, Adam is become one of us.*<sup>37</sup> God said this ironically, and to upbraid Adam for his rash presumption; but after the Incarnation of the Word we can truly say, “Behold, God is become like one of us.”<sup>38</sup>

“Look, then, O man,” exclaims St. Augustine, “thy God is made thy brother;”<sup>39</sup> thy God is made like thee, a son of Adam, as thou art: he has put on thy selfsame flesh, has made himself passible, liable to suffer and to die as thou art. He could have assumed the nature of an angel; but no, he would take on himself thy very flesh, that thus he might give satisfaction to God with the very same flesh (though sinless) of Adam the sinner. And he even gloried in this, oftentimes styling himself the Son of man; hence we have every right to call him our brother.

It was an immeasurably greater humiliation for God to become man than if all the princes of the earth, than if all the angels and saints of heaven, with the divine Mother herself, had been turned into a blade of grass, or into a handful of clay; yes, for grass, clay, princes, angels, saints, are all creatures; but between the creature and God there is an infinite difference. Ah, exclaims St. Bernard, the more a God has humbled himself for us in becoming man, so much the more has he made his goodness known to us: “The smaller he has become by humility, the greater he has made himself in bounty.”<sup>40</sup> But

<sup>37</sup> “Ecce Adam quasi unus ex nobis factus est.”—*Gen.* iii. 22.

<sup>38</sup> “De cætero dicemus veraciter, quia Deus factus est quasi unus ex nobis.”—*De Emman.* l. 1, c. 19.

<sup>39</sup> “Deus tuus factus est frater tuus.”

<sup>40</sup> “Quanto minorem se fecit in humilitate, tanto majorem exhibuit in bonitate.”—*In Epiph.* s. 1.

the love which Jesus Christ bears to us, cries out the Apostle, irresistibly urges and impels us to love him: *The charity of Christ presseth us.*<sup>41</sup>

O God! did not faith assure us of it, who could ever believe that a God, for love for such a worm as man is, should himself become a worm like him? A devout author says, Suppose, by chance, that, passing on your way, you should have crushed to death a worm in your path; and then some one, observing your compassion for the poor reptile, should say to you, Well, now, if you would restore that dead worm to life, you must first yourself become a worm like it, and then must shed all your blood, and make a bath of it in which to wash the worm, and so it shall revive; what would you reply? Certainly you would say, And what matters it to me whether the worm be alive or dead, if I should have to purchase its life by my own death? And much more would you say so if it was not an inoffensive worm, but an ungrateful asp, which, in return for all your benefits, had made an attempt upon your life. But even should your love for that reptile reach so far as to induce you to suffer death in order to restore it to life, what would men say then? And what would not that serpent do for you, whose death had saved it, supposing it were capable of reason? But this much has Jesus Christ done for you, most vile worm; and you, with the blackest ingratitude, have tried oftentimes to take away his life; and your sins would have done so, were Jesus liable to die any more. How much viler are you in the sight of God than is a worm in your own sight! What difference would it make to God had you remained dead and forever reprobate in your sins, as you well deserved? Nevertheless, this God had such a love for you that, to release

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<sup>41</sup> "Charitas Christi urget nos."—2 Cor. v. 14.

you from eternal death, he first became a worm like you; and then, to save you, would lavish upon you his heart's blood, even to the last drop, and endure the death which you had justly deserved.

Yes, all this is of faith: *And the Word was made flesh.*<sup>42</sup> *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.*<sup>43</sup> The Holy Church declares herself to be filled with terror at the idea of the work of redemption: *I considered Thy work, and was afraid.*<sup>44</sup> And this the prophet said of old: *O Lord, I have heard Thy hearing, and was afraid. . . . Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people; for salvation with Thy Christ.*<sup>45</sup>

Hence St. Thomas terms the mystery of the Incarnation the miracle of miracles,<sup>46</sup> a miracle above all comprehension, in which God showed how powerful was his love towards men, which of God made him man, of Creator a creature.<sup>47</sup> The Creator, says St. Peter Damian, springs from the creature, of Lord it made him servant, of impassible subject to sufferings and to death: *He hath showed might in His arm.*<sup>48</sup> St. Peter of Alcantara, one day hearing the Gospel sung which is appointed for the third Mass on Christmas-night—*In the beginning was the Word*—in reflecting on this mystery became so inflamed with divine love that, in a state of ecstasy, he was borne a considerable space through the air to the foot of the Blessed Sacrament. And St. Augustine says that his

<sup>42</sup> "Et Verbum caro factum est."—*John*, i. 14.

<sup>43</sup> "Dilexit nos, et lavit nos . . . in sanguine suo."—*Apoc.* i. 5.

<sup>44</sup> "Consideravi opera tua, et expavi."—*Off. Circumc. resp.* 6.

<sup>45</sup> "Domine, audivi auditionem tuam, et timui. . . . Egressus es in salutem populi tui, in salutem cum Christo tuo."—*Hab.* iii. 2. 13.

<sup>46</sup> "Miraculum miraculorum."—*De Pot.* q. 6, a. 2, ad 9.

<sup>47</sup> "Creator oritur ex creatura."—*In Nat. B. V.* s. 2.

<sup>48</sup> "Fecit potentiam in brachio suo."—*Luke*, i. 51.

soul could feast forever on the contemplation of the exalted goodness of God, manifested to us in the work of human redemption.<sup>49</sup> For this reason it was that the Lord sent this saint, on account of his fervent devotion to this mystery, to inscribe these words on the heart of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi: *And the Word was made flesh.*

## II.

Whosoever loves, has no other end in loving but to be loved again. God, then, having so dearly loved us, seeks nothing else from us, as St. Bernard remarks, but our love: "When God loves, he desires nothing else than to be loved."<sup>50</sup> Wherefore, he goes on with this admonition to each one of us: "He has made known his love, that he may experience thine."<sup>51</sup> O man, whoever thou art, thou hast witnessed the love which God has borne thee in becoming man, in suffering and dying for thee; how long shall it be before God shall know by experience and by deeds the love thou bearest him? Ah! truly every man at the sight of a God clothed in flesh, and choosing to lead a life of such duration, and to suffer a death of such ignominy, ought to be enkindled with love towards a God so loving. *Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down: the mountains would melt away at Thy presence, . . . the waters would burn with fire.*<sup>52</sup> Oh that Thou wouldst deign, my God (thus cried out the prophet before the arrival of the

<sup>49</sup> "Non satiabar considerare altitudinem consilii tui super salutem generis humani."—*Conf.* l. 9, c. 6.

<sup>50</sup> "Cum amat Deus, non aliud vult quam amari."—*In Cant.* s. 83.

<sup>51</sup> "Notam fecit dilectionem suam; experiatur et tuam."—*De Aquæd.*

<sup>52</sup> "Utinam dirumperes cœlos et descenderes! a facie tua montes defluerent . . . aquæ arderent igni."—*Isai.* lxiv. 1.

Divine Word upon earth), to leave the heavens, and descend here to become man amongst us! Ah, then, on beholding Thee like one of themselves, the mountains would melt away; men would surmount all obstacles, remove all difficulties, in observing Thy laws and Thy counsels; the waters would burn with fire! Oh, surely Thou wouldst enkindle such a furnace in the human heart that even the most frozen souls must catch the flame of Thy blessed love! And, in fact, after the Incarnation of the Son of God, how brilliantly has the fire of divine love shone to many loving souls! And it may be indeed asserted, without fear of contradiction, God was more beloved in one century after the coming of Jesus Christ than in the entire forty preceding centuries. How many youths, how many of the nobly born, and how many monarchs even, have left wealth, honors, and their very kingdoms, to seek the desert or the cloister, that there, in poverty and obscure seclusion, they might the more unreservedly give themselves up to the love of this their Saviour! How many martyrs have gone rejoicing and making merry on their way to torments and to death! How many tender young virgins have refused the proffered hands of the great ones of this world, in order to go and die for Jesus Christ, and so repay in some measure the affection of a God who stooped down to become incarnate and to die for love of them!

Yes, all this is most true; but now comes a tale for tears. Has this been the case with all men? Have all sought thus to correspond with this immense love of Jesus Christ? Alas, my God, the greater part have combined to repay him with nothing but ingratitude! And you also, my brother, tell me, what sort of return have you made up to this time for the love your God has borne you? Have you always shown yourself

thankful? Have you ever seriously reflected what those words mean, a God to be made man, and to die for thee?

A certain man, while one day attending Mass without devotion, as too many do, at these concluding words of the last Gospel, *And the Word was made flesh*,<sup>53</sup> made no external act of reverence; at the same instant a devil struck him a severe blow, saying, "Thankless wretch! thou hearest that a God was made man for thee, and dost thou not even deign to bend the knee? Oh, if God had done the like for me, I should be eternally occupied in thanking him!"

Tell me, O Christian! what more could Jesus Christ have done to win thy love? If the Son of God had engaged to rescue from death his own Father, what lower humiliation could he stoop to than to assume human flesh, and lay down his life in sacrifice for his salvation? Nay, I say more; had Jesus Christ been a mere man, instead of one of the divine Persons, and had wished to gain by some token of affection the love of his God, what more could he have done than he has done for thee? If a servant of thine had given for thy love his very life-blood, would he not have riveted thy heart to him, and obliged thee to love him in mere gratitude? And how comes it, then, that Jesus Christ, though he has laid down his life for thee, has still failed to win thy love?

Alas! men hold in contempt the divine love, because they do not, or, rather let us say, because they will not, understand what a treasure it is to enjoy divine grace, which, according to the Wise Man, is an infinite treasure: *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God.*<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> "Et Verbum caro factum est."—*John*, i. 14.

<sup>54</sup> "Infinitus enim thesaurus est hominibus; quo qui usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitiae Dei."—*Wisd.* vii. 14.

Men appreciate the good graces of a prince, of a prelate, of a nobleman, of a man of letters, and even of a vile animal; and yet these same persons set no store by the grace of God,—but renounce it for mere smoke, for a brutal gratification, for a handful of earth, for a whim, for nothing.

What sayest thou, my dear brother? Dost thou wish still to be ranked among these ungrateful ones? For, if thou dost not wish for God, says St. Augustine, if thou canst meet with something better than God: “Desire something better, if thou dost deserve something better.”<sup>55</sup> Go, find thyself a prince more courteous, a master, a brother, a friend more amiable, and who has shown thee a deeper love. Go, seek for thyself one who is better qualified than God to make thee happy in the present life and in the life to come.

Whoever loves God has nothing to fear, and God cannot help loving in return one who loves him: *I love those who love me.*<sup>56</sup> And what shall he be afraid of who is the beloved of God? *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?*<sup>57</sup> So said David, and so said the sisters of Lazarus to our Blessed Lord: *He whom thou lovest is sick.*<sup>58</sup> It was enough for them to know that Jesus Christ loved their brother, to convince them that he would do everything for his recovery.

But how, on the contrary, can God love those who despise his love? Come, then, let us once for all make the resolution to give the tribute of our love to a God who has so sincerely loved us. And let us continually beseech him to grant us the precious gift of his holy love. St. Francis de Sales says that this grace of loving God was the grace for which we ought

<sup>55</sup> “Aliud desidera, si melius inveneris.”—*In Ps. 26 enarr. 2.*

<sup>56</sup> “Ego diligentes me diligo.”—*Prov. viii. 17.*

<sup>57</sup> “Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?”—*Ps. xxxvi. 1.*

<sup>58</sup> “Quem amas, infirmatur.”—*John, xi 3.*



to ask God more than for any other; because with divine love all good comes to a soul: *All good things come together with her.*<sup>59</sup> This made St. Augustine say, “Love, and do whatever you like.”<sup>60</sup> Whoever loves a person avoids everything that may offend him, and always seeks what may give him most pleasure. Thus is it with one who really loves God; he can never deliberately do anything to offend him, but he studies in every possible manner to please him.

And in order the more quickly and the more surely to obtain this gift of divine love, let us have recourse to the foremost of God’s lovers—I mean, to Mary his Mother, who was so inflamed with his holy love that the devils, as St. Bonaventure assures us, had not the boldness even to tempt her: “They were scared away by her burning charity, so that they dared not approach her,”<sup>61</sup> And Richard adds that even the seraphim themselves might descend from their lofty throne in heaven to take a lesson in love from the heart of Mary.<sup>62</sup> And because, continues St. Bonaventure, the heart of Mary was a complete furnace of divine love, therefore all who love this Blessed Mother, and address themselves to her, will be inflamed by her with the same love; she will make them resemble herself.<sup>63</sup>

If we wish to add to this discourse some example about the Infant Jesus, we may select one of those related at the end on page 164.

<sup>59</sup> “Venerunt . . . omnia bona pariter cum ilia.”—*Wisd.* vii. 11.

<sup>60</sup> “Ama, et fac quod vis.”

<sup>61</sup> “A sua inflammatissima charitate dæmones pellebantur, in tantum quod non erant ausi illi appropinquare.”—*Pro Fest. V. M.* s. 4, a. 3, c. 2.

<sup>62</sup> “Seraphim e cælo descendere poterant, ut amorem discerent in corde Virginis.”

<sup>63</sup> “Quia tota ardens fuit, omnes se amantes eamque tangentes incendit (et sibi assimilat).”—*De B. V. M.* s. 1.

## Affections and Prayers

Let us say with St. Augustine, “O fire, ever burning, inflame me.”<sup>64</sup> O Word Incarnate, Thou wert made man to enkindle divine love in our hearts: and how couldst Thou have met with such a want of gratitude in the hearts of men? Thou hast spared nothing to induce them to love Thee; Thou hast even gone so far as to give Thy blood and Thy life for them: and how, then, can men still remain so ungrateful? Do they, perchance, not know it? Yes, they know it, and they believe that for them Thou hast come down from heaven to put on mortal flesh, and to load Thyself with our miseries; they know that for their love Thou hast led a painful life, and embraced an ignominious death; and how, then, can they live forgetful of Thee? They love relatives, friends; they love even animals: if from them they receive any token of good-will, they are anxious to repay it; and yet towards Thee alone are they so loveless and ungrateful. But, alas! in accusing them, I am my own accuser: I who have treated Thee worse than any one else. But Thy goodness encourages me, which I feel has borne with me so long, in order at length to pardon me, and to inflame me with Thy love, provided I will but repent and love Thee. Indeed, my God, I do wish to repent; and I grieve with my whole soul for having offended Thee; I wish to love Thee with my whole heart. I am well aware, my Redeemer, that my heart is no longer worthy of Thy acceptance, since it has forsaken Thee for the love of creatures; but, at the same time, I see that Thou art willing to have it, and with my entire will I dedicate it and present it to Thee. Inflame it, then, wholly with Thy divine love, and grant that from this day forward it may never

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<sup>64</sup> “O Ignis qui semper ardes! accende me.”—*Solil, an. ad D.* c. 34.

love any other but Thee, O infinite Goodness! worthy of an infinite love. I love Thee, my Jesus; I love Thee, O sovereign Good! I love Thee, O only Love of my soul!

O Mary my Mother, thou who art the mother of fair love,<sup>65</sup> do thou obtain for me this grace to love my God; I hope it of thee.

## DISCOURSE II. The Eternal Word Being Great Becomes Little

*Parvulus natus est nobis, et Filius datus est nobis.*

“A child is born to us, and a son is given to us.”

—*Is.* ix. 6

Plato said that Love is the loadstone of love.<sup>66</sup> Hence comes the common proverb, as St. John Chrysostom remarks: “If you wish to be loved, love,”<sup>67</sup> for certainly there is no more effectual means to secure for one’s self the affections of another than to love him, and to make him aware that he is loved.

But, my Jesus, this rule, this proverb, holds good for others, holds good for all, but not for Thee. Men are grateful to all, but not to Thee. Thou art at a loss what further to do, to show men the love Thou bearest them; Thou hast positively nothing more to do, to allure the affections of men; yet, in point of fact, how many are there among mankind who love Thee? Alas! the greatest number, we may say, nearly all, not only do not love Thee, but they offend Thee and despise Thee.

<sup>65</sup> “Mater pulchræ dilectionis.”—*Ecclus.* xxiv. 24.

<sup>66</sup> “Magnes amoris, amor.”

<sup>67</sup> “Si vis amari, ama.”—*Ad pop. Ant. hom.* 13.

# PREPARATION FOR DEATH

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## PREFACE

he object of the present Treatise is expressed by a passage which is to be met with in one of the Epistles of S. Fulgentius, on the subject of prayer: "*Compunction of soul* excites an *affection* for prayer; humble *prayer* obtains the Divine help. *Compunction of soul*, leads it to regard its wounds; but prayer, earnestly demands the medicine for its healing. And who is sufficient for these things? For who can pray as he ought, unless the Divine Physician Himself pours into the heart the beginning of spiritual desire."

It will be seen that the following Manual of Devotion consists of a series of chapters or instructions upon important points of Christian teaching, which are called "Considerations." These Considerations are written for the purpose of pricking or of wounding the conscience, it may be in many points, that so it may be thoroughly aroused and awakened; of exciting, that is, *compunction of the soul*, real remorse of conscience for past as well as for present coldness and dryness. It must be a very hard heart, indeed, which is not moved by these "Considerations," so touchingly simple are they, so plain, and so wholly true. They deal with such doctrines and facts as have an universal application, which admit of no dispute, and which are always confirmed by some passage from Holy Scripture. It must be allowed, on all hands, that it is

necessary for the soul to be aroused to feel its own needs, to regard its own wounds, that so it may be directed to a source whence these needs can be supplied, and these wounds be healed. One great aim of this Treatise, is to arouse, as well as to direct the mind, to lead it to consider its own wants, and to seek by prayer to have those wants supplied. The book is essentially a guide to prayer. It represents, from its beginning to its end, the continual outpouring of heart before God; an outpouring that is oftentimes expressed in the very same words which imply, at the same time, a new phase of thought. These several repetitions are not to be regarded as tokens of intellectual inferiority, but as so many developments of a plan, which is both carefully laid down and accurately carried out under a seeming carelessness of expression.

Regarded as a Manual of Mental Prayer, each of these "Considerations" has a technical and special signification. They treat of life and death, of the value of time, of the mercy of God, of the habit of sin, of the general and particular judgments, of the love of God, of the Holy Communion, and of kindred subjects equally important. The "Consideration," as here used, implies far more than a mere inquiry. Its equivalents, the Italian *Considerazione*, and the Latin *Consideratio*, do not fully express its particular meaning in this Treatise, where it stands for a reflectional meditation. It calls into play the exercise of the memory, which puts together all the circumstances of the subject under notice; it excites the imagination, which represents, as in a picture, all such circumstances, bringing them vividly before the mind's eye; and, lastly, it urges the will so to fix and detain these things in the soul, that, by its own effort, it may unite itself with the will of God, so that God's will and the will of man may become one.



S. Thomas Aquinas defines Consideration to be “an act of the intellect, and of the beholding the truth of a proposition,” (Sum. 22<sup>E</sup>, Q. liii. 4); to be, moreover, principally related to the judgment. As one of the three divisions of prayer, properly so called, these Considerations must also be considered as reflections, as reasonings of the mind upon definite subjects, either for its perfect conviction of some vital truth, or for its persuasion to the formation of some holy resolution. The chief end of all such reflection, must be the bringing the soul into communion with God; but this cannot be effected by the intellect alone. Man is not united to God through the mind only, but chiefly through the heart; the “*Consideration*” must pass onwards into an “*Affection*,” which forms another leading division of mental prayer; where the action of the former ends, that of the latter begins.

Let us apply these “Considerations” to one or two of the subjects which are treated of in the present Treatise.

At the first thought of *Death*, we are all naturally inclined to fear it, but the “Consideration” upon death (c. viii.) tends to remove this fear, since it brings death before us, Firstly, as “the end of our labours;” of that toil by which we are prepared for our eternal rest. Secondly, as the “consummation of our victory” over sin and weakness; the struggle has been a sore one; the battle has been hardly fought, but it has been won at last. Thirdly, as the “gate of life;” therefore the death of the Saints is called a birthday, a day in which they are born to that other and blessed life which can never end. These are the three “*Points*” in the “Consideration” upon Death which disarms it of its terrors.

Again, are we sorely troubled by our struggles with self-will? We find a “Consideration” on conformity to the will

of God (c. xxxiv.), the “First Point” of which indicates the connection between perfect resignation to God’s will and perfect love towards His Person. The “Second Point” shows that nothing comes amiss of earthly sorrow and humiliation, not even martyrdom itself, if all things be submitted to His Divine will. The “Third Point” explains that peace of soul which fills a heart whose every desire is in conformity to God’s will. Let come what may, I wish for it, “because God wills it.”

Perhaps, with its cares and pleasures, the world is occupying too large a portion of our time and thoughts. The “Consideration” upon its vanity (c. xiii.) will teach us, in the *first* place, to care chiefly for those things which we can carry away with us after death, to endeavour to gain eternal possessions. In the *second* place, to weigh the things of time against those of eternity, and to mark their lightness. In the *third* place, to contrast time with eternity, and so to become “rich toward God.” Each Consideration opens up three *points* for meditation, and to each of these is added an “Affection” and a “Prayer.”

The “Considerations” employ the mind, the “Affections” excite the heart; they awake in us those emotions by which it seeks to unite itself with God. It is that *affectus orationis* of which S. Fulgentius makes mention. The affection is kindled by consideration, and the consideration is supplemented by the affection; neither can afford to be separated the one from the other. Whilst the “Consideration” sets forth death as the end of toil, the “Affection” urges the soul to anticipate it, to ask heaven of Jesus, not that it may enjoy itself the more, but that it may love Him the more. The former bids us look at the consummation of our victory, the latter expresses such love,

that it longs quickly to die, if such be the will of Jesus. Better far to die, and so to be delivered from the danger of losing grace, and from the fear of love ever growing cold.

The "Affections" to the three points of the Consideration upon the will of God lament over the times when God's will was not followed. They desire from henceforth that His will shall reign perfectly in the heart. And lastly, they express an earnest cleaving to Him who laid down His will for our sakes. "I give thee my will, my liberty, my all." With Affections our author has joined "Prayers." It would have been more conformable to the ordinary divisions of prayer had he substituted "*Resoluzioni*" for the "*Pregchiere*;" for, indeed, as is but natural, the "*affection*" in the present book passes into a "*resolution*;" the prayer is more of a resolve than a petition. It is generally a firm resolve which is made in prayer either to renounce some things for God's glory, or to perform or suffer other things for the same end. The "spiritual desire," "*spiritalis desiderium*," of S. Fulgentius expresses itself in the form of spiritual resolution.

This brief explanation of the plan upon which this book has been written, naturally leads to some suggestions as to its use.

And, firstly, it may be remarked, that only one Consideration should be read at the same time. In many cases one point even, with its "Affections and Prayers," will afford sufficient employment both for the head and heart. It must be remembered that the book is intended to be suggestive merely, not final or ample. It presents a skeleton which the devout reader is to clothe with flesh and blood, and animate with the life of his own spirit. It is an outline, the details of the picture being left to the reader to complete.

Secondly, it will be found most profitable, after having fixed the "Consideration" upon which the meditation is to be made, to read, first of all, its title, and the initial text of Holy Scripture, and for the reader to try to form a meditation for himself; after which he can compare his own thoughts with those of the book, noting carefully in what they agree, in what they differ, and how far they mutually minister to each other.

Thirdly, it must be remembered, that the Treatise is but a means to an end, and that end is gained, when the attention is arrested, and the heart is moved. Let the book be then closed, and let a certain time of quiet be given to the mind, during which it may do its sufficient work in the soul.

It is, moreover, believed that this book may be made of no small value to many as a help for the preparation of sermons. Its fulness of application of Holy Scripture is very great, and many of its quotations from the Fathers are both striking and apposite; and many a parish Priest, with but small time for reading at his disposal, may often find in one point only of a Consideration the hint and outline of a whole sermon.

Take, for instance, the first point of Consideration xiv. It is reducible to the following heads:—I. General considerations. 1. The moral inequalities in the government of this world, and the need which these imply for another life. 2. This earth is not man's country; his earthly home is but an inn. 3. The folly of those who spend their substance in buying possessions in a land which is not theirs. II. The heavenly home for the faithful. 1. Beauties of heaven. 2. In it is the fulness of desire. 3. It is an ocean of delight, and an existence of continual joy. 4. Its enduring nature. III. The dreadful home of the lost. 1. It will be a place of straitness and confinement. 2. A place of destitution, forsaken by all, forsaken by God. 3. A home of

your own choice. 4. A state of endless pain. But several of the points are richer in material than the one to which reference has been made.

With regard to the translation, it is sufficient to observe that the Italian is rendered into as literal English as the differences of idiom between the two languages would admit. In some cases it may be feared that the English has been made to give way somewhat too much—an error on the safe side; so uncertain and unsatisfactory is a loose paraphrastic style of translation. A few omissions are made. Two Considerations are rejected as unsuitable for our present use. The repetition of the same anecdote is avoided. A few irrelevant miracles or stories do not appear. Occasionally a reading from the Apocryphal has been replaced by one from the Canonical Scriptures. And in all things, that *spiritual edification* which was the one object of the author in writing this book, has not been lost sight of in the preparation of this English edition. But while acknowledging gladly, how useful the present and kindred books are for this end, it is well ever to remember the statement of that same Saint whose words have formed the beginning and text of these remarks. “Ædificatio spiritualis, nunquam oportunius petitur, quam ab ipso Christi Corpore (quod est Ecclesia) in Sacramento Panis et Calicis Ipsum Christi Corpus et Sanguis offertur.” (S. Fulg. De Miss S. Spt., c. xi.)

All Saints, a.d. 1868.

CONSIDERATION I  
DESCRIPTION OF ONE WHO  
HAS DEPARTED THIS LIFE

*“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”*

—Gen. iii. 19

FIRST POINT



Consider that thou art dust, and unto dust thou must return. The day will come when thou must die, and be placed in a grave where “the worms” shall “cover thee.” (Isa. xiv. 11.) The same fate awaits all, both nobles and plebeians, both princes and vassals. Directly the soul shall leave the body, with the last gasp, it will go into eternity, and the body will return to its dust. “When Thou takest away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust.” (Ps. civ. 29.)

Imagine to yourself a person, whose soul has just departed. Behold that pale corpse, which is still upon the bed, the head fallen upon the breast; the hair dishevelled and bathed in the sweat of death; the eyes sunken; the cheeks hollow; the face of ashy paleness; the tongue and the lips of a leaden hue; the body cold and heavy. Those who see it grow pale and tremble. How many there are who, upon seeing a relation or friend in this condition, have changed their life, and have left the

world! But still more dreadful is it when the body begins to decay. A few hours or days will hardly have passed ere it will become offensive. The windows will have to be opened; incense will have to be burned—nay, it must be sent in haste to the church to be buried, that the whole house be not infected. Behold to what that proud, that voluptuous man is reduced? In life he was the favourite, the one who was sought after in society; now he makes all those who look upon him shudder. His relations hasten to have him removed from the house, and men are hired to bear him, shut up in a coffin, to his grave. He was once famous for his great talent—for his great politeness—for his courteous behaviour, and for his facetiousness; but now that he is dead, his memory will soon pass away, “their memorial is perished with them.” (Ps. ix. 6.)

Upon hearing the news of his death, some people say he was of great dignity—others, that he left his family well-provided for; some grieve because he had done them good, and others rejoice because they derive some benefit from his death. Within a short time, however, he is spoken of by no one. And his nearest relations, even from the hour of his death, will not hear him mentioned, lest their grief should be renewed. When the visits of condolence are made, other things form the subject of conversation; and if any one by chance alludes to the departed one, the relations immediately exclaim, “In kindness, do not mention him to me.”

You must consider that what you have done at the death of your friends and relations, others will do at your death. Those who are living, enter upon the stage of life, to occupy the wealth and the position of the dead, and little or no esteem is paid to the dead, and very little mention is ever made of them. Your relations will at first mourn for you for some days, but

they will soon be consoled with that share of property which will fall to them, so that they will shortly rejoice because of your death, and in the same room in which your soul has gone forth, to be judged by Jesus Christ, they will dance and eat, laugh and play, as they did before; and your soul, where will it be then?

### Affections and Prayers

O Jesus, my Redeemer, I thank Thee that Thou didst not let me die when I was in disgrace with Thee. During how many of the past years have I not deserved to be cast into hell? If I had died on such a day, or on such a night, what would have become of me for all eternity? I thank Thee for this, O my God. I accept my death as a satisfaction for my sins; and I accept it in whatever manner it may please Thee to send it to me. But since Thou hast waited for me until now, wait for me yet a little longer. "Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little." (Job x. 20.) Give me time to weep over the offences which I have committed against Thee, before Thou comest to judge me.

I will no longer resist Thy sweet voice that calls me. Perhaps these words which I have just read may be the last call for me. I confess that I do not deserve pity, for Thou hast so often pardoned me; and I, ungrateful one that I am, have again offended Thee; but "a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise." (Ps. li. 17.) O Lord, since Thou wilt not despise a broken and contrite heart, look upon a traitor, who being repentant, flees unto Thee. "Cast me not away from Thy presence." (Ps. li. 11.) In mercy, do not cast me from Thee, for Thou hast said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (S. John vi. 37.) It is true that I have offended Thee more than many others, because I have been favoured



by Thee with light and grace; but the blood which Thou hast shed for me gives me courage, and gives me pardon, if only I repent. Yes, O my Sovereign Good, I do repent with my whole heart for having despised Thee. Pardon me, and give me grace to love Thee for the time to come. I have offended Thee too many times already. I will not spend the life that remains to me, O my Jesus, in giving Thee offence, but I will spend it ever weeping over the displeasure I have caused Thee, and in loving Thee with all my heart, Thou, O God, who art so worthy of infinite love.

## SECOND POINT

In order more clearly to see what indeed thou art, my Christian soul, S. John Chrysostom observes, "Go to a sepulchre, contemplate dust, ashes, worms, and sigh." See how that corpse becomes at first yellow, and then black. Afterwards there is seen upon the body a white and unpleasant mould. Then there issues forth a foul and corrupt matter, which sinks into the ground. In that corruption many worms are generated, which feed upon the flesh. The rats then come to feast upon the body, some on the outside, others entering into the mouth and bowels. The cheeks, the lips, and the hair fall in pieces; the ribs are the first to become bare of flesh, then the arms and the legs. The worms after having consumed the flesh eat each other, and, in the end, nothing remains of that body but a fetid skeleton, which, in course of time, is divided, the bones being separated, and the head falling from the body: they "become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away." (Dan. ii. 35.) Behold, then,

what man is—a little dust upon a threshing-floor, which is carried away by the wind.

Behold that nobleman, who was considered to be the life and soul of society, where is he? Go into his room, he is not there; if you look into his bed, it belongs to another; his clothes, his arms, others have already taken and divided them. If you wish to see him, you must seek for him in that grave where he is changed into all that is unpleasant, and into fleshless bones. O my God, that that body fed with so many delicacies, clothed with so much pomp, attended by so many servants, should be reduced to this! O ye saints, ye, who for the love of that God whom ye loved alone, upon this earth, knew how to mortify your bodies;—and now your bones are kept and prized as sacred relics in golden shrines; and your souls which are beatified, rejoice in the presence of God, waiting for the final Day, when your bodies even, will again become the companions of your souls in glory, as they were once the companions of your souls, in bearing the cross of this world. This is the true love of the body, so to burden it with mortifications here, that it may be happy in eternity; and to deny it those pleasures here which would render it unhappy in eternity.

### **Affections and Prayers**

Behold, therefore, O my God, to what my body will become reduced, through which I have so often offended Thee, it will be reduced even to worms and corruption. But this does not grieve me, O my God, nay, it rather cheers me, for this my flesh to become putrid and consumed, which made me lose Thee, O my Sovereign Good. But it does grieve me very

much, to think that I should have taken so much delight in those wretched pleasures which have so often displeased Thee. But I will not distrust Thy mercy. Thou hast waited for me to give me pardon. "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you." (Isa. xxx. 18.) And Thou wilt pardon me if I repent. Yes, Thou wilt, for I do repent with all my heart for having despised Thee, O God of infinite goodness. I will repeat to Thee as did S. Catherine of Genoa, "No more sins, O my Jesus, no more sins." No, I will no longer abuse Thy patience; neither will I wait to embrace Thee until the hour of death. O my Crucified Love, now will I embrace Thee, now will I commend my soul into Thy keeping. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." My soul has been many years in this world without loving Thee; give me light and strength to love Thee during the life that remains to me. I will not wait until the hour of death to love Thee; from this moment, I will love Thee, and embrace Thee, and unite myself to Thee, and I promise never more to leave Thee.

### THIRD POINT

My brother, in this description of death, thou seest thyself, and that, which one day thou wilt be, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Reflect, for in a few years, nay, perhaps in a few months, and even days, thou wilt become a mass of corruption and worms. By thinking upon this, Job became a saint, "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father, to the worm, Thou art my brother and sister." (Job xvii. 14.)

Everything must have an end; and if, when the hour of death arrives, thy soul is lost, everything will be lost for thee. S. Lawrence Justinian says, "Consider thyself as dead already,

since thou knowest thou must die. If now the hour of thy death were approaching, what is there of good, that thou wouldst not like to have done? Now, that thou art living, reflect, that one day thou must die. Bonaventure observes, that in order to guide the vessel aright, the pilot must place himself at the helm: even so must a man, if he wishes to lead a holy life, reflect that death is ever nigh. Therefore, S. Bernard observes, "Look upon the sins of youth, and blush; look on the sins of manhood, and weep; look upon the present evil habits of thy life, and tremble, and hasten to make amends."

When Camillus de Lellis beheld the graves of the dead, he said within himself, "If all these dead bodies could come back again to life, what would they not do to gain eternal life? and I, who have now the opportunity—what am I doing for my soul?" Yet it was humility on the part of this saint which caused him to say this. But perhaps, my brother, thou mightst with reason fear, lest thou shouldst be like that barren fig-tree, concerning which our blessed Lord said, "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." (S. Luke xiii. 7.) Thou, who for many more years than three hast been living in this world, what fruit hast thou yielded? Take care, remarks S. Bernard, for the Lord does not require flowers only, but seeks for fruit also; that is to say, not only good desires and resolutions, but also good works. Therefore, take care to make good use of the time which God in His mercy grants to you; do not wait until "time shall be no longer" to desire to do good—when it shall be said unto you: "Time shall be no longer, depart." Make haste, it is now almost time to leave the world; make haste, what is done, is done.

## Affections and Prayers

Look upon me, O my God, for I am that tree which for so many years deserved to hear these words, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (S. Luke xiii. 7;) yes, because during the many years that I have been in the world, I have yielded no other fruit than the briars and thorns of sin. But Thou, O Lord, dost not wish me to despair. Thou hast said to all those that seek Thee, that they shall find Thee. "Seek and ye shall find." I do seek Thee, my God, and I do desire Thy grace. I am indeed sorry for all the sins I have committed against Thee. I would grieve even to death because of them. During the past years, I have often fled from Thee; but now I value Thy friendship more than all the kingdoms of the world. I will no longer resist Thy calls. Thou dost wish me to be Thine alone. I yield myself wholly to Thee, without any reserve. Thou didst give Thyself entirely for me, upon the Cross; now I give myself entirely to Thee.

Thou hast said: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (S. John xiv. 14.) My Jesus, I trust in this Thy great promise, and in Thy name; and through Thy merits I seek of Thee Thy grace and Thy holy love. Let Thy grace and Thy most holy love abound in my soul, where sin did once abound. I thank Thee greatly, for having given me the Spirit to make this prayer to Thee. Whilst Thou dost inspire me to pray, it is a sign that Thou wilt graciously hear me. Hear me, O my Jesus, and give me a great love towards Thee, and give me a great desire to please Thee, and then the strength to follow the desire.

## CONSIDERATION 2

# ALL ENDS WITH DEATH

*“An end, the end is come.”*

—Ezek. vii. 2

### FIRST POINT

**B**y the worldly, those only are considered happy who enjoy the things of this world, its pleasures, its riches, its pomps; but death puts an end to all these joys of earth, “For what is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time.” (S. James iv. 14.) The vapours which arise from the earth, sometimes when raised in the air and clothed with the light of the sun, cause a beautiful appearance; but how long does it last? It vanishes with a little wind. Behold that great man, who to-day is courted, feared, and almost adored; to-morrow, when he is dead, he will be despised, reviled, and scorned. When death comes, all must be left. The brother of that great servant of God, Thomas à Kempis, boasted of having made a beautiful house; but a friend told him one day that there was one great defect. What is it? he demanded. “The defect,” replied the other, “is, that you have had a door made in it.” “Indeed!” exclaimed he; “is the door a defect?” “Yes,” replied the friend, “because one day you will

have to be carried out of that door dead, and thus will you have to leave your house and all that is in it."

Death, in short, despoils man of all the things in this world. What a sad sight it is to see a prince carried forth from his palace, never more to enter it, and to see others take possession of his furniture, his money, and of all his other goods! He is left in the grave with a garment on that will scarcely cover his body. There is no one now to prize and to flatter him; neither are there any who take account of his last commands. Saladin, who acquired many kingdoms in Asia, when dying, said, that when his body was taken to be buried, a man should go before it, with his shirt suspended to a pole, crying, "This is all that Saladin carries to the grave."

When the body of that prince is shut up in the grave, the flesh will soon fall off, and his skeleton will no longer be distinguished from other skeletons. S. Basil cries, "Contemplate the sepulchre, and see whether you can distinguish who was the servant and who was the lord."

Diogenes was one day observed by Alexander the Great to be anxiously seeking for something amidst certain skulls. "What dost thou seek?" inquired Alexander, with curiosity. "I am seeking," he replied, "the skull of thy father, King Philip, and I cannot distinguish it; if thou canst find it, show it to me." In this world, men are born of unequal rank, but after death all will be equal, observes Seneca. And Horace said, that death makes the spade equal to the sceptre.

Finally, when death comes, "the end comes;" everything is ended, and everything must be left, and nothing is taken to the grave, of all the things of this world.

## Affections and Prayers

Since, my dear Lord, Thou dost grant me understanding to know, that all that the world esteems, is but vanity and foolishness, give me strength to leave all its allurements before death may come to snatch me from them. Alas! wretched me, how often, because of the miserable pleasures and possessions of this world, have I not offended, and lost Thee. O Thou Infinite Good, O my Jesus, O my Heavenly Physician, look upon my poor miserable soul, and upon the heavy wounds I have made with my sins, and do Thou have mercy upon me. "If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." I know Thou wilt make me clean; but in order to cleanse me, Thou desirest that I should repent of all the injuries I have done Thee. I do indeed repent of them with my whole heart; heal me, therefore, now that Thou canst do so. "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." (Ps. xli. 4.) I have often been forgetful of Thee, but Thou hast never been forgetful of me; and now make me feel that Thou wilt also forget those offences which I have committed against Thee, if only I abhor them. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed. . . he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. xviii. 21.) I do, indeed, detest them, and hate them above every other evil. Forget Thou, O my Redeemer, the sins I have committed against Thee. In future, I would rather lose all, even life itself, than Thy grace. And of what use are all the world's treasures to me without Thy grace?

Ah, help me! for Thou knowest how weak I am. Satan will never cease to tempt me; he is now preparing to assault me, in order to make me his slave once more. No, my Jesus, I know Thou wilt not abandon me. I wish to be the slave of Thy love from this day forth. Thou alone art my Lord; Thou



hast created me, Thou hast redeemed me, Thou hast loved me beyond all others; Thou alone deservest to be loved; Thee only will I love.

## SECOND POINT

Philip II., King of Spain, being near death, called his son to him, and casting aside his royal robe, and showing him his breast, which was all gnawed by worms, said to him, "Prince, see how we die, and see how all the grandeur of this world is finished." Theodoret spoke truly when he said, that "death fears neither riches nor guards, nor the purple; rottenness follows, and health fails." So that every one who dies, although he may be a prince, takes nothing with him to the grave; all the glory remains upon the bed where he died. "For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth: neither shall his pomp follow him." (Ps. xlix. 17.)

S. Antoninus relates, that when Alexander the Great was dead, a certain philosopher, exclaiming, said, "Behold he who was treading upon the earth yesterday, now by that same earth is possessed. Yesterday, the whole earth was not enough for him, now, he lies in about seven spans thereof. Yesterday, he conducted his armies over the earth, and now he is taken by a few men to be put under the earth." But rather let us listen to God, when He says: "Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Ecclus. x. 9.) Man, dost thou not see, that thou art nothing but dust and ashes; and of what, therefore, art thou proud? Why, therefore, dost thou spend thy years, and thy thoughts, in seeking to make thyself great in this world? Death will soon come, and then all thy grandeur will come to an end, and also all thy designs. "And then all his thoughts perish." (Ps. cxlvi. 3.)

Oh how much happier was the death of S. Paul the hermit, who lived sixty years shut up in a cave, than the death of Nero, who was emperor of Rome? How much happier was the death of Felix, a Capuchin lay brother, than the death of Henry VIII., who lived in royal splendour, but who was the enemy of God? But we must consider, that these holy men, in order to die such a happy death, gave up everything—their country, the hopes and pleasures which the world offered them; and they embraced a life which was poor and despised. They buried their lives in this world, so that they might not be buried when dead, in hell. But how can the worldly, who are living in sin—in worldly pleasure, in dangerous occasions—how can they, I repeat, hope to die a happy death? God now threatens those who are living in sin, that when they are on the bed of death they will seek Him, but they will not find Him. “Ye shall seek me and shall not find me.” (S. John vii. 34.) God says, that that will be the time for vengeance, but not for mercy. “To me belongeth vengeance and recompence.” (Deut. xxxii. 35.) Reason tells us the same; for at the hour of death, a worldly man will find his mind fail him; his heart dark and hardened, because of his evil habits; his temptations will be very strong; how can he, who in life has been wont to yield to sin and to let sin conquer him—how can such an one, I say, ever expect to be able to resist temptation at the hour of death? An all-powerful Divine grace is then needed to change his heart; but will God give him this Divine grace? Has he deserved it, during the unholy life he has led? And does he deserve it now, that he is dying? And yet this is a question concerning his eternal happiness or his eternal misery. How is it then that he who thinks upon this, and believes in the truths of faith, does not give up everything,

so as to give himself entirely to God, who, according to our works, so will He judge us?

### **Affections and Prayers**

Ah, Lord, how many nights have I, wretched one that I am, laid me down to sleep at enmity with Thee? O God, what a wretched state was my soul then in! It was hated by Thee, and it did not mind Thy hatred. Once I was condemned to hell, the sentence only remained to be executed. But Thou, my God, hast never ceased to seek me, and to invite me to pardon. But who is it who can assure me that I am pardoned now? Must I live, my Jesus, in this fear until the time shall come for me to be judged? But the grief that I feel at having offended Thee; the desire which I have to love Thee; and much more, Thy great compassion, my loved Redeemer; make me hope to remain in Thy blessed favour. I am very sorry for having offended Thee, O Thou Sovereign Good, and I love Thee beyond all things. I have resolved to lose all rather than lose Thy grace and Thy holy love. Thou desirest that heart which seeks Thee to rejoice. "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." (1 Chron. xvi. 10.) O Lord, I detest my offences against Thee; give me courage and confidence; do not reproach me with my ingratitude, for I am very conscious of it; I detest it. Thou hast said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Yes, my God, I will leave all and be converted to Thee. I seek Thee; I desire Thee; and I love Thee more than all things. Give me Thy holy love, and I ask for nothing more.

### THIRD POINT

David likened the happiness of this present life to a dream, when one awakens. “Yea even like as a dream, when one awaketh.” (Ps. lxxiii. 19.) A certain author observes, “In a dream the senses being at rest, great things appear, and are not, and quickly vanish away.” The goods of this world appear great, but in truth they are nothing; like sleep, they last but a short time, and then they all vanish away. This thought—namely, that all things end with death—made S. Francis Borgia give himself up entirely to God. This saint was obliged to accompany the body of the Empress Isabella to Granada. When the coffin was opened, all those present fled, because of the dreadful sight and smell; but S. Francis, led by Divine light, remained to contemplate, in that body, the vanity of the world; and looking upon it, he said, “Art thou then my empress? Art thou that great one to whom so many great ones bowed the knee? O my mistress, Isabella, where is now thy majesty and thy beauty?” “Even thus,” he concluded within himself, “do the grandeurs and the crowns of this world end. From this day forward I will therefore serve a Master Who can never die!” Therefore, from that time he gave himself entirely to the love of Jesus crucified; and then he formed this resolution, that if his wife should die he would become a religious, which resolution he afterwards fulfilled by entering the Society of Jesus.

Truly, then, did one disabused of the world write these words on a skull: *Cogitanti vilescent omnia*. It is impossible for him who thinks upon death to love the world, and therefore are there so many unhappy lovers of this world; because they do not think upon death. “O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour: and have such pleasure in

vanity, and seek after leasing?" (Ps. iv. 2.) O miserable children of Adam, the Holy Spirit warns us; why therefore do you not drive away from your hearts that affection for the world which causes you to love vanity and deceit? That which happened to your forefathers will one day happen to you; they, at one time were living in the same houses, and many slept upon the same beds that you do now; but now they are no more: the same will happen to you.

Therefore, my brother, give thyself now to God, before death shall come to Thee. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." (Eccles. ix. 10.) Whatsoever thou canst do to-day do it, and wait not until to-morrow, because this day will pass away, and will never return, and to-morrow death might overtake you, so that you would then be able to do nothing at all. Quickly remove yourself from all that separates, or that may separate you from God. Let us now give up all our love for this world's goods, before death takes them away from us by force. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Rev. xiv. 13.) Blessed are those, who, when dying, are found dead to the affection of this world. By such as these, death is not feared—it is desired, it is joyfully embraced; for instead of separating them from all that they love, it then unites them to their Sovereign Good, Who is alone loved by them, and Who will make them blessed for evermore.

### **Affections and Prayers**

My dear Redeemer, I indeed thank Thee for having waited for me. What would have become of me if I had died when I was far from Thee? For ever blessed be Thy mercy, and Thy patience, which Thou hast exercised towards me, during the many years that are past. I thank Thee for the light and grace

with which Thou dost now assist me. At one time I did not love Thee, and then I cared little for being loved by Thee. Now I love Thee with all my heart, and now I have no greater grief, than what I feel, for having once displeased a God so gracious. This grief torments me, but the torment is sweet, because this grief gives me confidence that Thou hast indeed pardoned me. My sweet Saviour, would that I had died over and over again, rather than once even, to have given Thee offence. I tremble and fear, lest at any time I should ever again displease Thee. Ah, rather let me die a most painful death, than that I should ever again lose Thy grace. Once I was the slave of hell, but now I am Thy servant, O God of my soul. Thou hast said that Thou wilt love those who love Thee. I love them that love me. I do love Thee, therefore Thou art mine, and I am Thine. I might lose Thee at some time, but this is the grace that I seek, namely, that it would be better for me to die, than to lose Thee again. Thou hast given me so many graces that I have not asked Thee for, therefore I cannot fear that Thou wilt fail to grant me this grace, for which I am now asking Thee. Never again let me lose Thee; give me Thy holy love, and nothing more can I desire.