

**THE GLORIES
OF MARY**

THE GLORIES OF MARY

Translated from the Italian of

ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI

Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths, and Founder of the
Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

Revised by

THE RIGHT REV. ROBERT A. COFFIN

Late Bishop of Southwark

TAN Books
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We hereby approve of this translation of *The Glories of Mary*, and cordially recommend it to the faithful.

Nicholas Card. Wiseman
Archbishop of Westminster
Given at Westminster on the Feast of
Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, A.D. 1852

Second Edition

We heartily recommend this translation of *The Glories of Mary* to all the disciples of her Divine Son.

Henry E.
Archbishop of Westminster.
August 11, 1868

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NOTICE



he 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.

CONTENTS

<i>Publisher's Note</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>The Author's Prayer to Jesus and Mary</i>	<i>xxi</i>
<i>To the Reader</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
<i>Introduction: Which It Is Necessary to Read</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Prayer to the Blessed Virgin to Obtain a Good Death</i>	<i>7</i>

PART THE FIRST ON THE SALVE REGINA

CHAPTER I

HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY

- I. How Great Should Be Our Confidence in Mary,
Who Is the Queen of Mercy..... 11
- II. How Much Our Confidence in Mary Should
Be Increased From the Fact of Her Being
Our Mother
- 24
- III. On the Greatness of the Love Which This
Mother Bears Us..... 34
- IV. Mary Is the Mother of Penitent Sinners..... 51

CHAPTER 2

OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS

- I. Mary Is Our Life, Because She Obtains Us the
Pardon of Our Sins
- 63

- II. Mary Is Also Our Life, Because She Obtains
Us Perseverance..... 73
- III. Mary Renders Death Sweet to Her Clients 84

CHAPTER 3
OUR HOPE

- I. Mary Is the Hope of All 99
- II. Mary Is the Hope of Sinners 111

CHAPTER 4
TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR
BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

- I. On the Promptitude of Mary in Assisting Those
Who Invoke Her..... 127
- II. Of the Greatness of the Power of Mary to
Defend Those Who Invoke Her When Tempted
by the Devil..... 140

CHAPTER 5
TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND
WEeping, IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS

- I. Of the Necessity of the Intercession of
Mary for Our Salvation..... 153
- II. The Same Subject Continued..... 169

CHAPTER 6
O, GRACIOUS ADVOCATE

- I. Mary Is an Advocate Who Is Able to Save All..... 185
- II. Mary Is So Tender an Advocate, That She Does
Not Refuse to Defend the Cause Even of the
Most Miserable 200
- III. Mary Is the Peace-Maker Between Sinners
and God 211

CHAPTER 7
TURN, THEN, THINE EYES OF
MERCY TOWARDS US

- I. Mary Is All Eyes to Pity and Succour Us in Our
Necessities..... 225

CHAPTER 8
AND AFTER THIS OUR EXILE SHOW UNTO US
THE BLESSED FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS

- I. Mary Delivers Her Clients From Hell..... 237
II. Mary Succours Her Clients in Purgatory..... 249
III. Mary Leads Her Servants to Heaven..... 257

CHAPTER 9
O CLEMENT, O PIOUS

- Of the Greatness of the Clemency and Compassion
of Mary 271

CHAPTER 10
O SWEET VIRGIN MARY

- Of the Sweetness of the Name of Mary During Life
and at Death..... 285

DEVOUT PRAYERS ADDRESSED BY VARIOUS
SAINTS TO THE DIVINE MOTHER

- Prayer of Saint Ephrem 303
Prayer of Saint Bernard 304
Prayer of Saint Germanus..... 306
Prayer of Blessed Raymond Jourdain, Abbot of
Celles..... 307
Prayer of Saint Methodius..... 308
Prayer of Saint John Damascen 308

Prayer of Saint Andrew of Candia.....	309
Prayer of Saint Ildephonsus	310
Prayer of Saint Athanasius.....	310
Prayer of Saint Anselm.....	311
Prayer of Saint Peter Damian	312
Prayer of William of Paris	313

**PART THE SECOND
TREATING OF HER PRINCIPAL
FEASTS AND HER DOLOURS**

**DISCOURSE I
ON MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

How Becoming It Was That Each of the Three Divine Persons Should Preserve Mary From Original Sin	317
--	-----

**DISCOURSE 2
OF THE BIRTH OF MARY**

Mary Was Born a Saint, and a Great Saint; for the Grace With Which God Enriched Her From the Beginning Was Great, and the Fidelity With Which She Immediately Corresponed With It Was Great.....	353
---	-----

**DISCOURSE 3
OF THE PRESENTATION OF MARY**

The Offering That Mary Made of Herself to God Was Prompt Without Delay, and Entire Without Reserve	377
--	-----

DISCOURSE 4
OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF MARY

In the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, Mary Could
Not Have Humbled Herself More Than She Did
Humble Herself: God, on the Other Hand, Could
Not Have Exalted Her More Than He Did
Exalt Her 395

DISCOURSE 5
OF THE VISITATION OF MARY

Mary Is the Treasurer of All Divine Graces; Therefore,
Whoever Desires Graces Must Have Recourse to
Mary; and He Who Has Recourse to Mary May
Be Certain of Obtaining the Graces He Desires ... 423

DISCOURSE 6
OF THE PURIFICATION OF MARY

The Great Sacrifice Which Mary Made on This Day to
God in Offering Him the Life of Her Son 445

DISCOURSE 7
OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

On This Day the Church Celebrates, in Honour of
Mary, Two Solemn Festivals; the First Is That of
Her Happy Passage From This World; the Second,
That of Her Glorious Assumption into Heaven..... 463

DISCOURSE 8
SECOND DISCOURSE ON THE
ASSUMPTION OF MARY

1st—How Glorious Was the Triumph of Mary When
She Ascended to Heaven. 2nd—How Exalted Was
the Throne to Which She Was Elevated in
Heaven 483

**DISCOURSE 9
OF THE DOLOURS OF MARY**

Mary Was the Queen of Martyrs, for Her Martyrdom Was Longer and Greater Than That of All the Martyrs	501
--	-----

**REFLECTIONS ON EACH OF THE SEVEN
DOLOURS OF MARY IN PARTICULAR**

First Dolour: Of Saint Simeon's Prophecy	523
Second Dolour: Of the Flight of Jesus into Egypt	530
Third Dolour: Of the Loss of Jesus in the Temple.....	537
Fourth Dolour: On the Meeting of Mary With Jesus, When He Was Going to Death.....	544
Fifth Dolour: Of the Death of Jesus.....	551
Sixth Dolour: The Piercing of the Side of Jesus, and His Descent From the Cross.....	560
Seventh Dolour: The Burial of Jesus	568

**OF THE VIRTUES OF THE MOST BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY**

I. Of the Humility of Mary	577
II. Of Mary's Charity Towards God	585
III. Of Mary's Charity Towards Her Neighbour	593
IV. Of Mary's Faith.....	597
V. Of Mary's Hope	601
VI. Of Mary's Chastity	604
VII. Of Mary's Poverty.....	610
VIII. Of Mary's Obedience	613
IX. Of Mary's Patience.....	617
X. Of Mary's Prayer	620

**VARIOUS PRACTICES OF DEVOTION IN
HONOUR OF THE DIVINE MOTHER**

First Devotion: Of the Hail Mary	627
Second Devotion: Of Novenas	631
Third Devotion: Of the Rosary and Office of Our Blessed Lady.....	634
Fourth Devotion: Of Fasting.....	638
Fifth Devotion: Of Visiting the Images of Mary	640
Sixth Devotion: Of the Scapular	642
Seventh Devotion: Of Joining Confraternities of Our Blessed Lady	643
Eighth Devotion: Of Alms Given in Mary's Honour.....	649
Ninth Devotion: Of Having Frequent Recourse to Mary	650
Tenth Devotion: In This Tenth and Last Devotion I Unite Several Devotions Which May Be Practised in Honour of Mary	651
Conclusion.....	654

**PART THE THIRD
VARIOUS ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES
APPERTAINING TO THE MOST
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Various Additional Examples Appertaining to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.....	661
Reply to an Anonymous Writer, Who Has Censured What the Author of This Work Has Said, in the First Section of the Fifth Chapter, on the Salve Regina.....	705

A Short Reply to the Extravagant Reform Attempted by the Abbé Rolli; a Reform Which Is in Opposition to the Devotion and Love We Owe to the Divine Mother	717
A Sermon for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	727
A Sermon on the Dolours of Mary	739
Sermon for the Feast of Saint Joseph	751
Novena of Meditations	767
Prayers to the Divine Mother	807
Little Rosary of the Seven Dolours of Mary	817
Little Rosary of Mary Immaculate	823
Dedications and Prayers	825

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



n 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 towards 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

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,¹ 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

¹ 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,² ‘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 propositions³—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;’⁴ 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.

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


³ In Chapters vi. vii. viii. ix.

⁴ 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."'”⁵

⁵ 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.'¹ 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.'²

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

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

² 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;'³ and he adds,

³ Honorare siquidem Mariam, thesaurizare est sibi vitam

‘that this most gracious Lady will honour in the next world those who honour her in this.’⁴ 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;”⁵ 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:⁶ 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:’⁷ he died like a Saint in the act of praying, and in the most heavenly peace. Mary also appeared to a Dominican friar, who

æternam.—*De Laud. V. 1. 2.*

⁴ Glorificabit in futuro servientes sibi et honorificantes se in præsentī.—*Ib.*

⁵ Qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt.—*Eccl. xxiv. 31.*

⁶ 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.*

⁷ 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.⁸ 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.'⁹

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?'¹⁰

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

⁸ Ap. P. Auriem, *Aff. scamb.* p. 1, c. 13.

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

¹⁰ 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;'¹¹ 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

¹¹ 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.'¹² 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.

¹² 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.'¹ '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.'² '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

¹ 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.*

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

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

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.'⁵ 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.'⁶ 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.'⁷

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

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

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

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

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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;'⁸ 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,"⁹ 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

⁸ Hoc reges habent magnificum, prodesse miseris.

⁹ 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.'¹⁰ 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.'¹¹

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."¹² 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.'¹³ Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also remarks, 'that the Eternal Father gave the office of judge and avenger to the Son, and

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

¹¹ 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.

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

¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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”).¹⁵ 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;’¹⁶ 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

¹⁴ Pater omne iudicium dedit Filio, misericordiæ vero officium dedit Matri.

¹⁵ Unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ.—*Ps.* xlv. 8 .

¹⁶ 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."¹⁷ 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."¹⁸ 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

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

¹⁸ 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."¹⁹ 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.'²⁰

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.'²¹ 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

¹⁹ Lex clementiæ in lingua ejus.—*Prov.* xxxi. 26.

²⁰ 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.*

²¹ 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.²² 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.

Suetonius²³ 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.'²⁴ 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?'²⁵

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

²³ Tit. c. 8.

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

²⁵ 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;²⁶ and the Son, 'exulting in it, fulfils thy petitions as if He were paying a debt;²⁷ 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;

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.*

²⁶ 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.*

²⁷ 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;²⁸ '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.'²⁹ '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;³⁰ 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.'³¹

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

²⁸ 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.

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

³⁰ Ego vocor ab omnibus mater misericordiæ, vere filia misericordiam Filii mei misericordem me fecit.—*Rev.* lib. ii. cap. 23.

³¹ 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."³² 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.'³³ 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

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

³³ 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:³⁴ '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."³⁵ 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

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

³⁵ 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."³⁶ 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."³⁷ But if Jesus is the Father of our Souls, Mary is also their Mother; for she, by giving us

³⁶ Veni, ut vitam habeant, et abundantius habeant.—*Joan.* x. 10.

³⁷ 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,³⁸ 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.'³⁹ 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."⁴⁰ 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

³⁸ De Laud. B. M. I. 6, c. 1.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Peperit filium suum primogenitum.—*Luc.* ii. 7.

children.⁴¹ This was revealed by our Lord to St. Gertrude,⁴² 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,"⁴³ 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;"⁴⁴ 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.'⁴⁵

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

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² Insin. 1. 4, c. 3.

⁴³ Venter tunc sicut acervus tritici vallatus liliis.—*Cant.* vii. 2.

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

⁴⁵ 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.'⁴⁶ 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."⁴⁷ St. William says, that 'Mary, in order that she might save many souls, exposed her own to death;⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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

vitam.—*Delrio in Cant.* iv. 13.

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

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

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

⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

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;"⁵¹ 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;"⁵² 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."⁵³ '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.'⁵⁴ And Silveira remarks, that St.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ Torcular calcavi solus.—*Is.* lxiii. 3.

⁵² Ecce filius tuus.—*Joan.* xix. 26.

⁵³ Deinde dicit discipulo: Ecce mater tua.—*Joan.* xix. 27.

⁵⁴ 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.'⁵⁵

The Church applies to Mary these words of the sacred Canticles: "I am the mother of fair love;"⁵⁶ 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.'⁵⁷ 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?'⁵⁸ 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

facts est Mater.—Tom. i. Serm. 51.

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis.—*Eccles.* xxiv. 24.

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

⁵⁸ 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."⁵⁹ 'Of what handmaid?' asks St. Augustine; and he replies: 'Of her who said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'⁶⁰ '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?'⁶¹ 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.'⁶² 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

⁵⁹ *Salvum fac filium ancillæ tuæ.—Ps. lxxxv. 16.*

⁶⁰ *Cujus ancillæ . . . quæ ait. Ecce ancilla Domini.—In Ps. lxxxv.*

⁶¹ *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.*

⁶² *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.’⁶³ 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.’⁶⁴ ‘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

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

⁶⁴ 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!⁶⁵ 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."⁶⁶ 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,⁶⁷ 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,

⁶⁵ 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.*

⁶⁶ Si quia est parvulus, veniat ad me.—*Prov. ix. 4.*

⁶⁷ 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. Thomas⁶⁸ 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,'⁶⁹ and even the most savage beasts cannot do otherwise than love their young.⁷⁰ 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."⁷¹ Mary is our Mother, not, as we have already observed, according to the flesh, but by love; "I am the Mother of fair love;"⁷² 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

⁶⁸ De Dil. Chr. c. 13.

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

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

⁷¹ 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.

⁷² Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis.—*Eccles.* xxiv. 24.

us whom she has adopted for her children.⁷³ 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;’⁷⁴ so much so, adds St. Ambrose, that whilst ‘her Son hung on the cross, Mary offered herself to the executioners,’⁷⁵ 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;”⁷⁶ 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

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

⁷⁴ 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.*

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

⁷⁶ 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 ardours 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 Nieremberg⁷⁷ says that the love that all mothers have ever had for their children is but a shadow in comparison with the love that

⁷⁷ *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."⁷⁸ '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.'⁷⁹ And when did she give Him? She gave Him, says Father Nieremberg,⁸⁰ when she granted Him permission to deliver Himself up

⁷⁸ Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.—
Joan. iii. 16.

⁷⁹ Sic Maria dilexit nos, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.W

⁸⁰ 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. Antoninus⁸¹ 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,’

⁸¹ 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.'⁸²

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."⁸³ And to save us He was pleased even to lay down His life for us, "having become obedient unto death."⁸⁴ 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

⁸² 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.

⁸³ Salvum facere quod perierat.—*Luc.* xix. 10.

⁸⁴ 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."⁸⁵ 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"⁸⁶—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.'⁸⁷ 'And who,' exclaims St. Antoninus, 'can ever form an idea of the tender care that this most loving Mother takes of all of us,'⁸⁸ 'offering and dispensing her mercy to everyone,'⁸⁹ 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.'⁹⁰ 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.'⁹¹ The

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

⁸⁶ Non est qui se abscondit a calore ejus.—*Ps.* xviii. 7.

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

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

⁸⁹ Omnibus aperit sinum misericordiæ suæ.—*Ibid.*

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

⁹¹ 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.'⁹² 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."⁹³ 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.'⁹⁴

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."⁹⁵ '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,"⁹⁶ 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,'⁹⁷ that is, she loves in a more special manner, those

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

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

⁹⁴ Velocius occurrit ejus pietas quam invocetur.—*Exp. in Cant.* c. xxiii.

⁹⁵ Facile . . . invenitur ab his qui quærunt illam.—*Sap.* vi. 13.

⁹⁶ Ego diligentes me diligo.—*Prov.* viii. 17.

⁹⁷ *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.⁹⁸

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,

⁹⁸ 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!’⁹⁹ Let us love her like that great lover of Mary, who loved this his sweet Mother

⁹⁹ 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;¹⁰⁰ and to express the ardent love he bore her, added: 'for hast thou not ravished my heart, O Queen?'¹⁰¹ 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

¹⁰⁰ O raptrix cordium!—*Ib.*

¹⁰¹ 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.'¹⁰² I know, my Lady, that among those that love thee thou lovest the most, and that

¹⁰² 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.'¹⁰³ 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.'¹⁰⁴ 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

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

¹⁰⁴ 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?¹⁰⁵

Example

Father Auriemma¹⁰⁶ 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

¹⁰⁵ 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.*

¹⁰⁶ *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:¹⁰⁷ 'Lady, who with the love and favour thou showest thy servants dost ravish their hearts, ravish also my

¹⁰⁷ 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,¹⁰⁸ 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

¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ 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.’¹¹⁰ 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,¹¹¹ 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.¹¹² And

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

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

¹¹¹ Surrexerunt filii ejus.—*Prov.* xxxi. 28.

¹¹² 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.'¹¹³ 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.'¹¹⁴ 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.'¹¹⁵ 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.'¹¹⁶ "He is cursed of God," says Ecclesiastes, "that angereth his mother."¹¹⁷ 'That is Mary,'¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹³ Qui genitoris non facit opera, negat genus.—*Ib.*

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

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

¹¹⁶ *Ap. Pelb. Stell.* lib. xii. p. ult. c. 7.

¹¹⁷ Est maledictus a Deo qui exagperat matrem.—*Ecc.* iii. 18.

¹¹⁸ 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.'¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ St. Bernard says,¹²¹ 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,¹²² 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

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

¹²⁰ Sess. 6. can. 7.

¹²¹ *De Div.* s. 81.

¹²² 2a, 2æ, qu. 178. a. 2. ad 1.

that asketh receiveth."¹²³ 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.'¹²⁴ 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.'¹²⁵ '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.'¹²⁶ This most

¹²³ Omnis enim qui petit, accipit.—*Luc.* xi. 10.

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

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

¹²⁶ 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.'¹²⁷

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

Spec. B.V. lect. 3.

¹²⁷ 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."¹²⁸ 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*!' ¹²⁹ '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;¹³⁰ 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

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

¹²⁹ 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.

¹³⁰ 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 Kings¹³¹ 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.'¹³²

¹³¹ Reg. c. xiv.

¹³² 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.’¹³³ ‘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.’¹³⁴ 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.’¹³⁵ 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

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

¹³³ 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.*

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

¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶ 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.

¹³⁶ 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.*