

CHAPTER XIX

HOW ONE MUST SERVE JESUS
AFTER MARY'S EXAMPLE

I.

Who are the highest in heaven, and who were the most humble on this earth among the creatures endowed with life?

Is it not Jesus? Is it not Mary?

Jesus made Himself for us the servant of all, and Mary calls herself a servant.

The earth proclaims the grandeur and the heavens in chorus sing the sublime dignity of Jesus and Mary, here below and on high.

Oh, you may unite your voice to these voices, to sing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary!

It is also good to put yourself in the service of those who have made themselves our servants.

Indeed, serve the Lord, you sons of men, serve Him who first deigned to serve you.

Serve Mary too: she gave you the example of being humble and of giving service.

It is a duty for you and it is to your advantage to honor before all, these two powerful models.

You must pray to them daily, even hourly, because they have the power to conquer the enemy and to procure the joys of victory.

II.

Thus, in every condition hurry to Jesus and, at the same time, hurry to Mary.

Expose to them always your needs and your troubles.

Confess your sins and weep for your forgetfulness: arouse your hope and wait for grace.

If you fall, alas! with facility, hasten to rise all the more quickly.

Sincere prayers are always listened to and true pleadings are always heard.

The angels in their turn will rejoice for you on seeing you cleansed from the ugliness of sin.

For your part, avoid sin henceforth. Mary will obtain for you the pardon of Jesus.

Pray to Jesus and Mary for the honor that is due to them: Jesus and Mary will then give you assistance and courage.

III. Prayer:

It is to you, O Jesus, my Lord and my God, to you, O Mary, Mother of God and my mother, that I wish to confide my body and soul.

You alone are my hope and my help in my troubles and in my tribulations.

Let your tenderness and your affection sustain me everywhere! This is my only prayer.

(Monastic Enchiridion, Chap. IV)

HOMILY

LATENT FORCES IN LIFE

I. There is in each one of us a hidden power, a latent force which is personal, that no other possesses. There are no two souls exactly alike. It is these hidden forces which we must cultivate and exercise in order to arrive at perfection.

II. That is true in the spiritual domain as in the world of matter. Men of genius, the saints, attained this superior state which constitutes heroism, only by putting to work the special forces of their soul, as well as the material dispositions of their body.

III. *Nosce teipsum*. One must know himself to perfect himself each day. Perfection is not the work of a day, but the crowning of a life. Above all, we must ask for perseverance.

MEDITATION

CONTENTMENT WITH ONESELF

There are people who are always discontented with everything and with themselves. Discontent with the happiness of others, discontent with their life and their lot. This is a whim and a defect.

He who, like the Christian philosopher, would care to look well around him, not only above but below, would easily see that he is not just to think thus.

Without reaching the pessimism which says that we must be content with little, it is important to correct ourselves and to judge ourselves better. To underestimate ourselves is not a virtue; humility thus understood would be a defect.

Let us have great confidence in ourselves! Let us enlarge our thought and our affection! He who knows himself well, loves himself; he who loves himself, encourages himself. Let us have confidence in ourselves!

Practice: Never allow yourself to be disheartened by a defeat or a trial.

Thought: If I consider myself, I find myself happy.

Contentus sua sorte, said Socrates.

CHAPTER XX

HOW TO ACT
AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

I.

My memory will live in the succession of centuries, is said in Ecclesiastes in reference to Mary.

Mary, humble and poor in everything, a model of patience and perfection, from the day of her birth until the hour of her death lived poor and hidden, a life of suffering.

You who suffer, come to her always, and each day search for what you can put at her feet, as at the feet of a mother, in eager token of respect and love.

If you wish to rejoice in heaven with Mary, suffer poverty on earth with Mary.

Take for a model her examples both of poverty and humility.

Flee the vain amusements of men: watch lest you offend by useless words or unworthy acts, either Jesus your God, or Mary your mother.

II.

It is certainly not a simple and slight fault to offend such loving protectors.

They see at all times how you work and how you try to reform yourself; and, depending on your efforts, they regulate their help.

However, their love surpasses your wickedness, and their goodness always incites repentance.

If you realize that you have erred, change your resolution for the better.

Persevere in the good and know how to give thanks for all the gifts received. It is thus that Mary acted in her life of union with Jesus here on earth.

Learn from the example of this goodness to accept the annoyances of life, to submit yourself in everything to the unknown designs chosen for you by God from all eternity.

Jesus will then be for you a protector, and Mary a loving and faithful mother.

Be on your part a devoted child, a faithful servant, always eager for that which is good.

III. Prayer:

I greet you with composure, Virgin full of grace, the Lord is with you!

I greet you, sole hope of the poor!

I have revealed to you, gentle mother of orphans!

henceforth I shall reveal them with still more assurance, because I feel that a great virtue flows from you, and that your name exhales a perfume that embalms the heart and comforts the soul.

O sweet name of Mary, name of grace and charm, name always sweet to say, and sweet to think upon, name fashioned in heaven, name carried by the angels, name recommended by the Gospel to men, when as if by making of it a eulogy: the name of the chosen virgin was: Mary!

(Mystical Prayers, Chap. VI)

HOMILY

ACTION AND EFFORT

I. Action is the sign of life; to live is to act, in the domain of the spiritual life, as in the domain of the natural life. But action is not without effort and effort supposes work. Is there a more beautiful example of work than that of Mary? See her in the Temple, at Nazareth, at Jerusalem. See her weaving the seamless robe of the Infant Jesus, in the splendid picture of *Mater admirabilis*.

II. Mary works in prayer and in contemplation. More than that, her work is a prayer. To pray is to lift our soul to God. Work ought not bind us to the earth, but to aid us to rise to heaven, through effort and through the soaring of the heart.

III. But work is hard; labor is harsh. Thus we must join to work, prayer, which itself carries us on the wings of love to the sky, with Mary.

MEDITATION

CHARACTER

Character is that which leaves an indelible imprint on each soul and each individual. In the original sense of the word, character was an impression with a heated iron, on a stipe of wood. The imprint thus marked grows with the tree and remains visible.

It ought to be likewise for the soul. To have character is praiseworthy for any man; to possess character is admirable for a woman. Virtue is nothing more, because virtue is a lasting imprint.

To have character, we must know how to suffer. Let us see in Mary our model and our exemplar. What a beautiful type and what a beautiful character, forged of strength and sweetness. From the Crib to Calvary, she appears always beautiful,

always good, always strong. Can we imagine a more appealing model? Let us imitate her always.

Practice: Accustom yourself to keep even-tempered in all circumstances.

Thought: Often say with Mary: Lord, let it be done to me according to Your will.

Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

CHAPTER XXI

THE INTERIOR LIFE OF MARY

I.

Willingly remain in solitude and silence in order to pray better: It is thus that Mary dwelt with the angel, alone in her retreat and speaking only with him.

An angel will come likewise to you and will announce to you the marvels of heaven.

He will come likewise as a helper and a guardian, and before him the spirit of evil will flee.

To retire and to be silent after the example of Mary is the only means of having peace of heart, of obtaining from God the gift of prayer.

Watch the bee eager to gather its honey; it passes through the flowers but without attaching itself; scarcely laden with its sugar, it flees hastily toward the hive and hides the honey, so as to be able to enjoy it during the winter in solitude and tranquility.

It thus encloses the fragrance of the perfume for fear that by going forth, flying hither and yonder, it may thus lose the fruit of its work.

II.

Besides, perfumes carefully enclosed in their containers are better preserved.

On the contrary, those which are left open, are not slow to lose their fragrance.

Nor do flowers too often handled delay in losing their freshness.

A flower blooms well only in gardens: it is sheltered behind walls.

Roses born in the shade of the enclosure open quickly and are long fragrant; while those which are sown along the highways lose their odor, wither, and die.

In like manner, a torch lit in high wind is likely to be extinguished; while the light protected by a shade remains burning. So it is with our devotion; it is conserved and grows in retirement, whereas it evaporates and is lost in noise.

Three things are especially necessary for man; three things are pleasing to God, to Mary and to the angels; manual labor to counteract physical desire, love of study to counteract heaviness of heart, attention in prayer to counteract the art of the demon. Therefore, love retirement and work often if you wish to have peace of heart.

III. Prayer:

You are sweet and beautiful, O Mary, my mother, holy Mother of God full of grace.

He alone could enumerate your virtues who could enumerate the stars in the heavens.

Just as the visible sky appears above the earth, lofty and sublime, so does your life appear exalted above our lives.

You alone merit to have been chosen from all eternity for the Mother of God.

And of being, in time, consecrated by the Holy Spirit; greeted by angels; instructed by the archangel and overshadowed by the spirit of the Lord.

(The Valley of Lilies, Chap. IV)

HOMILY

THE LIFE OF CONSCIENCE

I. Lacordaire said that in the solitude of the conscience the most beautiful mysteries of life unfold. He who could penetrate the interior of Mary would there contemplate with delight splendor worthy of heaven. It is in solitude and silence that is wrought this intimate life which the mystic calls the interior life. Mary lived it in company with the angels, in the intimacy of Jesus. What models for us! But also what effort!

II. It is by work and concentration that the sap of the corporal life is formed; it is through work and meditation that the food of the spiritual life is produced. Mary gives us a sublime example of it, a notable model which we ought to try to reproduce.

III. This is the grace we ask for in the exultant prayer which recalls the gifts and the interior privileges of the Mother of God, who is also our own mother and model.

MEDITATION

THE LIFE OF THE HEART

To live by the heart is to live doubly. Assuredly, all life flows from the heart, but just as the heart beats more quickly and strongly in the hours of anguish and of love, thus it is the life of the soul.

What we call the life of the heart is the affective life, the ascent of Calvary, the search for perfection. Love and do as you wish, said St. Augustine. This is the philosophy of love and of the interior life.

The heart of Mary, more than any other human heart, knew the tenderness of love and the anguish of grief. Heart of a mother and heart of a woman, heart of a virgin and heart of a martyr, formed in an immaculate flesh and transformed by contact with the Heart of God Himself, since the Heart of Jesus

and the heart of Mary exchanged the same blood and lived the same life. Let us place our heart near to hers.

Practice: To search constantly for something to do for the love of your neighbor.

Thought: Heart of Mary, sanctuary of sorrow and of love:
Amori et dolori sacrum.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WORKS AND EXAMPLE OF MARY

I.

For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb.

It is in all truth that these lovely words, words of eternal wisdom, are said about Mary, the mother of Jesus our Savior.

Jesus is gentle to us; Mary is all sweetness. There is in them neither bitterness nor sadness, but compassion, sweetness, love, and an untiring eternal mercy.

Happy is he who follows the example of Jesus! Happy is he who confides himself to the love of Mary!

He will unfailingly secure help and support from them.

Gather together as souvenirs the actions and words of Jesus while on earth.

What He did, what He said: you will find in these more than all the treasures of the world.

Meditate with equal attention on the words and actions of Mary:

They will be for you a help and a support more pleasing to the heart than balm and perfumes.

II.

Just as the body has need of food in order to live; and perfume in order to be sweet-smelling, so too the soul has need of virtues to keep alive, and of meditations to remain strong.

The more the soul gives itself to elevated matters, the more it confides itself to wise directors, the better it acquires the glorious science of the saints, and the more quickly it attains the joys of the blessed.

Jesus and Mary are for us in every way sublime masters and models of sanctity; keep them constantly before your eyes and be attentive to them.

Unite yourself to them; enter into intimacy with them.

Everywhere that anyone speaks on the mysteries of Jesus our Saviour and of Mary His mother, listen carefully, and think often of what the names of Jesus and Mary hold for you of strength and sweetness.

III. Prayer:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, ever virgin, mother enriched while on earth with so many favors that the mind of man can neither comprehend them nor speak of them in their greatness, behold me before you, I am your servant, humbly prostrate at the foot of your throne, with all the ardor of a heart which knows how to love.

You are elevated above the archangels, holy Mother of God; you deserve to be, because you have been the most humble of women.

You have found grace even in the eyes of God, O Virgin all beautiful and Mother incomparable.

There is not in heaven nor on earth a creature worthy to be compared to you.

Again I kneel humbly at your feet, O Mary, in order to be better able to offer you praises from reverent lips and a sinless heart.

(The Valley of Lilies, Chap. X)

HOMILY

ACTION AND DEVOTION

I. To act, in Latin, is the opposite of to suffer. Action supposes the exercise of the will; inaction, on the contrary, is always a passion or an effacement. As action supposes energy, inaction recalls decay. Admirable actions make beautiful lives. Thus Mary rises above other women through the spirit of her works and the force of her action. Here is a model to reproduce.

II. An effort attempted in order to imitate this model even from afar, is already a meritorious action. The accomplished effort constitutes a virtue and virtue raises, beautifies and transforms. The fruit of this practice is called devotion. True devotion is active, not passive. To devote oneself is to give oneself.

III. In a prayer inflamed with lyricism, the author asks Mary to teach him to act and to devote himself as she acted and devoted herself.

MEDITATION

PERSONAL EFFORT

Effort is an act which costs and which supposes courage and energy: moral courage, civil courage, military courage, all are contained. Effort requires the mastery of oneself, an assured character, and a firm will. Discouragement is the opposite of personal effort. According to Mary's example we must know how to stand firm against difficulties and remain standing in spite of trials. *Stabat*: the Virgin Mary stood at the foot of the Cross, said the Evangelist St. John, who accompanied her there.

This is the attitude which is suitable for an imitator of Mary, who wishes to follow Jesus as far as Calvary, and not only to the breaking of bread.

Practice: Never to change a decision once it has been made.

Thought: To you, O Mother, we offer both our strength and our weaknesses.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW TO PRAY AND MEDITATE
ACCORDING TO MARY'S EXAMPLE

I.

Before undertaking a work of piety, before beginning an ordinary task, lift your heart to heaven; invoke Jesus and Mary and confide yourself to their protection.

Offer to God both yourself and your actions: your works will then become meritorious; they will be, at the same time, pleasing to God, useful to your neighbor, and profitable to yourself.

Let your intention be always pure, and let your will be directed toward the good.

Work in silence and speak rarely, but let your prayer unceasingly rise to God daily through the thrice holy name of Jesus.

Begin here below to chant, to love, to praise Jesus through the intercession of His Mother Mary. Praise often their glory and their name so as to merit to reign with them in heaven.

II.

To praise Jesus is to possess sweetness and charm in your soul: to praise Mary is to possess beauty.

When your soul is happy, sing: when it is sad, pray.

The more often you exercise yourself in praise the more you will feel love deepen within you, and the more you will see devotion grow.

Do not forget: you will not be forgotten. Be attentive, vigilant over yourself, and you will find in this way zeal and attention.

You must bleed from the blows of a trial, you must be weighed down by adversity, in order to experience the joy of union with God and better to appreciate His grace.

Happy is he who knows how to listen to the counsel of Jesus and Mary for his own amendment!

He will find joy if he has known tears, because pity in the divine Heart of Jesus surpasses the horror of our sins, and the heart of Mary is a limitless treasure of mercy and compassion for us.

III. Prayer:

O Mary, receive, at the return of its exile, my poor soul distraught among the perils of this world; lead it yourself to the gate of heaven in order to introduce it to the joys of paradise. Place me near you and say to Jesus the sweet and consoling word, the word of pardon.

You who have received from the mouth of an angel the gratifying Ave of the salutation, grant me the power often to repeat reverently your name so full of sweetness.

Receive, O Mary, my Queen and Mother, the fervent prayer of your servant and shed upon him from your throne on high, looks of tenderness and mercy.

(The Garden of Roses, Chap. VII)

HOMILY

THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

I. Prayer is a science, but also a virtue. The spirit acts in prayer, just as the heart beats. Without these two elements prayer is an empty formula, whereas it ought to constitute a human act. Nothing is more beautiful than the attitude of the man who prays; nothing is more touching than the sight of a woman at prayer. Look upon the Orantes of the Catacombs.

II. The model, here below, in prayer, as the exemplar for us of all Christian life, is Mary. The very image of the Orant recalls now and then the portrait of the Mother of God. She prays, arms outstretched, as if to rise on outspread wings.

III. Is our prayer like this? Is it not too often with us the body alone which prays? Let us ask Mary for the science of prayer and the grace of her protection.

MEDITATION

MEDITATION

To meditate is a mysterious word which, in the language of the Church, means to reflect and to examine with an aspiration of love. To meditate is not only to think, but also to rise to God. Mary, the Gospel tells us, kept the words of Scripture in her heart. There is the true model of meditation: it is with the heart as much as with the intelligence that we meditate in the mystic life.

Meditation can be brief, provided that it be effective. It ought to be effective in the resolution which it inspires. That is to say that it is destined to prepare action and effort.

Practice: Do not allow a single day to pass without making a meditation.

Thought: O Mary, teach me to meditate as you did!

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW TO HONOR AND GLORIFY MARY

I.

Oh, if you would only progress in the praise and in the love of Jesus!

If you would from day to day serve better His divine Mother and honor her better!

But alas, you are weak, lukewarm, and negligent, often blamable and burdened with numerous sins, unworthy even to name Jesus and Mary. How then can you praise them worthily?

Praise is questionable when seen on the lips of a sinner. Holiness can only be worthily praised by those who are themselves holy, and not by sinners.

What then must you do? Be silent or speak? Wretched are you if you keep silent; wretched if you speak unworthily.

How then should one act in order to find mercy with God and not to merit reproach?

Nothing is better to attract the love of Jesus and the compassion of His divine Mother than to humiliate yourself in all things, and at all times, and to put yourself always in the last place.

Have a lowly opinion of yourself; consider yourself as worth nothing; God will be lenient with you and will pardon you: Mary will pray for you and will console you.

Far from being confounded in their presence, you will, on the contrary, receive, for your praises an abundant and unending reward.

II.

If you can do no better in your life, at least in everything that depends on you let your intention replace the action until you are able to improve.

Let those who are fervent and full of devotion pray fervently and devoutly;

Let those who have little love or ardor offer to Jesus at least the little they have through the hands of Mary, the Mother of the living flame.

Alas! We would be unworthy by ourselves to appear in the presence of the Mother of God, and to speak in order to pray worthily before her, if Mary herself did not call sinners to the consoling assembly of the saints, according to the beloved word of the royal prophet:
 "The poor and needy shall come to praise thy name."

III. Prayer:

Comfort with your holy words, O Mary, my sorrowful soul and my dejected heart.

Say only one word and once again I shall regain courage from your consolation.

I do not ask for a difficult or an impossible work, but only that you might say to my heart and to my soul that intimate word of encouragement which alone can give back to me joy and happiness.

I come to you as an abandoned son: receive me with a mother's smile, O Mary, so that your repentant servant may know that he has found grace and pardon.

Give me the help that my heart solicits and the consolation that my soul desires: give them to me without delay, O my mother!

(Sermons to the Novices, Sermon XXV)

HOMILY

HONOR AND HONORS

I. Honor is the sentiment of our own grandeur and the high consideration of our dignity. Honors are only exterior signs of interior value.

After Jesus, no one is greater than Mary. To her alone is offered a cult of hyperdulia, above the cult given to the saints.

II. How can we manifest to her this cult and this devotion? The author tells us how: by enlarging our heart. What does it mean—to enlarge our heart? It means to fill it with sublime sentiments and heroic resolutions.

III. Sanctity is only sustained heroism. Through our own effort we can arrive at this sublime state. Also, let us ask Mary to help us in it with her protection.

MEDITATION

HUMILITY AND HUMILIATION

Humility is sometimes considered as a lowering of oneself by oneself. It is not thus that it should be considered in the spiritual life. Humility would then be humiliation, which is not a virtue.

We can be humiliated by someone; we could practice humility only by ourselves. Therefore humility is the feeling of our own inferiority in relation to God. Mary is proclaimed a humble servant of the Lord, while yet being the Mother of the Savior, the Queen of heaven and earth.

Let us be humble like her, while recognizing our dignity as Christians.

Practice: To habituate yourself never to take offense from the lack of consideration of others for you.

Thought. The Lord exalts the humble, said Mary in her canticle of the *Magnificat*.

CHAPTER XXV
**HOW ONE MUST GO TO JESUS
 THROUGH MARY**

I.

Happy is he who daily comes to offer his homage, his praise, his heart, and his love to Jesus and Mary.

Happy is he who invokes them and seeks them! Oh! what sweetness is there in the name of Jesus! What sweetness also in the name of Mary.

Happy is the pilgrim who in time of exile remembers constantly his fatherland on high, where Jesus and Mary, surrounded by choirs of angels, await him to give him joy for all eternity!

Happy is the traveler who does not seek for a dwelling place here, but who always aspires to reign and to live with Christ in heaven!

Happy are the poor and indigent who each day come to ask for bread at the table of the Master, and who do not cease to plead, praying until they have received a few crumbs!

Happy is he who is called to the feast of the Lamb, and approaches daily the banquet of the altar while waiting for the eternal banquet of heaven!

II.

Every time that the faithful receive Communion, or that the priest offers the Holy Sacrifice, so often do they receive in union with Jesus and Mary food for the soul.

He who communicates becomes by that act the apostle of Jesus, the page of Mary, the companion of the saints, the brother of the apostles, an intimate of God, the kinsman of the saints, and the heir of the happiness of heaven.

Flee confusion, avoid dissipation of the soul, watch carefully over both your heart and your senses, if you wish to please Jesus and Mary.

You will then receive all succor from on high, and, always, when you call for aid in the midst of perils, and in the greatest dangers, you will be heard by the Master Himself.

It is thus that once on a tempestuous night the frightened apostles called upon Jesus. At once Jesus coming to them said, "Why are you fearful? O men of little faith! I am here; do not fear."

The voice of Jesus has the sweetness that consoles, the strength that supports, the joy that reassures, the grace that absolves, the goodness that pardons.

The voice of Mary also reconciles, and adds to the sweetness of the honey the strength of its comb.

III. Prayer:

Oh, how pleasing, sweet and agreeable to hear your voice, O Mary, my Mother!

What voice? The caressing and divine voice heard by John, the beloved disciple, the voice that said, "My son, behold your Mother."

The apostle heard it from the lips of Jesus. I wish to hear it from your own lips.

O Mary! Say to your servant, "My son, here is your Mother: here she is near to you."

At this voice, my soul, rekindled with joy, will find again strength and consolation, as John found them on receiving his Mother.

Let your voice, sweeter than all others, come to my ears! O Mary, let it come to my heart! Your fruitful maternal words will bring to me the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

(Monastic Enchiridion, Chap. V)

HOMILY

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

I. Spiritual communion consists in the ardent desire to receive sacramental Communion. Mary, more than all other saints, can serve us as model and exemplar.

Even before she received the Divine Child in her womb, Mary aspired to communicate in thought with God. Through her love, she drew God to her, said St. Bernard.

II. Thus spiritual communion ought to be to every Christian. In Communion, it is the communicant who is transformed into that which he receives, and not the contrary, as in material manducation. When I receive Communion, said Rodin, I absorb a force which transforms me.

III. To attain this transformation, the soul requires recollection and devotion, that is to say, the complete oblation of the whole being to God. It is through Mary that this offering is the most pleasing to God. Let us go to Jesus through Mary.

MEDITATION

DEVOTION

Devotion, this is the offering made to God of what is best in the creature. Devotion cannot exist without the total oblation of the heart and the will.

Devotion is a mysterious and sublime act. It is a gift and an offering. It is also the portion of a woman and of a virgin, still more than that of a man of action. It is something sweet and ecstatic.

But it is an ecstasy to which every soul may attain by effort over himself. It is necessary to give, and to give oneself in order to devote oneself well: to devote oneself is truly to possess devotion.

Let us imitate Mary, and let us remember that Mary acted by virtues and not by words in her life.

Practice: Be recollected for a moment each evening before retiring.

Thought: O Mary, offer us to Jesus upon your arms, even as a mother offers her child to you.

CHAPTER XXVI
THE MATERNAL
INTERCESSION OF MARY

I.

It is a salutary practice for all to evoke the memory of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary and to confide themselves to her in all dangers as an unhappy child confides himself to his mother.

The name of Mary frequently invoked brings to the soul assurance and comfort. In her turn, Mary is always ready to say to her Son the word of grace in favor of anyone who suffers and who bears the burden of sorrow.

Indeed, if Mary did not intercede in heaven for the world, how would the world be able to subsist in the midst of the sins, and in the mire of the vice in which it would dwell?

If it is a duty for all the faithful to invoke Mary, it is an obligation for Religious and for devout souls: they make a formal profession of virtue and they aspire to the perfection of heaven by forsaking the world and the things of the world.

But, first of all, what ought you to ask of Mary? In the first place, pardon for the sins committed; next, the grace of practicing humility, because it is humility alone which is pleasing to God.

You ought also to seek out poverty and not to glorify yourself for gifts received, if you do not wish to lose your poverty itself.

II.

Lament to be still so far from these qualities which alone may merit the name of virtues: sincere humility, total poverty, complete obedience, perfect charity.

All these qualities in their perfection are found blended in Mary.

Prostrate yourself therefore at her feet as one poor and a beggar, and come to ask for a small share at least of these beautiful virtues which alone can lead to a degree of perfection that you are unable to reach without them.

Seek all that you desire to obtain from God, through Mary, for her power extends over the earth and over purgatory.

Her glory is great and her grace is powerful, surpassing that of the archangels, the angels, and the saints, rising to God who is the cause of her grandeur and glory.

But this power, these glories and these favors, she has them that she may distribute them to us who live here below and who ask her for them.

Lovingly confide yourself as a son to the tenderness and affection of this Mother whose prayers are received by God.

Ask only what is pleasing to her Son and what is useful for your own salvation; she knows your needs better than you do.

To ask pardon for your sins and to remain humble is what pleases God and Mary most. Indeed it is because of her humility that Mary glorified herself before God, whereas she always kept silence about the other virtues and the other graces.

Humility everywhere; humility in everything.

III. Prayer:

Come, O my soul, come to embrace the one whom you love!
Cover with kisses Mary, your Mother and the Mother of God.
Kiss also her Son Jesus, the most beautiful of children among all the children of men.

You, O Mary, are accustomed to hearing the prayer of the poor and of orphans, and you never send away unconsolated those who persevere in coming to pray to you.

You, O Mary, are the Virgin Mother of a God, you are the mysterious and loving tree, engendered by the eternal line of kings, the tree which has produced the mysterious flower announced for the salvation of the whole world.

Jesus, our Savior and the Savior of all, to whom be honor and glory for eternity!

(Cloister Discipline, Chap. XIV)

HOMILY

THE PROTECTION OF MARY AND OBJECTS OF PIETY

I. The maternal intercession of Mary has a name more familiar to the heart, it is that of protectress. To protect is to intercede and also to intervene and to direct. This is certainly the role of Mary in relation to the faithful.

But again, we must ask for this protection. Besides, often, we have impulses rather than energetic desires in the spiritual life. To desire supposes an effort and effort belongs only to courage.

II. To receive the protection of Mary, we must merit it. The petition and the effort are already a motive for obtaining it. To desire confidently, to act, to renew our resolutions, to multiply our acts of the will, here are the means of obtaining this protection.

III. Far from that is the blind and slightly superstitious confidence sometimes attached to objects of piety themselves. Those are only signs and not generators of piety. Devotion ought to be enlightened, active, and rising above the aims of the earth.

MEDITATION

CONFIDENCE AND SUPERSTITION

Confidence is a virtue which supposes faith and reason. The word itself indicates this. We trust or we confide ourselves to someone whom we believe to be superior to ourselves, and it is reason which guides. Reason is attracted by grace in christian confidence. In superstition, on the contrary, we confide ourselves to blind forces, imaginary and non-existent. Reason is led astray and the soul is blinded. The will becomes inactive and the character or energy is exhausted little by little.

Superstition has degrees. We must avoid even the appearances which are often presented under the aspect of vain observances. Devotion to Mary is sometimes badly understood in this sense. This is no longer devotion, it is foolishness.

To confide oneself, to devote oneself, to perfect oneself, to rise, here is the devotion which pleases our Mother.

Practice: To examine yourself each evening in order to know what personal effort you have made during the day.

Thought: He who confides himself to Mary will be saved, said St. Ephrem.

CHAPTER XXVII

FREQUENT INVOCATION OF MARY

I.

Like to the fragrant myrrh, I give and I have given the sweetness of perfumes.

Reflect, O my son, reflect carefully on the example and the actions of Mary.

She is that myrrh, fragrant and choice which produced a perfume and a fruit, Jesus.

She is the one who carries to earth and to men the abundance of sweet consolations.

Guard in the depth of your heart the name of Mary and you will be consoled.

To be loved by Mary is to possess a treasure.

The love of Mary extinguishes the fire of the passions and brings to the soul the freshness of the virtues.

The love of Mary teaches you to scorn the world and to serve God in humility.

The love of Mary ever leads you away from evil and ever guides you to practice good.

II.

Therefore love Mary with a special love, and you will receive from her special graces.

Invoke Mary, and you will be victorious.

Honor Mary, and you will have happiness.

Two particular graces are the fruit of devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The first is to know how to praise God in prosperity; the second is to be able to be patient in adversity.

It is thus that Mary always glorified the Lord for the generous benefits she received from His hand while on earth.

It is thus that she showed herself in trials, always sweet and always ready to choose abasement rather than exaltation.

III. Prayer:

O Virgin most holy, O glorious Mary, O Mother, you are the gate of paradise, the source of life, the temple of the Lord, the beloved sanctuary of the Holy Ghost.

Whatever I can see of grace and beauty in human creatures; whatever I find of the sublime and great in the saints united to God in heaven: all this can I apply without error to your excellence and to your dignity.

It is very just and suitable that I apply myself, and with me all creatures, to praise unceasingly her whom I have chosen for advocate and mother, not only here below but in heaven beyond life, so as to merit through her eternal glory. The glory of Jesus, Her Son, thrice holy!

(Sermons to the Novices, XXV)

HOMILY

VOCAL PRAYER AND INVOCATIONS

I. Each thought is a real thing, a force. This force acts on the body itself. Be in your thought strong and active; your body will never be feeble.

This latent power which is in us is vivified by prayer and is heightened by its strength.

When this interior prayer is put into words, it acquires a double power. Herein lies the virtue of vocal prayer.

II. But this ought to be a prayer and not a recitation. True vocal prayer is that which is dictated by the heart and by inspiration. However, everyone not being poet or orator, we have recourse to the prayer of the Liturgy and of the Church, inspired by the Saints.

III. Such are true prayers and veritable invocations agreeable to God. The Office of the Blessed Virgin is, with the Rosary, the great vocal prayer and invocation which every devout soul should repeat often. Let us love liturgical prayers.

MEDITATION

Ejaculatory prayers are brief aspirations which we shoot as arrows into the sky, said St. Francis of Sales. They are outbursts and flashes of lightning. They bear the soul on high, and they win others.

Now, to bring to others a hope, a comfort, constitutes an act of heroic virtue, a work of mercy which brings us close to God. On the contrary, to discourage or to recriminate is to work against oneself and to pierce oneself with the arrows destined to be shot into the sky.

Invocations to Mary, the litanies of the Virgin, are the true ejaculatory prayers which we should have constantly on our lips.

Let us remember these when we feel depressed or only tempted.

Practice: Accustom yourself to say with feeling: Ave Maria!

Thought: We cry unto you, O Mary! *Ad te clamamus, O Maria.*

Go, fear nothing, I shall watch over you. I give to you assurance through my Son Jesus, your Brother, who made Himself your pontiff, your victim, and your intercessor. Confide yourself to Him and be without fear, because if He is seated at the right of the Father as a judge, He is at the same time the master of death and the author of life.

From all eternity begotten by the Father, He was incarnate in time in my womb, so as to come and bring Redemption to the world.

He is, therefore, the unique source of all hope, the cause of all consolation, the foundation of all victory.

Let Jesus and Mary be always present in your memory, O my son, and you will never fear the blows of the enemy.

(Soliloquy of the Soul, Chap. XXIV)

HOMILY

THE ROLE OF MARY IN THE CHURCH

I. We often repeat that Mary is the mediatrix between God and men, without considering well this role of mediatrix. The mediation of Mary is only an intervention, whereas that of Jesus is an immolation. Mary is an advocate who intercedes; Jesus is the mediator who pays.

II. But the intervention of Mary, even as advocate, is a force; a power for us, because she excels in lifting us. Our soul, thus confident, acts on our own body and exalts it. The habit of effort maintains the vigor of faith and the force of love.

III. The role of Mary in the Church is a role of inspirer of beauty, generator of charm, and creator of poetry. These words say more in the spiritual life than they signify in real life. Religions in which the cult of the Virgin does not flourish are cold religions, stripped of grace. Thus Mary is called by the Church: *Causa nostrae laetitiae*: cause of our joy.

MEDITATION

THE MERCY OF MARY

Misericordiarum Mater: the mother of mercies, such is the title which the Liturgy gives to Mary. We understand, here, by mercy, the maternal compassion or the maternal intervention of Mary in favor of men.

True mercy belongs to God alone. Only He has the right of grace and of pardon, He loves to exercise it through His Mother. The gift thus assumes more sweetness and charm.

Mary has herself received from God all the mercies, that is to say, all the graces that a creature can receive: graces of body, graces of heart, graces of soul.

O Mary, be to us a tender Mother, a sweet Mother, a Mother all merciful!

Practice: To be compassionate to all the unfortunate and often to give them alms.

Thought: Mother of mercy, pray for us! *Mater misericordiae, ora pro nobis.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MEDIATION OF MARY WITH GOD

I.

The Disciple:

Grace flows from your lips, O Mary! Ah, yes, my queen and my mother, speak, speak to my soul, you who are so gentle and so compassionate to poor sinners.

Mary:

Yes, my son, I am the Mother of mercy to the heart filled with compassion:

I am the mysterious ladder of sinners,

I am the hope and pardon of the culpable,

I am the consolation of afflicted souls,

I am the joy and the fruition of the blessed.

Come to me, all you who love me, come and you will be filled with my consolations.

Come, because I have pity on all those who pray to me: Come to me! Come everyone, just and sinners. I shall also pray to the Eternal Son, my Son, so that He will pardon each of you through the Holy Spirit.

I call to all of you, and I await all of you; I desire to see you all, everyone of you, come to me. I scorn no sinner, indeed far from that, I rejoice with the angels in heaven over one sinner who is converted and returns.

Thus bears fruit the blood of my sweet Son, offered to God for the salvation of the entire world.

Come to me, come children of men, my mother's heart protects you with God.

I shall myself bear His aroused anger, if it be necessary, and I shall appease Him until you are pardoned.

Change your ways and turn to God!

You have offended His love and His grace, but ask pardon and I shall obtain for you indulgence and peace. I have been chosen by God Himself to be mediatrix for you, between heaven and you, between the world and God.

II. The Disciple:

O word filled with grace and sweetness! O kind word heard from heaven itself, word that consoles, word that comforts; word that delights the sinner and the just, voice of a mother, voice that resounds in the heart as a gentle harmony in heaven.

How is it that this honor comes to me today, that the Mother of my Savior deigns to speak to me? Yes, you are blessed, O my Mother, and your voice is a blessing!

You have milk and honey in your voice; the perfume of your words surpasses in sweetness all the perfumes of the universe. My soul is transported at the sound of your voice, O Mary, and as soon as your gentle speech is heard my heart trembles and my whole being exults joyously, because you bring happiness to me.

I was sad and your voice reassures me, a voice so gentle that it seems to come from heaven.

I was sad and crushed in desolation, and you lift me up and comfort me.

You extend your hands to me, you touch me, and I am cured of my infirmity.

I could scarcely speak, and now I feel myself completely restored, induced to speak again and to proclaim your praises.

Life was a burden to me, and now death itself no longer makes me fearful, because I know that you are my advocate with God.

I confide myself and my cause to your tenderness, O Mother, now, in the future, and at every moment.

From the day you spoke to me, an orphan, I have been transformed into a new man, and I have felt in my soul new strength.

I was weighted down, without hope or life: at your call, O my Mother, I felt that a new courage, and a new joy were coming to lift me up.

III. Mary:

What is the matter, my child? Where are your enemies?

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DIVINE INTERVENTION OF MARY

I. The Disciple:

Happy moment when you deign, O Mary, to visit my poor saddened soul!

Do not make me wait too long for this visit, O Mother, let me hear your words of consolation.

Your words exalt me and inflame me: they warm my heart and enlighten my mind.

Happy Mother, O Mary, who alone can at all times, give to us your children the milk of consolation, as once you gave the milk of your breast to Jesus, your Son.

You do not refuse compassionate aid to the one who asks you: even more, you grant your help to those who may offend you.

O Mother of tenderness and Mother of sweetness, Mother of mercy and Mother of love! incomparable Virgin, worthy to be loved, Mother who alone merited to have as Son, the Son of God Himself, born of you!

You are at the same time Mother to all and a Mother to each one of us. You give to all and to each his part of your heart and his portion of your love.

O Virgin blessed among all virgins, Mother of Men and Queen of Angels, come, snatch from me the weight of my sins, draw me far from earth and close to you!

Infuse into my softened soul your grace, like to the life-giving dew of the sky, so that from here on earth, I may feel that you are the Mother of mercy.

II. Mary:

I am, O my son, the Mother of beautiful love, of sweet fears and of tender words, I am the Mother of true consolations.

Exult in your heart on hearing my name, bow your head and greet me: you honor the Son in honoring the Mother.

I am, my child, the Mother of Jesus, and this title is my glory for eternity.

Reflect upon what Jesus is. He is the Son of God, the Savior of all, the King of heaven and earth, He is the hope of the just and the peace of the meek. He is the strength of the weak and the way of the wanderers.

He is the support of those whom misfortune oppresses: He is the succor of those who suffer tribulation: He is the refuge of those who are of good heart.

My child, honor both the Son and the Mother, and you will be in return blessed by the Father.

You give honor and glory to Jesus each time that you honor me. Place me as a seal upon your heart and as a seal upon your acts. In all your works and in all your pleasures, in the midst of your joys and sadnesses, let the name of Jesus and the name of Mary be often on your lips and always in your heart.

III. The Disciple:

Let all peoples and tongues, let all creatures serve you, O Mary!

Let all bow before you! Let the heavens say of you: Rejoice, O Mary, throughout eternity; and let the earth respond: Rejoice for eternity and beyond.

Let all the saints proclaim your name, O Mother, your sublime name, and let all the blessed rejoice before you and before your Son, Our Lord and our eternal Master.

(Soliloquy of the Soul, Chap. XXV)

HOMILY

THE FORCE AND POWERS OF MARY

I. Force and power are prerogatives of sovereignty. But these prerogatives can never be exercised. They are for sovereigns of a hard heart and a distracted soul.

Mary is a sovereign, but also a mother. If it is so pleasing and so beautiful to see in history, queens uniting to the prestige of royalty the privilege of beauty and the charm of tenderness, what can we imagine of Mary?

II. Dominion belongs to her, as co-redemptrix of the human race, thus the Liturgy proclaims it: *exaudietur pro sua reverentia*. The exercise of this force is facilitated for her by her tenderness in regard to those who are her children, adopted in the person of St. John at Calvary.

III. The powers of Mary extend to spiritual favors, but pour forth sometimes even in corporal graces. Both are granted only to pure hearts and to souls disposed to active strivings toward heaven. The Assumption of Mary ought to be the model of our ascension toward God.

MEDITATION

INTERCESSION OF MARY

To intercede is to intervene with supplication in favor of someone, but also with the certain hope of obtaining the petition. Mary, by her title of Queen of Heaven and Mother of Men, intervenes in our favor when we ask her for her intercession.

In the beautiful Liturgical Office of the Virgin, inspired by Scripture, we say at each Psalm: *O Maria, intercede pro nobis, ad Dominum Deum nostrum*. O Mary intercede for us with Him who is your Lord and your Son, but who is our God.

We speak to God as to a Sovereign and to a Judge; but you, you speak to Him as to a Son and a Protector. We also have recourse to your intercession, O Mary, O our Mother!

Practice: A holy and salutary habit consists in carrying a rosary or wearing a medal.

Thought: Let us go to Jesus through Mary: *Ad Jesum per Mariam*.

OF THE ETERNAL ROYALTY OF LOVE

I.

Upon her head, like that of a queen, is placed a crown of twelve stars. These twelve stars on the brow of Mary are the twelve prerogatives of the Queen and of the Mother before God in heaven.

She possesses, indeed, in the Church Triumphant, surpassing all other blessed spirits, four special prerogatives: the power of listening with great goodness, of condescending with great mercy, of intervening for us with great power, and of succoring on earth with great ease.

She, has besides, in the Church Triumphant, four privileges, outstanding among all:

she is resplendent more than all others;
 she is glorified more than all others;
 she is loved more tenderly than all others;
 she is honored more fervently than all others.

Mary possesses also, in relation to the Trinity, four particular favors, which are for her like brilliant stars midst fainter stars.

Better, truly, than those who contemplate the glory of the Divine Trinity,

she contemplates fully the Divine Trinity Itself:
 she knows with greater joy its sweetness,
 she comprehends with greater profundity its mysteries,
 she tastes with greater charm its richness.

II.

Listen again, listen devoutly, to what the greatest of the servants of Mary, the doctor of gentle speech, St. Bernard, said to his Religious about the stars which form a crown on the forehead of the Virgin:

No one can estimate the importance of the jewels, no one can count the number of the gems which adorn the diadem of Mary in Heaven.

It is an undertaking above our power, that of examining the value, or of scrutinizing the composition of her brilliant aureole. We shall undertake to do so with humility.

Without wishing to penetrate the secrets of the Lord, it seems that one can see in the twelve stars the twelve prerogatives of our Mother.

We find indeed in the Virgin Mary, privileges granted to her soul, privileges infused into her heart, privileges attached to her body.

And if we multiply this number three, by the number of the four known favors, we shall find the number of twelve stars which shine on the brow of Mary, our Queen.

We find these wonders,

at her birth,
 in the salutation she received from the angel,
 in the overshadowing of her by the Holy Spirit,
 and finally in the conception of Jesus Himself.

The holy doctor goes on to enumerate the circumstances of the life of our Mother in which grace brought its favors.

III.

Let us meditate therefore, often and with piety, on the life and deeds of Mary. Let us chant hymns and canticles in her honor, on the days of her solemnities.

Come before her altar and before her image, incline your head, kneel before her, as if you were seeing Mary herself present before you.

Raise your eyes and contemplate Mary speaking with the angels, or better still, Mary holding on her knees her son Jesus:

In contemplating the Mother of Mercy, say then, with a burst of confident love:

IV. Prayer:

O most loving Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven,
Mistress of the Earth,

O you, the Joy of Saints, and the Salvation of sinners, listen to
the appeals of our repentant hearts! Listen to the desires of
our souls at prayer!

Come to the help of the poor and the infirm! Renew the cour-
age of the afflicted! Protect your children against their
enemies!

Deliver them from the snares of the devils. Lead them near to
you in blessedness in heaven, where you reign with your Son
in the midst of the elect for all eternity!

(Cloistral Discipline, Chap. XIV)

HOMILY

ROYALTY OF HEART

I. Everything is sold or bought on the earth: power, favor,
gold, conscience itself. Only the heart is not sold; it gives itself
or does not give itself, fashioned as it is with a spark of royalty.

A great orator has said: the heart is the whole of man, it is
the *raison d'être* of a woman. The heart of Mary is the greatest
of hearts, after the Heart of Jesus. Was not the Heart of Jesus
fashioned from a bit of the human heart of Mary?

II. The Heart of Jesus, united to the divinity in the person
of Christ, has transmitted by its contact with the heart of His
Mother something of Its grandeur and beauty to the heart of
Mary. Mary is therefore queen by her heart, as she is queen by
her human destiny. Her heart vibrates with more force than the
heart of any other creature. It is less sublime than the Heart of
God, but it is unique in heaven and earth.

III. Oh! how sweet it is to feel yourself near this heart which
has loved with a mother's love an Infant God, and which loves
with the same maternal love all the children of men.

MEDITATION

THE PERPETUITY OF LOVE

Love is not a simple sentiment; it is a gigantic force: women
hold a power which they do not know. Only Mary has known
what power the heart of a mother has. To know how to love, and
to love always, is an ardent life, an active life, a very short
life. Not to love is to be dead.

Love addresses itself to the spirited person who vibrates and
not to the lifeless or inactive person. Love supposes beauty, and
sometimes creates it or exalts it.

Let us love Mary! She has beauty, she has grace, she has
charm. No creature equals her; no woman surpasses her. She
comes next after God, as Dante sings.

Let us say to her then with the heavenly poet: O Mother,
O Queen, O Mary, help us to love you, help us to praise you.

You are beauty, *la beltà*, and we cannot admire you enough.
You are goodness, *la bontà*, and we cannot praise you enough.

We say to you therefore the only word worthy of you, the word sent from heaven, the word of the Archangel: Ave Maria!

Practice: Imitate the early Christians and often recite the Liturgical Office of the Holy Virgin.

Thought: O Mary, bless us and our families.

Nos cum prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria.