

# TREATISE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

## INTRODUCTION OF SAINT LOUIS MARIE

1. It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world.
2. Because Mary remained hidden during her life she is called by the Holy Spirit and the Church "Alma Mater", Mother hidden and unknown. So great was her humility that she desired nothing more upon earth than to remain unknown to herself and to others, and to be known only to God.
3. In answer to her prayers to remain hidden, poor and lowly, God was pleased to conceal her from nearly every other human creature in her conception, her birth, her life, her mysteries, her resurrection and assumption. Her own parents did not really know her; and the angels would often ask one another, "Who can she possibly be?", for God had hidden her from them, or if he did reveal anything to them, it was nothing compared with what he withheld.
4. God the Father willed that she should perform no miracle during her life, at least no public one, although he had given her the power to do so. God the Son willed that she should speak very little although he had imparted his wisdom to her. Even though Mary was his faithful spouse, God the Holy Spirit willed that his apostles and evangelists should say very little about her and then only as much as was necessary to make Jesus known.
5. Mary is the supreme masterpiece of Almighty God and he has reserved the knowledge and possession of her for himself. She is the glorious Mother of God the Son who chose to humble and conceal her during her lifetime in order to foster her humility. He called her "Woman" as if she were a stranger, although in his heart he esteemed and loved her above all men and angels. Mary is the sealed fountain and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit where only he may enter. She is the sanctuary and resting-place of the Blessed Trinity where God dwells in greater and more divine

6. I declare with the saints: Mary is the earthly paradise of Jesus Christ the new Adam, where he became man by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to accomplish in her wonders beyond our understanding. She is the vast and divine world of God where unutterable marvels and beauties are to be found. She is the magnificence of the Almighty where he hid his only Son, as in his own bosom, and with him everything that is most excellent and precious. What great and hidden things the all- powerful God has done for this wonderful creature, as she herself had to confess in spite of her great humility, "The Almighty has done great things for me." The world does not know these things because it is incapable and unworthy of knowing them.

7. The saints have said wonderful things of Mary, the holy City of God, and, as they themselves admit, they were never more eloquent and more pleased than when they spoke of her. And yet they maintain that the height of her merits rising up to the throne of the Godhead cannot be perceived; the breadth of her love which is wider than the earth cannot be measured; the greatness of the power which she wields over one who is God cannot be conceived; and the depths of her profound humility and all her virtues and graces cannot be sounded. What incomprehensible height! What indescribable breadth! What immeasurable greatness! What an impenetrable abyss!

8. Every day, from one end of the earth to the other, in the highest heaven and in the lowest abyss, all things preach, all things proclaim the wondrous Virgin Mary. The nine choirs of angels, men and women of every age, rank and religion, both good and evil, even the very devils themselves are compelled by the force of truth, willingly or unwillingly, to call her blessed. According to St. Bonaventure, all the angels in heaven unceasingly call out to her: "Holy, holy, holy Mary, Virgin Mother of God." They greet her countless times each day with the angelic greeting, "Hail, Mary", while prostrating themselves before her, begging her as a favour to honour them with one of her requests. According to St. Augustine, even St. Michael, though prince of all the heavenly court, is the most eager of all the angels to honour her and lead others to honour her. At all times he awaits the privilege of going at her word to the aid of one of her servants.

9. The whole world is filled with her glory, and this is especially true of Christian peoples, who have chosen her as guardian and protectress of kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and towns. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God in her name. There is no church without an altar dedicated to her, no country or region without at least one of her miraculous images where all kinds of afflictions are cured and all sorts of benefits

There is not a child who does not praise her by lisping a Hail Mary. There is scarcely a sinner, however hardened, who does not possess some spark of confidence in her. The very devils in hell, while fearing her, show her respect.

10. And yet in truth we must still say with the saints: *De Maria numquam satis* : We have still not praised, exalted, honoured, loved and served Mary adequately. She is worthy of even more praise, respect, love and service.

11. Moreover, we should repeat after the Holy Spirit, "All the glory of the king's daughter is within", meaning that all the external glory which heaven and earth vie with each other to give her is nothing compared to what she has received interiorly from her Creator, namely, a glory unknown to insignificant creatures like us, who cannot penetrate into the secrets of the king.

12. Finally, we must say in the words of the apostle Paul, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man understood" the beauty, the grandeur, the excellence of Mary, who is indeed a miracle of miracles of grace, nature and glory. "If you wish to understand the Mother," says a saint, "then understand the Son. She is a worthy Mother of God." *Hic taceat omnis lingua* : Here let every tongue be silent.

13. My heart has dictated with special joy all that I have written to show that Mary has been unknown up till now, and that that is one of the reasons why Jesus Christ is not known as he should be. If then, as is certain, the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ must come into the world, it can only be as a necessary consequence of the knowledge and reign of Mary. She who first gave him to the world will establish his kingdom in the world.

## PART I: TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR LADY IN GENERAL

### CHAPTER ONE NECESSITY OF DEVOTION TO OUR LADY

#### 1. Mary's part in the Incarnation

14. With the whole Church I acknowledge that Mary, being a mere creature fashioned by the hands of God is, compared to his infinite majesty, less than an atom, or rather is simply nothing, since he alone can say, "I am he who is". Consequently, this great Lord, who is ever independent and self-sufficient never had and does not now have any

15. However, I declare that, considering things as they are, because God has decided to begin and accomplish his greatest works through the Blessed Virgin ever since he created her, we can safely believe that he will not change his plan in the time to come, for he is God and therefore does not change in his thoughts or his way of acting.

16. God the Father gave his only Son to the world only through Mary. Whatever desires the patriarchs may have cherished, whatever entreaties the prophets and saints of the Old Law may have had for 4,000 years to obtain that treasure, it was Mary alone who merited it and found grace before God by the power of her prayers and the perfection of her virtues. "The world being unworthy," said Saint Augustine, "to receive the Son of God directly from the hands of the Father, he gave his Son to Mary for the world to receive him from her." The Son of God became man for our salvation but only in Mary and through Mary. God the Holy Spirit formed Jesus Christ in Mary but only after having asked her consent through one of the chief ministers of his court.

17. God the Father imparted to Mary his fruitfulness as far as a mere creature was capable of receiving it, to enable her to bring forth his Son and all the members of his mystical body.

18. God the Son came into her virginal womb as a new Adam into his earthly paradise, to take his delight there and produce hidden wonders of grace. God-made-man found freedom in imprisoning himself in her womb. He displayed power in allowing himself to be borne by this young maiden. He found his glory and that of his Father in hiding his splendours from all creatures here below and revealing them only to Mary. He glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this lovable virgin in his conception, his birth, his presentation in the temple, and in the thirty years of his hidden life. Even at his death she had to be present so that he might be united with her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father, just as formerly Isaac was offered in sacrifice by Abraham when he accepted the will of God. It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him, and sacrificed him for us. The Holy Spirit could not leave such wonderful and inconceivable dependence of God unmentioned in the Gospel, though he concealed almost all the wonderful things that Wisdom Incarnate did during his hidden life in order to bring home to us its infinite value and glory. Jesus gave more glory to God his Father by submitting to his Mother for thirty years than he would have given him had he converted the whole world by working the greatest miracles. How highly then do we glorify God when to please him we submit ourselves to Mary, taking Jesus as our sole model.

Baptist in the womb of his mother, Saint Elizabeth; no sooner had Mary spoken than John was sanctified. This was his first and greatest miracle of grace. At the wedding in Cana he changed water into wine at her humble prayer, and this was his first miracle in the order of nature. He began and continued his miracles through Mary and he will continue them through her until the end of time.

20. God the Holy Spirit, who does not produce any divine person, became fruitful through Mary whom he espoused. It was with her, in her and of her that he produced his masterpiece, God-made-man, and that he produces every day until the end of the world the members of the body of this adorable Head. For this reason the more he finds Mary his dear and inseparable spouse in a soul the more powerful and effective he becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ.

21. This does not mean that the Blessed Virgin confers on the Holy Spirit a fruitfulness which he does not already possess. Being God, he has the ability to produce just like the Father and the Son, although he does not use this power and so does not produce another divine person. But it does mean that the Holy Spirit chose to make use of our Blessed Lady, although he had no absolute need of her, in order to become actively fruitful in producing Jesus Christ and his members in her and by her. This is a mystery of grace unknown even to many of the most learned and spiritual of Christians.

## 2. Mary's part in the sanctification of souls

22. The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation, the first coming of Jesus Christ, is adhered to each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church and they will pursue it to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ.

23. God the Father gathered all the waters together and called them the seas (maria). He gathered all his graces together and called them Mary (Maria). The great God has a treasury or storehouse full of riches in which he has enclosed all that is beautiful, resplendent, rare, and precious, even his own Son. This immense treasury is none other than Mary whom the saints call the "treasury of the Lord". From her fullness all men are made rich.

24. God the Son imparted to his mother all that he gained by his life and death, namely, his infinite merits and his eminent virtues. He made her the treasurer of all his Father

abundantly.

25. God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary, his faithful spouse, and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses, so that she distributes all his gifts and graces to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills. No heavenly gift is given to men which does not pass through her virginal hands. Such indeed is the will of God, who has decreed that we should have all things through Mary, so that, making herself poor and lowly,, and hiding herself in the depths of nothingness during her whole life, she might be enriched, exalted and honoured by almighty God. Such are the views of the Church and the early Fathers.

26. Were I speaking to the so-called intellectuals of today, I would prove at great length by quoting Latin texts taken from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church all that I am now stating so simply. I could also instance solid proofs which can be read in full in Fr. Poir,'s book "The Triple Crown of the Blessed Virgin". But I am speaking mainly for the poor and simple who have more good will and faith than the common run of scholars. As they believe more simply and more meritoriously, let me merely state the truth to them quite plainly without bothering to quote Latin passages which they would not understand. Nevertheless, I shall quote some texts as they occur to my mind as I go along.

27. Since grace enhances our human nature and glory adds a still greater perfection to grace, it is certain that our Lord remains in heaven just as much the Son of Mary as he was on earth. Consequently he has retained the submissiveness and obedience of the most perfect of all children towards the best of all mothers. We must take care, however, not to consider this dependence as an abasement or imperfection in Jesus Christ. For Mary, infinitely inferior to her Son, who is God, does not command him in the same way as an earthly mother would command her child who is beneath her. Since she is completely transformed in God by that grace and glory which transforms all the saints in him, she does not ask or wish or do anything which is contrary to the eternal and changeless will of God. When therefore we read in the writings of Saint Bernard, Saint Bernardine, Saint Bonaventure, and others that all in heaven and on earth, even God himself, is subject to the Blessed Virgin, they mean that the authority which God was pleased to give her is so great that she seems to have the same power as God. Her prayers and requests are so powerful with him that he accepts them as commands in the sense that he never resists his dear mother's prayer because it is always humble and conformed to his will. Moses by the power of his prayer curbed God's anger against

of God, which is more powerful with the King of heaven than the prayers and intercession of all the angels and saints in heaven and on earth.

28. Mary has authority over the angels and the blessed in heaven. As a reward for her great humility, God gave her the power and the mission of assigning to saints the thrones made vacant by the apostate angels who fell away through pride. Such is the will of almighty God who exalts the humble, that the powers of heaven, earth and hell, willingly or unwillingly, must obey the commands of the humble Virgin Mary. For God has made her queen of heaven and earth, leader of his armies, keeper of his treasures, dispenser of his graces, worker of his wonders, restorer of the human race, mediatrix on behalf of men, destroyer of his enemies, and faithful associate in his great works and triumphs.

29. God the Father wishes Mary to be the mother of his children until the end of time and so he says to her, "Dwell in Jacob", that is to say, take up your abode permanently in my children, in my holy ones represented by Jacob, and not in the children of the devil and sinners represented by Esau.

30. Just as in natural and bodily generation there is a father and a mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there is a father who is God and a mother who is Mary. All true children of God have God for their father and Mary for their mother; anyone who does not have Mary for his mother, does not have God for his father. This is why the reprobate, such as heretics and schismatics, who hate, despise or ignore the Blessed Virgin, do not have God for their father though they arrogantly claim they have, because they do not have Mary for their mother. Indeed if they had her for their mother they would love and honour her as good and true children naturally love and honour the mother who gave them life. An infallible and unmistakable sign by which we can distinguish a heretic, a man of false doctrine, an enemy of God, from one of God's true friends is that the heretic and the hardened sinner show nothing but contempt and indifference for our Lady. He endeavours by word and example, openly or insidiously - sometimes under specious pretexts - to belittle the love and veneration shown to her. God the Father has not told Mary to dwell in them because they are, alas, other Esaus.

31. God the Son wishes to form himself, and, in a manner of speaking, become incarnate every day in his members through his dear Mother. To her he said: "Take Israel for your inheritance." It is as if he said, God the Father has given me as heritage

predestinate represented by Israel. As their loving mother, you will give them birth, feed them and rear them. As their queen, you will lead, govern and defend them.

32. "This one and that one were born in her." According to the explanation of some of the Fathers, the first man born of Mary is the God-man, Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ, the head of mankind, is born of her, the predestinate, who are members of this head, must also as a necessary consequence be born of her. One and the same mother does not give birth to the head without the members nor to the members without the head, for these would be monsters in the order of nature. In the order of grace likewise the head and the members are born of the same mother. If a member of the mystical body of Christ, that is, one of the predestinate, were born of a mother other than Mary who gave birth to the head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but a monster in the order of grace.

33. Moreover, Jesus is still as much as ever the fruit of Mary, as heaven and earth repeat thousands of times a day: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." It is therefore certain that Jesus is the fruit and gift of Mary for every single man who possesses him, just as truly as he is for all mankind. Consequently, if any of the faithful have Jesus formed in their heart they can boldly say, "It is thanks to Mary that what I possess is Jesus her fruit, and without her I would not have him." We can attribute more truly to her what Saint Paul said of himself, "I am in labour again with all the children of God until Jesus Christ, my Son, is formed in them to the fullness of his age." Saint Augustine, surpassing himself as well as all that I have said so far, affirms that in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God all the predestinate, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just. This is indeed a mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate and little known even to the predestinate!

34. God the Holy Spirit wishes to fashion his chosen ones in and through Mary. He tells her, "My well-beloved, my spouse, let all your virtues take root in my chosen ones that they may grow from strength to strength and from grace to grace. When you were living on earth, practising the most sublime virtues, I was so pleased with you that I still desire to find you on earth without your ceasing to be in heaven. Reproduce yourself then in my chosen ones, so that I may have the joy of seeing in them the roots of your invincible faith, profound humility, total mortification, sublime prayer, ardent charity,

35. When Mary has taken root in a soul she produces in it wonders of grace which only she can produce; for she alone is the fruitful virgin who never had and never will have her equal in purity and fruitfulness. Together with the Holy Spirit Mary produced the greatest thing that ever was or ever will be: a God-man. She will consequently produce the marvels which will be seen in the latter times. The formation and the education of the great saints who will come at the end of the world are reserved to her, for only this singular and wondrous virgin can produce in union with the Holy Spirit singular and wondrous things.

36. When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it. He gives himself generously to that soul according to the place it has given to his spouse. One of the main reasons why the Holy Spirit does not work striking wonders in souls is that he fails to find in them a sufficiently close union with his faithful and inseparable spouse. I say "inseparable spouse", for from the moment the substantial love of the Father and the Son espoused Mary to form Jesus, the head of the elect, and Jesus in the elect, he has never disowned her, for she has always been faithful and fruitful.

### 3. Consequences

37. We must obviously conclude from what I have just said: First, that Mary received from God a far-reaching dominion over the souls of the elect. Otherwise she could not make her dwelling-place in them as God the Father has ordered her to do, and she could not conceive them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother. She could not have them for her inheritance and her possession and form them in Jesus and Jesus in them. She could not implant in their heart the roots of her virtues, nor be the inseparable associate of the Holy Spirit in all these works of grace. None of these things, I repeat, could she do unless she had received from the Almighty rights and authority over their souls. For God, having given her power over his only-begotten and natural Son, also gave her power over his adopted children - not only in what concerns their body - which would be of little account - but also in what concerns their soul.

38. Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace as Jesus is king by nature and by conquest. But as the kingdom of Jesus Christ exists primarily in the heart or interior of man, according to the words of the Gospel, "The kingdom of God is within you", so

39. Secondly, we must conclude that, being necessary to God by a necessity which is called "hypothetical", (that is, because God so willed it), the Blessed Virgin is all the more necessary for men to attain their final end. Consequently we must not place devotion to her on the same level as devotion to the other saints as if it were merely something optional.

40. The pious and learned Jesuit, Suarez, Justus Lipsius, a devout and erudite theologian of Louvain, and many others have proved incontestably that devotion to our Blessed Lady is necessary to attain salvation. This they show from the teaching of the Fathers, notably St. Augustine, St. Ephrem, deacon of Edessa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. John Demascene, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure. Even according to Oecolampadius and other heretics, lack of esteem and love for the Virgin Mary is an infallible sign of God's disapproval. On the other hand, to be entirely and genuinely devoted to her is a sure sign of God's approval.

41. The types and texts of the Old and New Testaments prove the truth of this, the opinions and examples of the saints confirm it, and reason and experience teach and demonstrate it. Even the devil and his followers, forced by the evidence of the truth, were frequently obliged against their will to admit it. For brevity's sake, I shall quote one only of the many passages which I have collected from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church to support this truth. "Devotion to you, O Blessed Virgin, is a means of salvation which God gives to those whom he wishes to save" (St. John Damascene).

42. I could tell many stories in evidence of what I have just said. (1) One is recorded in the chronicles of St. Francis. The saint saw in ecstasy an immense ladder reaching to heaven, at the top of which stood the Blessed Virgin. This is the ladder, he was told, by which we must all go to heaven. (2) There is another related in the Chronicles of St. Dominic. Near Carcassonne, where St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary, there was an unfortunate heretic who was possessed by a multitude of devils. These evil spirits to their confusion were compelled at the command of our Lady to confess many great and consoling truths concerning devotion to her. They did this so clearly and forcibly that, however weak our devotion to our Lady may be, we cannot read this authentic story containing such an unwilling tribute paid by the devils to devotion to our Lady without shedding tears of joy.

43. If devotion to the Blessed Virgin is necessary for all men simply to work out their

absolute dependence on her support.

44. Mary alone found grace before God without the help of any other creature. All those who have since found grace before God have found it only through her. She was full of grace when she was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel and was filled with grace to overflowing by the Holy Spirit when he so mysteriously overshadowed her. From day to day, from moment to moment, she increased so much this twofold plenitude that she attained an immense and inconceivable degree of grace. So much so, that the Almighty made her the sole custodian of his treasures and the sole dispenser of his graces. She can now ennoble, exalt and enrich all she chooses. She can lead them along the narrow path to heaven and guide them through the narrow gate to life. She can give a royal throne, sceptre and crown to whom she wishes. Jesus is always and everywhere the fruit and Son of Mary and Mary is everywhere the genuine tree that bears that Fruit of life, the true Mother who bears that Son.

45. To Mary alone God gave the keys of the cellars of divine love and the ability to enter the most sublime and secret ways of perfection, and lead others along them. Mary alone gives to the unfortunate children of unfaithful Eve entry into that earthly paradise where they may walk pleasantly with God and be safely hidden from their enemies. There they can feed without fear of death on the delicious fruit of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They can drink copiously the heavenly waters of that beautiful fountain which gushes forth in such abundance. As she is herself the earthly paradise, that virgin and blessed land from which sinful Adam and Eve were expelled she lets only those whom she chooses enter her domain in order to make them saints.

46. All the rich among the people, to use an expression of the Holy Spirit as explained by St. Bernard, all the rich among the people will look pleadingly upon her countenance throughout all ages and particularly as the world draws to its end. This means that the greatest saints, those richest in grace and virtue will be the most assiduous in praying to the most Blessed Virgin, looking up to her as the perfect model to imitate and as a powerful helper to assist them.

47. I said that this will happen especially towards the end of the world, and indeed soon, because Almighty God and his holy Mother are to raise up great saints who will surpass in holiness most other saints as much as the cedars of Lebanon tower above little shrubs. This has been revealed to a holy soul whose life has been written by M. de

God who are raging on all sides. They will be exceptionally devoted to the Blessed Virgin. Illumined by her light, strengthened by her food, guided by her spirit, supported by her arm, sheltered under her protection, they will fight with one hand and build with the other. With one hand they will give battle, overthrowing and crushing heretics and their heresies, schismatics and their schisms, idolaters and their idolatries, sinners and their wickedness. With the other hand they will build the temple of the true Solomon and the mystical city of God, namely, the Blessed Virgin, who is called by the Fathers of the Church the Temple of Solomon and the City of God . By word and example they will draw all men to a true devotion to her and though this will make many enemies, it will also bring about many victories and much glory to God alone. This is what God revealed to St. Vincent Ferrer, that outstanding apostle of his day, as he has amply shown in one of his works. This seems to have been foretold by the Holy Spirit in Psalm 58: "The Lord will reign in Jacob and all the ends of the earth. They will be converted towards evening and they will be as hungry as dogs and they will go around the city to find something to eat." This city around which men will roam at the end of the world seeking conversion and the appeasement of the hunger they have for justice is the most Blessed Virgin, who is called by the Holy Spirit the City of God .

#### 4. Mary's part in the latter times

49. The salvation of the world began through Mary and through her it must be accomplished. Mary scarcely appeared in the first coming of Jesus Christ so that men, as yet insufficiently instructed and enlightened concerning the person of her Son, might not wander from the truth by becoming too strongly attached to her. This would apparently have happened if she had been known, on account of the wondrous charms with which Almighty God had endowed even her outward appearance. So true is this that St. Denis the Areopagite tells us in his writings that when he saw her he would have taken her for a goddess, because of her incomparable beauty, had not his well-grounded faith taught him otherwise. But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary must be known and openly revealed by the Holy Spirit so that Jesus may be known, loved and served through her. The reasons which moved the Holy Spirit to hide his spouse during her life and to reveal but very little of her since the first preaching of the gospel exist no longer.

1) God wishes to make Mary better known in the latter times.

50. God wishes therefore to reveal Mary, his masterpiece, and make her more known

God's masterpiece of glory in heaven, but also his masterpiece of grace on earth, he wishes to be glorified and praised because of her by those living upon earth. (3) Since she is the dawn which precedes and discloses the Sun of Justice Jesus Christ, she must be known and acknowledged so that Jesus may be known and acknowledged. (4) As she was the way by which Jesus first came to us, she will again be the way by which he will come to us the second time though not in the same manner. (5) Since she is the sure means, the direct and immaculate way to Jesus and the perfect guide to him, it is through her that souls who are to shine forth in sanctity must find him. He who finds Mary finds life, that is, Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. But no one can find Mary who does not look for her. No one can look for her who does not know her, for no one seeks or desires something unknown. Mary then must be better known than ever for the deeper understanding and the greater glory of the Blessed Trinity. (6) In these latter times Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, power and grace; in mercy, to bring back and welcome lovingly the poor sinners and wanderers who are to be converted and return to the Catholic Church; in power, to combat the enemies of God who will rise up menacingly to seduce and crush by promises and threats all those who oppose them; finally, she must shine forth in grace to inspire and support the valiant soldiers and loyal servants of Jesus Christ who are fighting for his cause. (7) Lastly, Mary must become as terrible as an army in battle array to the devil and his followers, especially in these latter times. For Satan, knowing that he has little time - even less now than ever - to destroy souls, intensifies his efforts and his onslaughts every day. He will not hesitate to stir up savage persecutions and set treacherous snares for Mary's faithful servants and children whom he finds more difficult to overcome than others.

51. It is chiefly in reference to these last wicked persecutions of the devil, daily increasing until the advent of the reign of anti-Christ, that we should understand that first and well-known prophecy and curse of God uttered against the serpent in the garden of paradise. It is opportune to explain it here for the glory of the Blessed Virgin, the salvation of her children and the confusion of the devil. "I will place enmities between you and the woman, between your race and her race; she will crush your head and you will lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15).

52. God has established only one enmity - but it is an irreconcilable one - which will last and even go on increasing to the end of time. That enmity is between Mary, his worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and followers of Lucifer. Thus the most fearful enemy that

such power to defeat, overthrow and crush this proud rebel, that Satan fears her not only more than angels and men but in a certain sense more than God himself. This does not mean that the anger, hatred and power of God are not infinitely greater than the Blessed Virgin's, since her attributes are limited. It simply means that Satan, being so proud, suffers infinitely more in being vanquished and punished by a lowly and humble servant of God, for her humility humiliates him more than the power of God. Moreover, God has given Mary such great power over the evil spirits that, as they have often been forced unwillingly to admit through the lips of possessed persons, they fear one of her pleadings for a soul more than the prayers of all the saints, and one of her threats more than all their other torments.

53. What Lucifer lost by pride Mary won by humility. What Eve ruined and lost by disobedience Mary saved by obedience. By obeying the serpent, Eve ruined her children as well as herself and delivered them up to him. Mary by her perfect fidelity to God saved her children with herself and consecrated them to his divine majesty.

54. God has established not just one enmity but "enmities", and not only between Mary and Satan but between her race and his race. That is, God has put enmities, antipathies and hatreds between the true children and servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and slaves of the devil. They have no love and no sympathy for each other. The children of Belial, the slaves of Satan, the friends of the world, - for they are all one and the same - have always persecuted and will persecute more than ever in the future those who belong to the Blessed Virgin, just as Cain of old persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob. These are the types of the wicked and of the just. But the humble Mary will always triumph over Satan, the proud one, and so great will be her victory that she will crush his head, the very seat of his pride. She will unmask his serpent's cunning and expose his wicked plots. She will scatter to the winds his devilish plans and to the end of time will keep her faithful servants safe from his cruel claws. But Mary's power over the evil spirits will especially shine forth in the latter times, when Satan will lie in wait for her heel, that is, for her humble servants and her poor children whom she will rouse to fight against him. In the eyes of the world they will be little and poor and, like the heel, lowly in the eyes of all, down-trodden and crushed as is the heel by the other parts of the body. But in compensation for this they will be rich in God's graces, which will be abundantly bestowed on them by Mary. They will be great and exalted before God in holiness. They will be superior to all creatures by their great zeal and so strongly will they be supported by divine assistance that, in union with Mary, they will crush the head of Satan with their heel, that is, their

55. Finally, God in these times wishes his Blessed Mother to be more known, loved and honoured than she has ever been. This will certainly come about if the elect, by the grace and light of the Holy Spirit, adopt the interior and perfect practice of the devotion which I shall later unfold. Then they will clearly see that beautiful Star of the Sea, as much as faith allows. Under her guidance they will perceive the splendours of this Queen and will consecrate themselves entirely to her service as subjects and slaves of love. They will experience her motherly kindness and affection for her children. They will love her tenderly and will appreciate how full of compassion she is and how much they stand in need of her help. In all circumstances they will have recourse to her as their advocate and mediatrix with Jesus Christ. They will see clearly that she is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus and will surrender themselves to her, body and soul, without reserve in order to belong entirely to Jesus.

56. But what will they be like, these servants, these slaves, these children of Mary? They will be ministers of the Lord who, like a flaming fire, will enkindle everywhere the fires of divine love. They will become, in Mary's powerful hands, like sharp arrows, with which she will transfix her enemies. They will be as the children of Levi, thoroughly purified by the fire of great tribulations and closely joined to God. They will carry the gold of love in their heart, the frankincense of prayer in their mind and the myrrh of mortification in their body. They will bring to the poor and lowly everywhere the sweet fragrance of Jesus, but they will bring the odour of death to the great, the rich and the proud of this world.

57. They will be like thunder-clouds flying through the air at the slightest breath of the Holy Spirit. Attached to nothing, surprised at nothing, troubled at nothing, they will shower down the rain of God's word and of eternal life. They will thunder against sin, they will storm against the world, they will strike down the devil and his followers and for life and for death, they will pierce through and through with the two-edged sword of God's word all those against whom they are sent by Almighty God.

58. They will be true apostles of the latter times to whom the Lord of Hosts will give eloquence and strength to work wonders and carry off glorious spoils from his enemies. They will sleep without gold or silver and, more important still, without concern in the midst of other priests, ecclesiastics and clerics. Yet they will have the silver wings of the dove enabling them to go wherever the Holy Spirit calls them, filled as they are with the resolve to seek the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

59. Lastly, we know they will be true disciples of Jesus Christ, imitating his poverty, his humility, his contempt of the world and his love. They will point out the narrow way to God in pure truth according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world. Their hearts will not be troubled, nor will they show favour to anyone; they will not spare or heed or fear any man, however powerful he may be. They will have the two-edged sword of the word of God in their mouths and the blood-stained standard of the Cross on their shoulders. They will carry the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left, and the holy names of Jesus and Mary on their heart. The simplicity and self-sacrifice of Jesus will be reflected in their whole behaviour. Such are the great men who are to come. By the will of God Mary is to prepare them to extend his rule over the impious and unbelievers. But when and how will this come about? Only God knows. For our part we must yearn and wait for it in silence and in prayer: "I have waited and waited."

## CHAPTER TWO IN WHAT DEVOTION TO MARY CONSISTS

### 1. Basic principles of devotion to Mary

60. Having spoken briefly of the necessity of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, I must now explain what this devotion consists in. This I will do with God's help after I have laid down certain basic truths which throw light on the remarkable and sound devotion which I propose to unfold.

First principle: Christ must be the ultimate end of all devotions

61. Jesus, our Saviour, true God and true man must be the ultimate end of all our other devotions; otherwise they would be false and misleading. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of everything. "We labour," says St. Paul, "only to make all men perfect in Jesus Christ." For in him alone dwells the entire fullness of the divinity and the complete fullness of grace, virtue and perfection. In him alone we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; he is the only teacher from whom we must learn; the only Lord on whom we should depend; the only Head to whom we should be united and the only model that we should imitate. He is the only Physician that can heal us; the only Shepherd that can feed us; the only Way that can lead us; the only Truth that we can believe; the only Life that can animate us. He alone is everything to us and he alone can satisfy all our desires. We are given no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. God has laid no other foundation for our salvation,

falls and withers and is fit only to be burnt. If we live in Jesus and Jesus lives in us, we need not fear damnation. Neither angels in heaven nor men on earth, nor devils in hell, no creature whatever can harm us, for no creature can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Through him, with him and in him, we can do all things and render all honour and glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit; we can make ourselves perfect and be for our neighbour a fragrance of eternal life.

62. If then we are establishing sound devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ. If devotion to our Lady distracted us from our Lord, we would have to reject it as an illusion of the devil. But this is far from being the case. As I have already shown and will show again later on, this devotion is necessary, simply and solely because it is a way of reaching Jesus perfectly, loving him tenderly, and serving him faithfully.

63. Here I turn to you for a moment, dear Jesus, to complain lovingly to your divine Majesty that the majority of Christians, and even some of the most learned among them, do not recognise the necessary bond that unites you and your Blessed Mother. Lord, you are always with Mary and Mary is always with you. She can never be without you because then she would cease to be what she is. She is so completely transformed into you by grace that she no longer lives, she no longer exists, because you alone, dear Jesus, live and reign in her more perfectly than in all the angels and saints. If we only knew the glory and the love given to you by this wonderful creature, our feelings for you and for her would be far different from those we have now. So intimately is she united to you that it would be easier to separate light from the sun, and heat from the fire. I go further, it would even be easier to separate all the angels and saints from you than Mary; for she loves you ardently, and glorifies you more perfectly than all your other creatures put together.

64. In view of this, my dear Master, is it not astonishing and pitiful to see the ignorance and short-sightedness of men with regard to your holy Mother? I am not speaking so much of idolaters and pagans who do not know you and consequently have no knowledge of her. I am not even speaking of heretics and schismatics who have left you and your holy Church and therefore are not interested in your holy Mother. I am speaking of Catholics, and even of educated Catholics, who profess to teach the faith to others but do not know you or your Mother except speculatively, in a dry, cold and sterile way. These people seldom speak of your Mother or devotion to her. They say

her. When he speaks of devotion to her as a sure means of finding and loving you without fear or illusion, or when he says this devotion is a short road free from danger, or an immaculate way free from imperfection, or a wondrous secret of finding you, they put before him a thousand specious reasons to show him how wrong he is to speak so much of Mary. There are, they say, great abuses in this devotion which we should try to stamp out and we should refer people to you rather than exhort them to have devotion to your Mother, whom they already love adequately. If they are sometimes heard speaking of devotion to your Mother, it is not for the purpose of promoting it or convincing people of it but only to destroy the abuses made of it. Yet all the while these persons are devoid of piety or genuine devotion to you, for they have no devotion to Mary. They consider the Rosary and the Scapular as devotions suitable only for simple women or ignorant people. After all, they say, we do not need them to be saved. If they come across one who loves our Lady, who says the rosary or shows any devotion towards her, they soon move him to a change of mind and heart. They advise him to say the seven penitential psalms instead of the Rosary, and to show devotion to Jesus instead of to Mary. Dear Jesus, do these people possess your spirit? Do they please you by acting in this way? Would it please you if we were to make no effort to give pleasure to your Mother because we are afraid of offending you? Does devotion to your holy Mother hinder devotion to you? Does Mary keep for herself any honour we pay her? Is she a rival of yours? Is she a stranger having no kinship with you? Does pleasing her imply displeasing you? Does the gift of oneself to her constitute a deprivation for you? Is love for her a lessening of our love for you?

65. Nevertheless, my dear Master, the majority of learned scholars could not be further from devotion to your Mother, or show more indifference to it even if all I have just said were true. Keep me from their way of thinking and acting and let me share your feelings of gratitude, esteem, respect and love for your holy Mother. I can then love and glorify you all the more, because I will be imitating and following you more closely.

66. As though I had said nothing so far to further her honour, grant me now the grace to praise her more worthily, in spite of all her enemies who are also yours. I can then say to them boldly with the saints, "Let no one presume to expect mercy from God, who offends his holy Mother."

67. So that I may obtain from your mercy a genuine devotion to your blessed Mother and spread it throughout the whole world, help me to love you wholeheartedly, and for this intention accept the earnest prayer I offer with St. Augustine and all who truly love

O Jesus Christ, you are my Father, my merciful God, my great King, my good Shepherd, my only Master, my best helper, my beloved friend of overwhelming beauty, my living Bread, my eternal priest. You are my guide to my heavenly home, my one true light, my holy joy, my true way, my shining wisdom, my unfeigned simplicity, the peace and harmony of my soul, my perfect safeguard, my bounteous inheritance, my everlasting salvation. My loving Lord, Jesus Christ, why have I ever loved or desired anything else in my life but you, my God? Where was I when I was not in communion with you? From now on, I direct all my desires to be inspired by you and centred on you. I direct them to press forward for they have tarried long enough, to hasten towards their goal, to seek the one they yearn for. O Jesus, let him who does not love you be accursed, and filled with bitterness. O gentle Jesus, let every worthy feeling of mine show you love, take delight in you and admire you. O God of my heart and my inheritance, Christ Jesus, may my heart mellow before the influence of your spirit and may you live in me. May the flame of your love burn in my soul. May it burn incessantly on the altar of my heart. May it glow in my innermost being. May it spread its heat into the hidden recesses of my soul and on the day of my consummation may I appear before you consumed in your love. Amen.

Second principle: We belong to Jesus and Mary as their slaves

68. From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says, that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves, for he bought us at an infinite price - the shedding of his Precious Blood. Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, but baptism made us in very truth slaves of Jesus. We must therefore live, work and die for the sole purpose of bringing forth fruit for him, glorifying him in our body and letting him reign in our soul. We are his conquest, the people he has won, his heritage. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit compares us: 1) to trees that are planted along the waters of grace in the field of the Church and which must bear their fruit when the time comes; 2) to branches of the vine of which Jesus is the stem, which must yield good grapes; 3) to a flock of sheep of which Jesus is the Shepherd, which must increase and give milk; 4) to good soil cultivated by God, where the seed will spread and produce crops up to thirty-fold, sixty-fold, or a hundred-fold. Our Lord cursed the barren fig-tree and condemned the slothful servant who wasted his talent. All this proves that he wishes to receive some fruit from our wretched selves, namely, our good works, which by right belong to him alone, "created in Jesus Christ for good works". These words of the Holy Spirit show that Jesus is the

69. There are two ways of belonging to another person and being subject to his authority. One is by ordinary service and the other is by slavery. And so we must use the terms "servant" and "slave". Ordinary service in Christian countries is when a man is employed to serve another for a certain length of time at a wage which is fixed or agreed upon. When a man is totally dependent on another for life, and must serve his master without expecting any wages or recompense, when he is treated just like a beast of the field over which the owner has the right of life and death, then it is slavery.

70. Now there are three kinds of slavery; natural slavery, enforced slavery, and voluntary slavery. All creatures are slaves of God in the first sense, for "the earth and its fullness belong to the Lord". The devils and the damned are slaves in the second sense. The saints in heaven and the just on earth are slaves in the third sense. Voluntary slavery is the most perfect of all three states, for by it we give the greatest glory to God, who looks into the heart and wants it to be given to him. Is he not indeed called the God of the heart or of the loving will? For by this slavery we freely choose God and his service before all things, even if we were not by our very nature obliged to do so.

71. There is a world of difference between a servant and a slave. 1) A servant does not give his employer all he is, all he has, and all he can acquire by himself or through others. A slave, however, gives himself to his master completely and exclusively with all he has and all he can acquire. 2) A servant demands wages for the services rendered to his employer. A slave, on the other hand, can expect nothing, no matter what skill, attention or energy he may have put into his work. 3) A servant can leave his employer whenever he pleases, or at least when the term of his service expires, whereas the slave has no such right. 4) An employer has no right of life and death over a servant. Were he to kill him as he would a beast of burden, he would commit murder. But the master of a slave has by law the right of life and death over him, so that he can sell him to anyone he chooses or - if you will pardon the comparison - kill him as he would kill his horse. 5) Finally, a servant is in his employer's service only for a time; a slave for always.

72. No other human state involves belonging more completely to another than slavery. Among Christian peoples, nothing makes a person belong more completely to Jesus and his holy Mother than voluntary slavery. Our Lord himself gave us the example of this when out of love for us he "took the form of a slave". Our Lady gave us the same example when she called herself the handmaid or slave of the Lord. The Apostle considered it an honour to be called "slave of Christ". Several times in Holy Scripture,

no doubt about our being slaves of Jesus Christ, using the unequivocal term "Mancipia Christi", which plainly means: slaves of Christ.

73. Granting this, I say that we must belong to Jesus and serve him not just as hired servants but as willing slaves who, moved by generous love, commit themselves to his service after the manner of slaves for the honour of belonging to him. Before we were baptised we were the slaves of the devil, but baptism made us the slaves of Jesus. Christians can only be slaves of the devil or slaves of Christ.

74. What I say in an absolute sense of our Lord, I say in a relative sense of our Blessed Lady. Jesus, in choosing her as his inseparable associate in his life, glory and power in heaven and on earth, has given her by grace in his kingdom all the same rights and privileges that he possesses by nature. "All that belongs to God by nature belongs to Mary by grace", say the saints, and, according to them, just as Jesus and Mary have the same will and the same power, they have also the same subjects, servants and slaves.

75. Following therefore the teaching of the saints and of many great men we can call ourselves, and become, the loving slaves of our Blessed Lady in order to become more perfect slaves of Jesus. Mary is the means our Lord chose to come to us and she is also the means we should choose to go to him, for she is not like other creatures who tend rather to lead us away from God than towards him, if we are over-attached to them. Mary's strongest inclination is to unite us to Jesus, her Son, and her Son's strongest wish is that we come to him through his Blessed Mother. He is pleased and honoured just as a king would be pleased and honoured if a citizen, wanting to become a better subject and slave of the king, made himself the slave of the queen. That is why the Fathers of the Church, and St. Bonaventure after them, assert that the Blessed Virgin is the way which leads to our Lord.

76. Moreover, if, as I have said, the Blessed Virgin is the Queen and Sovereign of heaven and earth, does she not then have as many subjects and slaves as there are creatures? "All things, including Mary herself, are subject to the power of God. All things, God included, are subject to the Virgin's power", so we are told by St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine and St. Bonaventure. Is it not reasonable to find that among so many slaves there should be some slaves of love, who freely choose Mary as their Queen? Should men and demons have willing slaves, and Mary have none? A king makes it a point of honour that the queen, his consort, should have her own slaves, over whom she has right of life and death, for honour and power given to the queen is

Esther, or Solomon for Bathsheba? Who could say or even think such a thing?

77. But where is my pen leading me? Why am I wasting my time proving something so obvious? If people are unwilling to call themselves slaves of Mary, what does it matter? Let them become and call themselves slaves of Jesus Christ, for this is the same as being slaves of Mary, since Jesus is the fruit and glory of Mary. This is what we do perfectly in the devotion we shall discuss later.

Third principle: We must rid ourselves of what is evil in us

78. Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us. When pure, clear water is poured into a foul-smelling jug, or wine into an unwashed cask that previously contained another wine, the clear water and the good wine are tainted and readily acquire an unpleasant odour. In the same way when God pours into our soul, infected by original and actual sin, the heavenly waters of his grace or the delicious wines of his love, his gifts are usually spoiled and tainted by the evil sediment left in us by sin. Our actions, even those of the highest virtue, show the effects of it. It is therefore of the utmost importance that, in seeking the perfection that can be attained only by union with Jesus, we rid ourselves of all that is evil in us. Otherwise our infinitely pure Lord, who has an infinite hatred for the slightest stain in our soul, will refuse to unite us to himself and will drive us from his presence.

79. To rid ourselves of selfishness, we must first become thoroughly aware, by the light of the Holy Spirit, of our tainted nature. Of ourselves we are unable to do anything conducive to our salvation. Our human weakness is evident in everything we do and we are habitually unreliable. We do not deserve any grace from God. Our tendency to sin is always present. The sin of Adam has almost entirely spoiled and soured us, filling us with pride and corrupting every one of us, just as leaven sours, swells and corrupts the dough in which it is placed. The actual sins we have committed, whether mortal or venial, even though forgiven, have intensified our base desires, our weakness, our inconstancy and our evil tendencies, and have left a sediment of evil in our soul. Our bodies are so corrupt that they are referred to by the Holy Spirit as bodies of sin, as conceived and nourished in sin, and capable of any kind of sin. They are subject to a thousand ills, deteriorating from day to day and harbouring only disease, vermin and corruption. Our soul, being united to our body, has become so carnal that it has been called flesh. "All flesh had corrupted its way". Pride and blindness of spirit, hardness of heart, weakness and inconstancy of soul, evil inclinations, rebellious passions, ailments

weaker than reeds, and more changeable than weather-cocks. We have in us nothing but sin, and deserve only the wrath of God and the eternity of hell.

80. Is it any wonder then that our Lord laid down that anyone who aspires to be his follower must deny himself and hate his very life? He makes it clear that anyone who loves his life shall lose it and anyone who hates his life shall save it. Now, our Lord, who is infinite Wisdom, and does not give commandments without a reason, bids us hate ourselves only because we richly deserve to be hated. Nothing is more worthy of love than God and nothing is more deserving of hatred than self.

81. Secondly, in order to empty ourselves of self, we must die daily to ourselves. This involves our renouncing what the powers of the soul and the senses of the body incline us to do. We must see as if we did not see, hear as if we did not hear and use the things of this world as if we did not use them. This is what St. Paul calls "dying daily". Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain and does not bear any good fruit. If we do not die to self and if our holiest devotions do not lead us to this necessary and fruitful death, we shall not bear fruit of any worth and our devotions will cease to be profitable. All our good works will be tainted by self-love and self-will so that our greatest sacrifices and our best actions will be unacceptable to God. Consequently when we come to die we shall find ourselves devoid of virtue and merit and discover that we do not possess even one spark of that pure love which God shares only with those who have died to themselves and whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in him.

82. Thirdly, we must choose among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin the one which will lead us more surely to this dying to self. This devotion will be the best and the most sanctifying for us. For we must not believe that all that glitters is gold, all that is sweet is honey, or all that is easy to do and is done by the majority of people is the most sanctifying. Just as in nature there are secrets enabling us to do certain natural things quickly, easily and at little cost, so in the spiritual life there are secrets which enable us to perform works rapidly, smoothly and with facility. Such works are, for example, emptying ourselves of self-love, filling ourselves with God, and attaining perfection. The devotion that I propose to explain is one of these secrets of grace, for it is unknown to most Christians. Only a few devout people know of it and it is practised and appreciated by fewer still. To begin the explanation of this devotion here is a fourth truth which is a consequence of the third.

mediator rather than directly by ourselves. Our human nature, as I have just shown, is so spoilt that if we rely on our own work, effort and preparedness to reach God and please him, it is certain that our good works will be tainted and carry little weight with him. They will not induce him to unite himself to us or answer our prayers. God had his reasons for giving us mediators with him. He saw our unworthiness and helplessness and had pity on us. To give us access to his mercies he provided us with powerful advocates, so that to neglect these mediators and to approach his infinite holiness directly and without help from any one of them, is to be lacking in humility and respect towards God who is so great and holy. It would mean that we have less esteem for the King of kings than for an earthly king or ruler, for we would not dare approach an earthly king without a friend to speak for us.

84. Our Lord is our Advocate and our Mediator of redemption with God the Father. It is through him that we must pray with the whole Church, triumphant and militant. It is through him that we have access to God the Father. We should never appear before God, our Father, unless we are supported by the merits of his Son, and, so to speak, clothed in them, as young Jacob was clothed in the skin of the young goats when he appeared before his father Isaac to receive his blessing.

85. But have we no need at all of a mediator with the Mediator himself? Are we pure enough to be united directly to Christ without any help? Is Jesus not God, equal in every way to the Father? Therefore is he not the Holy of Holies, having a right to the same respect as his Father? If in his infinite love he became our security and our Mediator with his Father, whom he wished to appease in order to redeem us from our debts, should we on that account show him less respect and have less regard for the majesty and holiness of his person? Let us not be afraid to say with St. Bernard that we need a mediator with the Mediator himself and the divinely-honoured Mary is the one most able to fulfil this office of love. Through her, Jesus came to us; through her we should go to him. If we are afraid of going directly to Jesus, who is God, because of his infinite greatness, or our lowliness, or our sins, let us implore without fear the help and intercession of Mary, our Mother. She is kind, she is tender, and there is nothing harsh or forbidding about her, nothing too sublime or too brilliant. When we see her, we see our own human nature at its purest. She is not the sun, dazzling our weak sight by the brightness of its rays. Rather, she is fair and gentle as the moon, which receives its light from the sun and softens it and adapts it to our limited perception. She is so full of love that no one who asks for her intercession is rejected, no matter how sinful he may be. The saints say that it has never been known since the world began that anyone had

conquered by the prayers of the dear Mother who bore him and nourished him.

86. All this is taken from St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure. According to them, we have three steps to take in order to reach God. The first, nearest to us and most suited to our capacity, is Mary; the second is Jesus Christ; the third is God the Father. To go to Jesus, we should go to Mary, our mediatrix of intercession. To go to God the Father, we must go to Jesus, our Mediator of redemption. This order is perfectly observed in the devotion I shall speak about further on.

Fifth principle: It is difficult to keep the graces received from God

87. It is very difficult, considering our weakness and frailty, to keep the graces and treasures we have received from God. 1. We carry this treasure, which is worth more than heaven and earth, in fragile vessels, that is, in a corruptible body and in a weak and wavering soul which requires very little to depress and disturb it.

88. 2. The evil spirits, cunning thieves that they are, can take us by surprise and rob us of all we possess. They are watching day and night for the right moment. They roam incessantly seeking to devour us and to snatch from us in one brief moment of sin all the grace and merit we have taken years to acquire. Their malice and their experience, their cunning and their numbers ought to make us ever fearful of such a misfortune happening to us. People, richer in grace and virtue, more experienced and advanced in holiness than we are, have been caught off their guard and robbed and stripped of everything. How many cedars of Lebanon, how many stars of the firmament have we sadly watched fall and lose in a short time their loftiness and their brightness! What has brought about this unexpected reverse? Not the lack of grace, for this is denied no one. It was a lack of humility; they considered themselves stronger and more self-sufficient than they really were. They thought themselves well able to hold on to their treasures. They believed their house secure enough and their coffers strong enough to safeguard their precious treasure of grace. It was because of their unconscious reliance on self - although it seemed to them that they were relying solely on the grace of God - that the most just Lord left them to themselves and allowed them to be despoiled. If they had only known of the wonderful devotion that I shall later explain, they would have entrusted their treasure to Mary, the powerful and faithful Virgin. She would have kept it for them as if it were her own possession and even have considered that trust an obligation of justice.

miracle for anyone to stand firm in the midst of this raging torrent and not be swept away; to weather this stormy sea and not be drowned, or robbed by pirates; to breathe this pestilential air and not be contaminated by it. It is Mary, the singularly faithful Virgin over whom Satan had never any power, who works this miracle for those who truly love her.

## 2. Marks of false and authentic devotion to Mary

90. Now that we have established these five basic truths, it is all the more necessary to make the right choice of the true devotion to our Blessed Lady, for now more than ever there are false devotions to her which can easily be mistaken for true ones. The devil, like a counterfeiter and crafty, experienced deceiver, has already misled and ruined many Christians by means of fraudulent devotions to our Lady. Day by day he uses his diabolical experience to lead many more to their doom, fooling them, lulling them to sleep in sin and assuring them that a few prayers, even badly said, and a few exterior practices, inspired by himself, are authentic devotions. A counterfeiter usually makes coins only of gold and silver, rarely of other metals, because these latter would not be worth the trouble. Similarly, the devil leaves other devotions alone and counterfeits mostly those directed to Jesus and Mary, for example, devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin, because these are to other devotions what gold and silver are to other metals.

91. It is therefore very important, first, to recognise false devotions to our Blessed Lady so as to avoid them, and to recognise true devotion in order to practise it. Second, among so many different forms of true devotion to our Blessed Lady we should choose the one most perfect and the most pleasing to her, the one that gives greater glory to God and is most sanctifying for us.

### 1. False devotion to our Lady

92. There are, I find, seven kinds of false devotion to Mary, namely, the devotion of (1) the critical, (2) the scrupulous, (3) the superficial, (4) the presumptuous, (5) the inconstant, (6) the hypocritical, (7) the self-interested.

#### Critical devotees

93. Critical devotees are for the most part proud scholars, people of independent and

appeal to them. They question all miracles and stories which testify to the mercy and power of the Blessed Virgin, even those recorded by trustworthy authors or taken from the chronicles of religious orders. They cannot bear to see simple and humble people on their knees before an altar or statue of our Lady, or at prayer before some outdoor shrine. They even accuse them of idolatry as if they were adoring the wood or the stone. They say that as far as they are concerned they do not care for such outward display of devotion and that they are not so gullible as to believe all the fairy tales and stories told of our Blessed Lady. When you tell them how admirably the Fathers of the Church praised our Lady, they reply that the Fathers were exaggerating as orators do, or that their words are misrepresented. These false devotees, these proud worldly people are greatly to be feared. They do untold harm to devotion to our Lady. While pretending to correct abuses, they succeed only too well in turning people away from this devotion.

### Scrupulous devotees

94. Scrupulous devotees are those who imagine they are slighting the Son by honouring the Mother. They fear that by exalting Mary they are belittling Jesus. They cannot bear to see people giving to our Lady the praises due to her and which the Fathers of the Church have lavished upon her. It annoys them to see more people kneeling before Mary's altar than before the Blessed Sacrament, as if these acts were at variance with each other, or as if those who were praying to our Lady were not praying through her to Jesus. They do not want us to speak too often of her or to pray so often to her. Here are some of the things they say: "What is the good of all these rosaries, confraternities and exterior devotions to our Lady? There is a great deal of ignorance in all this. It is making a mockery of religion. Tell us about those who are devoted to Jesus (and they often pronounce his name without uncovering their heads). We should go directly to Jesus, since he is our sole Mediator. We must preach Jesus; that is sound devotion." There is some truth in what they say, but the inference they draw to prevent devotion to our Lady is very insidious. It is a subtle snare of the evil one under the pretext of promoting a greater good. For we never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour his Mother, and we honour her simply and solely to honour him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek - Jesus, her Son.

95. The Church, with the Holy Spirit, blesses our Lady first, then Jesus, "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Not that Mary is greater than Jesus, or even equal to him - that would be an intolerable heresy. But in

## Superficial devotees

96. Superficial devotees are people whose entire devotion to our Lady consists in exterior practices. Only the externals of devotion appeal to them because they have no interior spirit. They say many rosaries with great haste and assist at many Masses distractedly. They take part in processions of our Lady without inner fervour. They join her confraternities without reforming their lives or restraining their passions or imitating Mary's virtues. All that appeals to them is the emotional aspect of this devotion, but the substance of it has no appeal at all. If they do not feel a warmth in their devotions, they think they are doing nothing; they become upset, and give up everything, or else do things only when they feel like it. The world is full of these shallow devotees, and there are none more critical of men of prayer who regard the interior devotion as the essential aspect and strive to acquire it without, however, neglecting a reasonable external expression which always accompanies true devotion.

## Presumptuous devotees

97. Presumptuous devotees are sinners who give full rein to their passions or their love of the world, and who, under the fair name of Christian and servant of our Lady, conceal pride, avarice, lust, drunkenness, anger, swearing, slandering, injustice and other vices. They sleep peacefully in their wicked habits, without making any great effort to correct them, believing that their devotion to our Lady gives them this sort of liberty. They convince themselves that God will forgive them, that they will not die without confession, that they will not be lost for all eternity. They take all this for granted because they say the Rosary, fast on Saturdays, are enrolled in the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary or the Scapular, or a sodality of our Lady, wear the medal or the little chain of our Lady. When you tell them that such a devotion is only an illusion of the devil and a dangerous presumption which may well ruin them, they refuse to believe you. God is good and merciful, they reply, and he has not made us to damn us. No man is without sin. We will not die without confession, and a good act of contrition at death is all that is needed. Moreover, they say they have devotion to our Lady; that they wear the scapular; that they recite faithfully and humbly every day the seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys in her honour; that sometimes they even say the Rosary and the Office of our Lady, as well as fasting and performing other good works. Blinding themselves still more, they quote stories they have heard or read - whether true or false does not bother them - which relate how people who had died in

supposed to have obtained from God at the moment of death, through the merciful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, sorrow and pardon for their sins, and so were saved. Accordingly, these people expect the same thing to happen to them.

98. Nothing in our Christian religion is so deserving of condemnation as this diabolical presumption. How can we truthfully claim to love and honour the Blessed Virgin when by our sins we pitilessly wound, pierce, crucify and outrage her Son? If Mary made it a rule to save by her mercy this sort of person, she would be condoning wickedness and helping to outrage and crucify her Son. Who would even dare to think of such a thing?

99. I declare that such an abuse of devotion to her is a horrible sacrilege and, next to an unworthy Communion, is the greatest and the least pardonable sin, because devotion to our Lady is the holiest and best after devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. I admit that to be truly devoted to our Lady, it is not absolutely necessary to be so holy as to avoid all sin, although this is desirable. But at least it is necessary (note what I am going to say), (1) to be genuinely determined to avoid at least all mortal sin, which outrages the Mother as well as the Son; (2) to practise self-restraint in order to avoid sin; (3) to join her confraternities, say the Rosary and other prayers, fast on Saturdays, and so on.

100. Such means are surprisingly effective in converting even the hardened sinner. Should you be such a sinner, with one foot in the abyss, I advise you to do as I have said. But there is an essential condition. You must perform these good works solely to obtain from God, through the intercession of our Lady, the grace to regret your sins, obtain pardon for them and overcome your evil habits, and not to live complacently in the state of sin, disregarding the warning voice of conscience, the example of our Lord and the saints, and the teaching of the holy gospel.

### Inconstant devotees

101. Inconstant devotees are those whose devotion to our Lady is practised in fits and starts. Sometimes they are fervent and sometimes they are lukewarm. Sometimes they appear ready to do anything to please our Lady, and then shortly afterwards they have completely changed. They start by embracing every devotion to our Lady. They join her confraternities, but they do not faithfully observe the rules. They are as changeable as the moon, and like the moon Mary puts them under her feet. Because of their fickleness they are unworthy to be included among the servants of the Virgin most faithful, because faithfulness and constancy are the hallmarks of Mary's servants. It is

## Hypocritical devotees

102. There is another category of false devotees of our Lady, - hypocritical ones. These hide their sins and evil habits under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin so as to appear to their fellow-men different from what they are.

## Self-interested devotees

103. Then there are the self-interested devotees who turn to her only to win a court-case, to escape some danger, to be cured of some ailment, or have some similar need satisfied. Except when in need they never think of her. Such people are acceptable neither to God nor to his Mother.

104. We must, then, carefully avoid joining the critical devotees, who believe nothing and find fault with everything; the scrupulous ones who, out of respect for our Lord, are afraid of having too much devotion to his Mother; the exterior devotees whose devotion consists entirely in outward practices; the presumptuous devotees who under cover of a fictitious devotion to our Lady wallow in their sins; the inconstant devotees who, being unstable, change their devotional practices or abandon them altogether at the slightest temptation; the hypocritical ones who join confraternities and wear emblems of our Lady only to be thought of as good people; finally, the self-interested devotees who pray to our Lady only to be rid of bodily ills or to obtain material benefits.

## 2. Marks of authentic devotion to our Lady

105. After having explained and condemned false devotions to the Blessed Virgin we shall now briefly describe what true devotion is. It is interior, trustful, holy, constant and disinterested.

106. First, true devotion to our Lady is interior, that is, it comes from within the mind and the heart and follows from the esteem in which we hold her, the high regard we have for her greatness, and the love we bear her.

107. Second, it is trustful, that is to say, it fills us with confidence in the Blessed Virgin, the confidence that a child has for its loving Mother. It prompts us to go to her in

when we are tempted, to be strengthened when we are weakening, to be lifted up when we fall into sin, to be encouraged when we are losing heart, to be rid of our scruples, to be consoled in the trials, crosses and disappointments of life. Finally, in all our afflictions of body and soul, we naturally turn to Mary for help, with never a fear of importuning her or displeasing our Lord.

108. Third, true devotion to our Lady is holy, that is, it leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary. Her ten principal virtues are: deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness, and heavenly wisdom.

109. Fourth, true devotion to our Lady is constant. It strengthens us in our desire to do good and prevents us from giving up our devotional practices too easily. It gives us the courage to oppose the fashions and maxims of the world, the vexations and unruly inclinations of the flesh and the temptations of the devil. Thus a person truly devoted to our Blessed Lady is not changeable, fretful, scrupulous or timid. We do not say however that such a person never sins or that his sensible feelings of devotion never change. When he has fallen, he stretches out his hand to his Blessed Mother and rises again. If he loses all taste and feeling for devotion, he is not at all upset because a good and faithful servant of Mary is guided in his life by faith in Jesus and Mary, and not by feelings.

110. Fifth, true devotion to Mary is disinterested. It inspires us to seek God alone in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves. The true subject of Mary does not serve his illustrious Queen for selfish gain. He does not serve her for temporal or eternal well-being but simply and solely because she has the right to be served and God alone in her. He loves her not so much because she is good to him or because he expects something from her, but simply because she is lovable. That is why he loves and serves her just as faithfully in weariness and dryness of soul as in sweet and sensible fervour. He loves her as much on Calvary as at Cana. How pleasing and precious in the sight of God and his holy Mother must these servants of Mary be, who serve her without any self-seeking. How rare they are nowadays! It is to increase their number that I have taken up my pen to write down what I have been teaching with success both publicly and in private in my missions for many years.

111. I have already said many things about the Blessed Virgin and, as I am trying to fashion a true servant of Mary and a true disciple of Jesus, I have still a great deal to

112. But my labour will be well rewarded if this little book falls into the hands of a noble soul, a child of God and of Mary, born not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man. My time will be well spent if, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, after having read this book he is convinced of the supreme value of the solid devotion to Mary I am about to describe. If I thought that my guilty blood could help the reader to accept in his heart the truths that I set down in honour of my dear Mother and Queen, I, her most unworthy child and slave, would use it instead of ink to write these words. I would hope to find faithful souls who, by their perseverance in the devotion I teach, will repay her for the loss she has suffered through my ingratitude and infidelity.

113. I feel more than ever inspired to believe and expect the complete fulfilment of the desire that is deeply engraved on my heart and what I have prayed to God for over many years, namely, that in the near or distant future the Blessed Virgin will have more children, servants and slaves of love than ever before, and that through them Jesus, my dear Lord, will reign more than ever in the hearts of men.

114. I clearly foresee that raging beasts will come in fury to tear to pieces with their diabolical teeth this little book and the one the Holy Spirit made use of to write it, or they will cause it at least to lie hidden in the darkness and silence of a chest and so prevent it from seeing the light of day. They will even attack and persecute those who read it and put into practice what it contains. But no matter! So much the better! It even gives me encouragement to hope for great success at the prospect of a mighty legion of brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary, both men and women, who will fight the devil, the world, and corrupt nature in the perilous times that are sure to come. "Let the reader understand. Let him accept this teaching who can."

### 3. Principal practices of devotion to Mary

115. There are several interior practices of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Here briefly are the main ones: (1) Honouring her, as the worthy Mother of God, by the cult of hyperdulia, that is, esteeming and honouring her more than all the other saints as the masterpiece of grace and the foremost in holiness after Jesus Christ, true God and true man. (2) Meditating on her virtues, her privileges and her actions. (3) Contemplating her sublime dignity. (4) Offering to her acts of love, praise and gratitude. (5) Invoking her with a joyful heart. (6) Offering ourselves to her and uniting ourselves to her. (7) Doing everything to please her. (8) Beginning, carrying out and completing our actions through her, in her, with her, and for her in order to do them through Jesus, in Jesus,

principal ones: (1) Enrolling in her confraternities and joining her sodalities. (2) Joining religious orders dedicated to her. (3) Making her privileges known and appreciated. (4) Giving alms, fasting, performing interior and exterior acts of self-denial in her honour. (5) Carrying such signs of devotion to her as the rosary, the scapular, or a little chain. (6) Reciting with attention, devotion and reverence the fifteen decades of the Rosary in honour of the fifteen principal mysteries of our Lord, or at least five decades in honour of the Joyful mysteries - the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of our Lord, the Purification, the Finding of the Child Jesus in the temple; or the Sorrowful mysteries: the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion; or the Glorious mysteries: The Resurrection of our Lord, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Assumption of our Lady, body and soul, into heaven, the Crowning of Mary by the Blessed Trinity. One may also choose any of the following prayers: the Rosary of six or seven decades in honour of the years our Lady is believed to have spent on earth; the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin in honour of her crown of twelve stars or privileges; the Little Office of our Lady so widely accepted and recited in the Church; the Little Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, composed in her honour by St. Bonaventure, which is so heart-warming, and so devotional that you cannot recite it without being moved by it; the fourteen Our Fathers and Hail Marys in honour of her fourteen joys. There are various other prayers and hymns of the Church, such as, the hymns of the liturgical seasons, the Ave Maris Stella, the O Gloriosa Domina ; the Magnificat and other prayers which are found in all prayer-books. (7) Singing hymns to her or teaching others to sing them. (8) Genuflecting or bowing to her each morning while saying for example sixty or a hundred times, "Hail Mary, Virgin most faithful", so that through her intercession with God we may faithfully correspond with his graces throughout the day; and in the evening saying "Hail Mary, Mother of Mercy", asking her to obtain God's pardon for the sins we have committed during the day. (9) Taking charge of her confraternities, decorating her altars, crowning and adorning her statues. (10) Carrying her statues or having others carry them in procession, or keeping a small one on one's person as an effective protection against the evil one. (11) Having statues made of her, or her name engraved and placed on the walls of churches or houses and on the gates and entrances of towns, churches and houses. (12) Solemnly giving oneself to her by a special consecration.

117. The Holy Spirit has inspired saintly souls with other practices of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, all of which are conducive to holiness. You can read of them in detail in "Paradise opened to Philagia", a collection of many devotions practised by

alone, seeking union with Jesus, our last end, and giving edification to our neighbour. (2) With attention, avoiding wilful distractions. (3) With devotion, avoiding haste and negligence. (4) With decorum and respectful bodily posture.

#### 4. The Perfect Practice

118. Having read nearly every book on devotion to the Blessed Virgin and talked to the most saintly and learned people of the day, I can now state with conviction that I have never known or heard of any devotion to our Lady which is comparable to the one I am going to speak of. No other devotion calls for more sacrifices for God, none empties us more completely of self and self-love, none keeps us more firmly in the grace of God and the grace of God in us. No other devotion unites us more perfectly and more easily to Jesus. Finally no devotion gives more glory to God, is more sanctifying for ourselves or more helpful to our neighbour.

119. As this devotion essentially consists in a state of soul, it will not be understood in the same way by everyone. Some - the great majority - will stop short at the threshold and go no further. Others - not many - will take but one step into its interior. Who will take a second step? Who will take a third? Finally who will remain in it permanently? Only the one to whom the Spirit of Jesus reveals the secret. The Holy Spirit himself will lead this faithful soul from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from light to light, until at length he attains transformation into Jesus in the fullness of his age on earth and of his glory in heaven.



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