

CHAPTER SIX - WONDERFUL EFFECTS OF THIS DEVOTION

213. My dear friend, be sure that if you remain faithful to the interior and exterior practices of this devotion which I will point out, the following effects will be produced in your soul:

Knowledge of our unworthiness

By the light which the Holy Spirit will give you through Mary, his faithful spouse, you will perceive the evil inclinations of your fallen nature and how incapable you are of any good apart from that which God produces in you as Author of nature and of grace. As a consequence of this knowledge you will despise yourself and think of yourself only as an object of repugnance. You will consider yourself as a snail that soils everything with its slime, as a toad that poisons everything with its venom, as a malevolent serpent seeking only to deceive. Finally, the humble Virgin Mary will share her humility with you so that, although you regard yourself with distaste and desire to be disregarded by others, you will not look down slightly upon anyone.

A share in Mary's faith

214. Mary will share her faith with you. Her faith on earth was stronger than that of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and saints. Now that she is reigning in heaven she no

longer has this faith, since she sees everything clearly in God by the light of glory. However, with the consent of almighty God she did not lose it when entering heaven. She has preserved it for her faithful servants in the Church militant. Therefore the more you gain the friendship of this noble Queen and faithful Virgin the more you will be inspired by faith in your daily life. It will cause you to depend less upon sensible and extraordinary feelings. For it is a lively faith animated by love enabling you to do everything from no other motive than that of pure love. It is a firm faith, unshakable as a rock, prompting you to remain firm and steadfast in the midst of storms and tempests. It is an active and probing faith which like some mysterious pass-key admits you into the mysteries of Jesus Christ and of man's final destiny and into the very heart of God himself. It is a courageous faith which inspires you to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and the salvation of souls. Lastly, this faith will be your flaming torch, your very life with God, your secret fund of divine Wisdom, and an all-powerful weapon for you to enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. It inflames those who are lukewarm and need the gold of fervent love. It restores life to those who are dead through sin. It moves and transforms hearts of marble and cedars of Lebanon by gentle and convincing argument. Finally, this faith will strengthen you to resist the devil and the other enemies of salvation.

The gift of pure love

215. The Mother of fair love will rid your heart of all scruples and inordinate servile fear. She will open and enlarge it to obey the commandments of her Son with alacrity and with the holy freedom of the children of God. She will fill your heart with pure love of which she is the treasury. You will then cease to act as you did before, out of fear of the God who is love, but rather out of pure love. You will look upon him as a loving Father and Endeavour to please him at all times. You will speak trustfully to him as a child does to its father. If you should have the misfortune to offend him you will abase yourself before him and humbly beg his pardon. You will offer your hand to him with simplicity and lovingly rise from your sin. Then, peaceful and relaxed and buoyed up with hope you will continue on your way to him.

Great confidence in God and in Mary

216. Our Blessed Lady will fill you with unbounded confidence in God and in herself:

1) Because you will no longer approach Jesus by yourself but always through Mary, your loving Mother.

2) Since you have given her all your merits, graces and satisfactions to dispose of as she pleases, she imparts to you her own virtues and clothes you in her own merits. So you will be able to say confidently to God: "Behold Mary, your handmaid, be it done unto me according to your word."

3) Since you have now given yourself completely to Mary, body and soul, she, who is generous to the generous, and more generous than even the kindest benefactor, will in return give herself to you in a marvelous but real manner. Indeed you may without hesitation say to her, "I am yours, O Blessed Virgin, obtain salvation for me," or with the beloved disciple, St. John, "I have taken you, Blessed Mother, for my all." Or again you may say with St. Bonaventure, "Dear Mother of saving grace, I will do everything with confidence and without fear because you are my strength and my boast in the Lord," or in another place, "I am all yours and all that I have is yours, O glorious Virgin, blessed above all created things. Let me place you as a seal upon my heart, for your love is as strong as death." Or adopting the sentiments of the prophet, "Lord, my heart has no reason to be exalted nor should my looks be proud; I have not sought things of great moment nor wonders beyond my reach; nevertheless, I am still not humble. But I have roused my soul and taken courage. I am as a child, weaned from earthly pleasures and resting on its mother's breast. It is upon this breast that all good things come to me."

4) What will still further increase your confidence in her is that, after having given her in trust all that you possess to use or keep as she pleases, you will place less trust in yourself and much more in her whom you have made your treasury. How comforting and how consoling when a person can say, "The treasury of God, where he has placed all that he holds most precious, is also my treasury." "She is," says a saintly man, "the treasury of the Lord."

Communication of the spirit of Mary

217. The soul of Mary will be communicated to you to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will take the place of yours to rejoice in God, her Savior, but only if you are faithful to the practices of this devotion. As St. Ambrose says, "May the soul of Mary be in each one of us to glorify the Lord! May the spirit of Mary be in each one of us to rejoice in God!" "When will that happy day come," asks a saintly man of our own day whose life was completely wrapped up in Mary, "when God's Mother is enthroned in men's hearts as Queen, subjecting them to the dominion of her great and princely Son? When will souls breathe Mary as the body breathes air?" When that time comes wonderful things will happen on earth. The Holy Spirit, finding his dear Spouse present again in souls, will come down into them with great power. He will fill them with his gifts, especially wisdom, by which they will produce wonders of grace. My dear friend, when will that happy time come, that age of Mary, when many souls, chosen by Mary and given her by the most High God, will hide themselves completely in the depths of her soul, becoming living copies of her, loving and glorifying Jesus? That day will dawn only when the devotion I teach is understood and put into practice. Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariae: "Lord, that your kingdom may come, may the reign of Mary come!"

Transformation into the likeness of Jesus

218. If Mary, the Tree of Life, is well cultivated in our soul by fidelity to this devotion, she will in due time bring forth her fruit which is none other than Jesus. I have seen many devout souls searching for Jesus in one way or another, and so often when they have worked hard throughout the night, all they can say is, "Despite our having worked all night, we have caught nothing." To them we can say, "You have worked hard and gained little; Jesus can only be recognized faintly in you." But if we follow the immaculate path of Mary, living the devotion that I teach, we will always work in daylight, we will work in a holy place, and we will work but little. There is no darkness in Mary, not even the slightest shadow since there was never any sin in her. She is a holy place, a holy of holies, in which saints are formed and molded.

219. Please note that I say that saints are molded in Mary. There is a vast difference between carving a statue by blows of hammer and chisel and making a statue by using a mould. Sculptors and statue-makers work hard and need plenty of time

to make statues by the first method. But the second method does not involve much work and takes very little time. St. Augustine speaking to our Blessed Lady says, "You are worthy to be called the mould of God." Mary is a mould capable of forming people into the image of the God-man. Anyone who is cast into this divine mould is quickly shaped and molded into Jesus and Jesus into him. At little cost and in a short time he will become Christ-like since he is cast into the very same mould that fashioned a God-man.

220. I think I can very well compare some spiritual directors and devout persons to sculptors who wish to produce Jesus in themselves and in others by methods other than this. Many of them rely on their own skill, ingenuity and art and chip away endlessly with mallet and chisel at hard stone or badly-prepared wood, in an effort to produce a likeness of our Lord. At times, they do not manage to produce a recognizable likeness either because they lack knowledge and experience of the person of Jesus or because a clumsy stroke has spoiled the whole work. But those who accept this little-known secret of grace which I offer them can rightly be compared to smelters and molders who have discovered the beautiful mould of Mary where Jesus was so divinely and so naturally formed. They do not rely on their own skill but on the perfection of the mould. They cast and lose themselves in Mary where they become true models of her Son.

221. You may think this a beautiful and convincing comparison. But how many understand it? I would like you, my dear friend, to understand it. But remember that only molten and liquefied substances may be poured into a mould. That means that you must crush and melt down the old Adam in you if you wish to acquire the likeness of the new Adam in Mary.

The greater glory of Christ

222. If you live this devotion sincerely, you will give more glory to Jesus in a month than in many years of a more demanding devotion. Here are my reasons for saying this:

(1) Since you do everything through the Blessed Virgin as required by this devotion, you naturally lay aside your own intentions no matter how good they appear to you. You abandon yourself to our Lady's intentions even though you do not know what they are. Thus you share in the high quality of her intentions, which are so pure that she gave more glory to God by the smallest of her actions, say, twirling her distaff, or making a stitch, than did St. Laurence suffering his cruel martyrdom on the grid-iron, and even more than all the saints together in all their most heroic deeds! Mary amassed such a multitude of merits and graces during her sojourn on earth that it would be easier to count the stars in heaven, the drops of water in the ocean or the sands of the sea-shore than count her merits and graces. She thus gave more glory to God than all the angels and

saints have given or will ever give him. Mary, wonder of God, when souls abandon themselves to you, you cannot but work wonders in them!

223. (2) In this devotion we set no store on our own thoughts and actions but are content to rely on Mary's dispositions when approaching and even speaking to Jesus. We then act with far greater humility than others who imperceptibly rely on their own dispositions and are self-satisfied about them; and consequently we give greater glory to God, for perfect glory is given to him only by the lowly and humble of heart.

224. (3) Our Blessed Lady, in her immense love for us, is eager to receive into her virginal hands the gift of our actions, imparting to them a marvelous beauty and splendor, and presenting them herself to Jesus most willingly. More glory is given to our Lord in this way than when we make our offering with our own guilty hands.

225. (4) Lastly, you never think of Mary without Mary thinking of God for you. You never praise or honor Mary without Mary joining you in praising and honoring God. Mary is entirely relative to God. Indeed I would say that she was relative only to God, because she exists uniquely in reference to him.

She is an echo of God, speaking and repeating only God. If you say "Mary" she says "God". When St. Elizabeth praised Mary calling her blessed because she had believed, Mary, the faithful echo of God, responded with her canticle, "My soul glorifies the Lord." What Mary did on that day, she does every day. When we praise her, when we love and honor her, when we present anything to her, then God is praised, honored and loved and receives our gift through Mary and in Mary.

CHAPTER SEVEN - PARTICULAR PRACTICES OF THIS DEVOTION

Exterior Practices

226. Although this devotion is essentially an interior one, this does not prevent it from having exterior practices which should not be neglected. "These must be done but those not omitted." If properly performed, exterior acts help to foster interior ones. Man is always guided by his senses and such practices remind him of what he has done or should do. Let no worldling or critic intervene to assert that true devotion is essentially in the heart and therefore externals should be avoided as inspiring vanity, or that real devotion should be hidden and private. I answer in the words of our Lord, "Let men see your good works that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven." As St. Gregory says, this does not mean that they should perform external actions to please men or seek praise; that certainly would be vanity. It simply means that we do these things before men only to please and glorify God without worrying about either the contempt or the approval of men.

I shall briefly mention some practices which I call exterior, not because they are performed without inner attention but because they have an exterior element as distinct from those which are purely interior.

Preparation and Consecration

227. Those who desire to take up this special devotion, (which has not been erected into a confraternity, although this would be desirable), should spend at least twelve days in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus, as I have recommended in the first part of this preparation for the reign of Jesus Christ. They should then spend three weeks imbuing themselves with the spirit of Jesus through the most Blessed Virgin. Here is a program they might follow:

228. During the first week they should offer up all their prayers and acts of devotion to acquire knowledge of themselves and sorrow for their sins.

Let them perform all their actions in a spirit of humility. With this end in view they may, if they wish, meditate on what I have said concerning our corrupted nature, and consider themselves during six days of the week as nothing but sails, slugs, toads, swine, snakes and goats. Or else they may meditate on the following three considerations of St. Bernard: "Remember what you were - corrupted seed; what you are - a body destined for decay; what you will be - food for worms."

They will ask our Lord and the Holy Spirit to enlighten them saying, "Lord, that I may see," or "Lord, let me know myself," or the "Come, Holy Spirit". Every day they should say the Litany of the Holy Spirit, with the prayer that follows, as

indicated in the first part of this work. They will turn to our Blessed Lady and beg her to obtain for them that great grace which is the foundation of all others, the grace of self-knowledge. For this intention they will say each day the Ave Maris Stella and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

229. Each day of the second week they should Endeavour in all their prayers and works to acquire an understanding of the Blessed Virgin and ask the Holy Spirit for this grace. They may read and meditate upon what we have already said about her. They should recite daily the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the Ave Maris Stella as during the first week. In addition they will say at least five decades of the Rosary for greater understanding of Mary.

230. During the third week they should seek to understand Jesus Christ better. They may read and meditate on what we have already said about him. They may say the prayer of St. Augustine which they will find at the beginning of the second part of this book. Again with St. Augustine, they may pray repeatedly, "Lord, that I may know you," or "Lord, that I may see." As during the previous week, they should recite the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the Ave Maris Stella, adding every day the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.

231. At the end of these three weeks they should go to confession and Holy Communion with the intention of consecrating themselves to Jesus through Mary as slaves of love. When receiving Holy Communion they could follow the method given later on. They then recite the act of consecration which is given at the end of this book. If they do not have a printed copy of the act, they should write it out or have it copied and then sign it on the very day they make it.

232. It would be very becoming if on that day they offered some tribute to Jesus and his Mother, either as a penance for past unfaithfulness to the promises made in baptism or as a sign of their submission to the sovereignty of Jesus and Mary. Such a tribute would be in accordance with each one's ability and fervor and may take the form of fasting, an act of self-denial, the gift of an alms or the offering of a votive candle. If they gave only a pin as a token of their homage, provided it were given with a good heart, it would satisfy Jesus who considers only the good intention.

233. Every year at least, on the same date, they should renew the consecration following the same exercises for three weeks. They might also renew it every month or even every day by saying this short prayer: "I am all yours and all I have is yours, O dear Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother."

The Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin

234. If it is not too inconvenient, they should recite every day of their lives the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, which is composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys in honor of the twelve glorious privileges of Mary. This prayer

is very old and is based on Holy Scripture. St. John saw in a vision a woman crowned with twelve stars, clothed with the sun and standing upon the moon. According to biblical commentators, this woman is the Blessed Virgin.

235. There are several ways of saying the Little Crown but it would take too long to explain them here. The Holy Spirit will teach them to those who live this devotion conscientiously. However, here is a simple way to recite it. As an introduction say: "Virgin most holy, accept my praise; give me strength to fight your foes", then say the Creed. Next, say the following sequence of prayers three times: one Our Father, four Hail Marys and one Glory be to the Father. In conclusion say the prayer Sub tuum - "We fly to thy patronage".

The Wearing of Little Chains

236. It is very praiseworthy and helpful for those who have become slaves of Jesus in Mary to wear, in token of their slavery of love, a little chain blessed with a special blessing.

It is perfectly true, these external tokens are not essential and may very well be dispensed with by those who have made this consecration. Nevertheless, I cannot help but give the warmest approval to those who wear them. They show they have shaken off the shameful chains of the slavery of the devil, in which original sin and perhaps actual sin had bound them, and have willingly taken upon themselves the glorious slavery of Jesus Christ. Like St. Paul, they glory in the chains they wear for Christ. For though these chains are made only of iron they are far more glorious and precious than all the gold ornaments worn by monarchs.

237. At one time, nothing was considered more contemptible than the Cross. Now this sacred wood has become the most glorious symbol of the

Christian faith. Similarly, nothing was more ignoble in the sight of the ancients, and even today nothing is more degrading among unbelievers than the chains of Jesus Christ. But among Christians nothing is more glorious than these chains, because by them Christians are liberated and kept free from the ignoble shackles of sin and the devil. Thus set free, we are bound to Jesus and Mary not by compulsion and force like galley-slaves, but by charity and love as children are to their parents. "I shall draw them to me by chains of love" said God Most High speaking through the prophet. Consequently, these chains are as strong as death, and in a way stronger than death, for those who wear them faithfully till the end of their life. For though death destroys and corrupts their body, it will not destroy the chains of their slavery, since these, being of metal, will not easily corrupt. It may be that on the day of their resurrection, that momentous day of final judgment, these chains, still clinging to their bones, will contribute to their glorification and be transformed into chains of light and splendor. Happy then, a

thousand times happy, are the illustrious slaves of Jesus in Mary who bear their chains even to the grave.

238. Here are the reasons for wearing these chains:

(a) They remind a Christian of the promises of his baptism and the perfect renewal of these commitments made in his consecration. They remind him of his strict obligation to adhere faithfully to them. A man's actions are prompted more frequently by his senses than by pure faith and so he can easily forget his duties towards God if he has no external reminder of them. These little chains are a wonderful aid in recalling the bonds of sin and the slavery of the devil from which baptism has freed him. At the same time, they remind him of the dependence on Jesus promised at baptism and ratified when by consecration he renewed these promises. Why is it that so many Christians do not think of their baptismal vows and behave with as much license as unbelievers who have promised nothing to God? One explanation is that they do not wear external sign to remind them of these vows.

239. (b) These chains prove they are not ashamed of being the servants and slaves of Jesus and that they reject the deadly bondage of the world, of sin and of the devil.

(c) They are a guarantee and protection against enslavement by sin and the devil. For we must of necessity choose to wear either the chains of sin and damnation or the chains of love and salvation.

240. Dear friend, break the chains of sin and of sinners, of the world and the worldly, of the devil and his satellites. "Cast their yoke of death far from us." To use the words of the Holy Spirit, let us put our feet into his glorious shackles and our neck into his chains. Let us bow down our shoulders in submission to the yoke of Wisdom incarnate, Jesus Christ, and let us not be upset by the burden of his chains. Notice how before saying these words the Holy Spirit prepares us to accept his serious advice, "Hearken, my son," he says, "receive a counsel of understanding and do not spurn this counsel of mine."

241. Allow me here, my dear friend, to join the Holy Spirit in giving you the same counsel, "These chains are the chains of salvation". As our Lord on the cross draws all men to himself, whether they will it or not, he will draw sinners by the fetters of their sins and submit them like galley-slaves and devils to his eternal anger and avenging justice. But he will draw the just, especially in these latter days, by the chains of love.

242. These loving slaves of Christ may wear their chains around the neck, on their arms, round the waist or round the ankles. Fr. Vincent Caraffa, seventh General of the Society of Jesus, who died a holy death in 1643, carried an iron band round his ankles as a symbol of his holy servitude and he used to say that

his greatest regret was that he could not drag a chain around in public. Mother Agnes of Jesus, of whom we have already spoken, wore a chain around her waist. Others have worn it round the neck, in atonement for the pearl necklaces they wore in the world. Others have worn chains round their arms to remind them, as they worked with their hands, that they are the slaves of Jesus.

Honoring the mystery of the Incarnation

243. Loving slaves of Jesus in Mary should hold in high esteem devotion to Jesus, the Word of God, in the great mystery of the Incarnation, March 25th, which is the mystery proper to this devotion, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the following reasons:

(a) That we might honor and imitate the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary, for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything.

(b) That we might thank God for the incomparable graces he has conferred upon Mary and especially that of choosing her to be his most worthy Mother. This choice was made in the mystery of the Incarnation. These are the two principal ends of the slavery of Jesus in Mary.

244. Please note that I usually say "slave of Jesus in Mary", "slavery of Jesus in Mary". We might indeed say, as some have already been saying, "slave of Mary", "slavery of Mary". But I think it preferable to say, "slave of Jesus in Mary". This is the opinion of Fr. Tronson, Superior General of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, a man renowned for his exceptional prudence and remarkable holiness. He gave this advice when consulted upon this subject by a priest.

Here are the reasons for it:

245. (a) Since we live in an age of pride when a great number of haughty scholars, with proud and critical minds, find fault even with long-established and sound devotions, it is better to speak of "slavery of Jesus in Mary" and to call oneself "slave of Jesus" rather than "slave of Mary". We then avoid giving any pretext for criticism. In this way, we name this devotion after its ultimate end which is Jesus, rather than after the way and the means to arrive there, which is Mary. However, we can very well use either term without any scruple, as I myself do. If a man goes from Orleans to Tours, by way of Amboise, he can quite truthfully say that he is going to Amboise and equally truthfully say that he is going to Tours. The only difference is that Amboise is simply a place on the direct road to Tours, and Tours alone is his final destination.

246. (b) Since the principal mystery celebrated and honored in this devotion is the mystery of the Incarnation where we find Jesus only in Mary, having become incarnate in her womb, it is appropriate for us to say, "slavery of Jesus in Mary", of Jesus dwelling enthroned in Mary, according to the beautiful, prayer, recited by so many great souls, "O Jesus living in Mary".

247. (c) These expressions show more clearly the intimate union existing between Jesus and Mary. So closely are they united that one is wholly the other. Jesus is all in Mary and Mary is all in Jesus. Or rather, it is no longer she who lives, but Jesus alone who lives in her. It would be easier to separate light from the sun than Mary from Jesus. So united are they that our Lord may be called, "Jesus of Mary", and his Mother "Mary of Jesus".

248. Time does not permit me to linger here and elaborate on the perfections and wonders of the mystery of Jesus living and reigning in Mary, or the Incarnation of the Word. I shall confine myself to the following brief remarks. The Incarnation is the first mystery of Jesus Christ; it is the most hidden; and it is the most exalted and the least known.

It was in this mystery that Jesus, in the womb of Mary and with her co- operation, chose all the elect. For this reason the saints called her womb, the throne-room of God's mysteries.

It was in this mystery that Jesus anticipated all subsequent mysteries of his life by his willing acceptance of them. Consequently, this mystery is a summary of all his mysteries since it contains the intention and the grace of them all.

Lastly, this mystery is the seat of the mercy, the liberality, and the glory of God. It is the seat of his mercy for us, since we can approach and speak to Jesus through Mary. We need her intervention to see or speak to him. Here, ever responsive to the prayer of his Mother, Jesus unfailingly grants grace and mercy to all poor sinners. "Let us come boldly before the throne of grace."

It is the seat of liberality for Mary, because while the new Adam dwelt in this truly earthly paradise God performed there so many hidden marvels beyond the understanding of men and angels. For this reason, the saints call Mary "the magnificence of God", as if God showed his magnificence only in Mary.

It is the seat of glory for his Father, because it was in Mary that Jesus perfectly atoned to his Father on behalf of mankind. It was here that he perfectly restored the glory that sin had taken from his Father. It was here again that our Lord, by the sacrifice of himself and of his will, gave more glory to God than he would have given had he offered all the sacrifices of the Old Law. Finally, in Mary he gave his Father infinite glory, such as his Father had never received from man.

Saying the Hail Mary and the Rosary

249. Those who accept this devotion should have a great love for the Hail Mary, or, as it is called, the Angelic Salutation.

Few Christians, however enlightened, understand the value, merit, excellence and necessity of the Hail Mary. Our Blessed Lady herself had to appear on several occasions to men of great holiness and insight, such as St. Dominic, St. John Capistran and Blessed Alan de Rupe, to convince them of the richness of this prayer.

They composed whole books on the wonders it had worked and its efficacy in converting sinners. They earnestly proclaimed and publicly preached that just as the salvation of the world began with the Hail Mary, so the salvation of each individual is bound up with it. This prayer, they said, brought to a dry and barren world the Fruit of Life, and if well said, will cause the Word of God to take root in the soul and bring forth Jesus, the Fruit of Life. They also tell us that the Hail Mary is a heavenly dew which waters the earth of our soul and makes it bear fruit in due season. The soul which is not watered by this heavenly dew bears no fruit but only thorns and briars, and merits only God's condemnation.

250. Here is what our Blessed Lady revealed to Blessed Alan de Rupe as recorded in his book, *The Dignity of the Rosary*, and as told again by Cartagena: "Know, my son, and make it known to all, that lukewarmness or negligence in saying the Hail Mary, or a distaste for it, is a probable and proximate sign of eternal damnation, for by this prayer the whole world was restored."

These are terrible words but at the same time they are consoling. We should find it hard to believe them, were we not assured of their truth by Blessed Alan and by St. Dominic before him, and by so many great men since his time. The experience of many centuries is there to prove it, for it has always been common knowledge that those who bear the sign of reprobation, as all formal heretics, evil-doers, the proud and the worldly, hate and spurn the Hail Mary and the Rosary. True, heretics learn to say the Our Father but they will not countenance the Hail Mary and the Rosary and they would rather carry a snake around with them than a rosary. And there are even Catholics who, sharing the proud tendencies of their father Lucifer, despise the Hail Mary or look upon it with indifference. The Rosary, they say, is a devotion suitable only for ignorant and illiterate people.

On the other hand, we know from experience that those who show positive signs of being among the elect, appreciate and love the Hail Mary and are always glad to say it. The closer they are to God, the more they love this prayer, as our Blessed Lady went on to tell Blessed Alan.

251. I do not know how this should be, but it is perfectly true; and I know no surer way of discovering whether a person belongs to God than by finding out if he

loves the Hail Mary and the Rosary. I say, "if he loves", for it can happen that a person for some reason may be unable to say the Rosary, but this does not prevent him from loving it and inspiring others to say it.

252. Chosen souls, slaves of Jesus in Mary, understand that after the Our Father, the Hail Mary is the most beautiful of all prayers. It is the perfect compliment the most High God paid to Mary through his archangel in order to win her heart. So powerful was the effect of this greeting upon her, on account of its hidden delights, that despite her great humility, she gave her consent to the incarnation of the Word. If you say the Hail Mary properly, this compliment will infallibly earn you Mary's good will.

253. When the Hail Mary is well said, that is, with attention, devotion and humility, it is, according to the saints, the enemy of Satan, putting him to flight; it is the hammer that crushes him, a source of holiness for souls, a joy to the angels and a sweet melody for the devout. It is the Canticle of the New Testament, a delight for Mary and glory for the most Blessed Trinity. The Hail Mary is dew falling from heaven to make the soul fruitful. It is a pure kiss of love we give to Mary. It is a crimson rose, a precious pearl that we offer to her. It is a cup of ambrosia, a divine nectar that we offer her. These are comparisons made by the saints.

254. I earnestly beg of you, then, by the love I bear you in Jesus and Mary, not to be content with saying the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, but say the Rosary too, and if time permits, all its fifteen decades, every day. Then when death draws near, you will bless the day and hour when you took to heart what I told you, for having sown the blessings of Jesus and Mary, you will reap the eternal blessings in heaven.

Praying the Magnificat

255. To thank God for the graces he has given to our Lady, her consecrated ones will frequently say the Magnificat, following the example of Blessed Marie d'Oignies and several other saints. The Magnificat is the only prayer we have which was composed by our Lady, or rather, composed by Jesus in her, for it was he who spoke through her lips. It is the greatest offering of praise that God ever received under the law of grace. On the one hand, it is the most humble hymn of thanksgiving and, on the other, it is the most sublime and exalted. Contained in it are mysteries so great and so hidden that even the angels do not understand them.

Gerson, a pious and learned scholar, spent the greater part of his life writing tracts full of erudition and love on the most profound subjects. Even so, it was with apprehension that he undertook towards the end of his life to write a commentary on the Magnificat which was the crowning point of all his works. In

a large volume on the subject he says many wonderful things about this beautiful and divine canticle. Among other things he tells us that Mary herself frequently recited it, especially at thanksgiving after Holy Communion. The learned Benzoni, in his commentary on the Magnificat, cites several miracles worked through the power of this prayer. The devils, he declares, take to flight when they hear these words, "He puts forth his arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted".

Contempt of the world

256. Mary's faithful servants despise this corrupted world. They should hate and shun its allurements, and follow the exercises of the contempt of the world which we have given in the first part of this treatise.

Special interior practices for those who wish to be perfect

257. The exterior practices of this devotion which I have just dealt with should be observed as far as one's circumstances and state of life permit. They should not be omitted through negligence or deliberate disregard. In addition to them, here are some very sanctifying interior practices for those souls who feel called by the Holy Spirit to a high degree of perfection. They may be expressed in four words, doing everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary, and for Mary, in order to do it more perfectly through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, and for Jesus.

Through Mary

258. We must do everything through Mary, that is, we must obey her always and be led in all things by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God. "Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God," says St. Paul. Those who are led by the spirit of Mary are children of Mary, and, consequently children of God, as we have already shown. Among the many servants of Mary only those who are truly and faithfully devoted to her are led by her spirit.

I have said that the spirit of Mary is the spirit of God because she was never led by her own spirit, but always by the spirit of God, who made himself master of her to such an extent that he became her very spirit. That is why St. Ambrose says, "May the soul of Mary be in each one of us to glorify the Lord. May the spirit of Mary be in each one of us to rejoice in God." Happy is the man who follows the example of the good Jesuit Brother Rodriguez, who died a holy death, because he will be completely possessed and governed by the spirit of Mary, a spirit which is gentle yet strong, zealous yet prudent, humble yet courageous, pure yet fruitful.

259. The person who wishes to be led by this spirit of Mary:

1) Should renounce his own spirit, his own views and his own will before doing anything, for example, before making meditation, celebrating or attending Mass, before Communion. For the darkness of our own spirit and the evil tendencies of our own will and actions, good as they may seem to us, would hinder the holy spirit of Mary were we to follow them.

2) We should give ourselves up to the spirit of Mary to be moved and directed as she wishes. We should place and leave ourselves in her virginal hands, like a tool in the hands of a craftsman or a lute in the hands of a good musician. We should cast ourselves into her like a stone thrown into the sea. This is done easily and quickly by a mere thought, a slight movement of the will or just a few words as, "I renounce myself and give myself to you, my dear Mother." And even if we do not experience any emotional fervor in this spiritual encounter it is none the less real. It is just as if a person with equal sincerity were to say - which God forbid! - "I give myself to the devil." Even though this were said without feeling any emotion, he would no less really belong to the devil.

3) From time to time during an action and after it, we should renew this same act of offering and of union. The more we do so, the quicker we shall grow in holiness and the sooner we shall reach union with Christ, which necessarily follows upon union with Mary, since the spirit of Mary is the spirit of Jesus.

With Mary

260. We must do everything with Mary, that is to say, in all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows. In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place. For this reason, we must examine and meditate on the great virtues she practiced during her life, especially:

1) Her lively faith, by which she believed the angel's word without the least hesitation, and believed faithfully and constantly even to the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

2) Her deep humility, which made her prefer seclusion, maintain silence, submit to every eventuality and put herself in the last place.

3) Her truly divine purity, which never had and never will have its equal on this side of heaven.

And so on for her other virtues.

Remember what I told you before, that Mary is the great, unique mould of God, designed to make living images of God at little expense and in a short time.

Anyone who finds this mould and casts himself into it, is soon transformed into our Lord because it is the true likeness of him.

In Mary

261. We must do everything in Mary. To understand this we must realize that the Blessed Virgin is the true earthly paradise of the new Adam and that the ancient paradise was only a symbol of her. There are in this earthly paradise untold riches, beauties, rarities and delights, which the new Adam, Jesus Christ, has left there. It is in this paradise that he "took his delights" for nine months, worked his wonders and displayed his riches with the magnificence of God himself. This most holy place consists of only virgin and immaculate soil from which the new Adam was formed with neither spot nor stain by the operation of the Holy Spirit who dwells there. In this earthly paradise grows the real Tree of Life which bore our Lord, the fruit of Life, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which bore the Light of the world.

In this divine place there are trees planted by the hand of God and watered by his divine unction which have borne and continue to bear fruit that is pleasing to him. There are flower-beds studded with a variety of beautiful flowers of virtue, diffusing a fragrance which delights even the angels. Here there are meadows verdant with hope, impregnable towers of fortitude, enchanting mansions of confidence and many other delights.

Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the truths that these material objects symbolize. In this place the air is perfectly pure. There is no night but only the brilliant day of the sacred humanity, the resplendent, spotless sun of the Divinity, the blazing furnace of love, melting all the base metal thrown into it and changing it into gold. There the river of humility gushes forth from the soil, divides into four branches and irrigates the whole of this enchanted place. These branches are the four cardinal virtues.

262. The Holy Spirit speaking through the Fathers of the Church, also calls our Lady the Eastern Gate, through which the High Priest, Jesus Christ, enters and goes out into the world. Through this gate he entered the world the first time and through this same gate he will come the second time.

The Holy Spirit also calls her the Sanctuary of the Divinity, the Resting-Place of the Holy Spirit, the Throne of God, the City of God, the Altar of God, the Temple of God, the World of God. All these titles and expressions of praise are very real when related to the different wonders the Almighty worked in her and the graces which he bestowed on her. What wealth and what glory! What a joy and a privilege for us to enter and dwell in Mary, in whom almighty God has set up the throne of his supreme glory!

263. But how difficult it is for us to have the freedom, the ability and the light to enter such an exalted and holy place. This place is guarded not by a cherub, like the first earthly paradise, but by the Holy Spirit himself who has become its absolute Master. Referring to her, he says: "You are an enclosed garden, my sister, my bride, an enclosed garden and a sealed fountain." Mary is enclosed. Mary is sealed. The unfortunate children of Adam and Eve driven from the earthly paradise, can enter this new paradise only by a special grace of the Holy Spirit which they have to merit.

264. When we have obtained this remarkable grace by our fidelity, we should be delighted to remain in Mary. We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that within her virginal bosom:

1) We may be nourished with the milk of her grace and her motherly compassion.

2) We may be delivered from all anxiety, fear and scruples.

3) We may be safeguarded from all our enemies, the devil, the world and sin which have never gained admittance there. That is why our Lady says that those who work in her will not sin, that is, those who dwell spiritually in our Lady will never commit serious sin.

4) We may be formed in our Lord and our Lord formed in us, because her womb is, as the early Fathers call it, the house of the divine secrets where Jesus and all the elect have been conceived. "This one and that one were born in her."

For Mary

265. Finally, we must do everything for Mary. Since we have given ourselves completely to her service, it is only right that we should do everything for her as if we were her personal servant and slave. This does not mean that we take her for the ultimate end of our service for Jesus alone is our ultimate end. But we take Mary for our proximate end, our mysterious intermediary and the easiest way of reaching him.

Like every good servant and slave we must not remain idle, but, relying on her protection, we should undertake and carry out great things for our noble Queen. We must defend her privileges when they are questioned and uphold her good name when it is under attack. We must attract everyone, if possible, to her service and to this true and sound devotion. We must speak up and denounce those who distort devotion to her by outraging her Son, and at the same time we must apply ourselves to spreading this true devotion. As a reward for these little services, we should expect nothing in return save the honor of belonging to such a lovable Queen and the joy of being united through her to Jesus, her Son, by a

bond that is indissoluble in time and in eternity. Glory to Jesus in Mary! Glory to Mary in Jesus! Glory to God alone!