

Mother Of God, Mother Of Men

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Preface.

The subject of this booklet appeared as an article in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor of that Review. At the request of the Catholic Truth Society, the article has been expanded. If it imparts a clearer knowledge of Mary's unique role in God's plan for the salvation of the world and arouses greater devotion to her in the hearts of its readers the writer's labours will be amply rewarded.

Like the earliest biographer of the Seraphic Saint Francis of Assisi, the author rejoices that his Order was commended in a special way to Mary, indeed was cradled in 'the little portion of Mary.' The same biographer tells us that the Seraphic saint embraced her with an unspeakable love forasmuch as she made the Lord of majesty our brother. There is true Franciscan intuition in those words.

Mother of God, Mother of Men. By FATHER HILARY, O.F.M. Cap.

Very early in the book of Genesis we are told that Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all the living. We might suspect a divine irony in those words of the Holy Spirit because before ever Eve became a mother she had sinned and led Adam into that sin which had death for its wages and so she merited rather to be called the mother of all the dead. Eve had to suffer for her sin. With dismay, she heard the divine judgment of banishment and pain and woe; but even as the dread sentence of God's justice fell upon her ears there came with it a promise which cheered Adam and herself and gave joy and hope to the many generations which followed them until that promise became a blessed reality in the fulness of time. To the infernal serpent, the Lord God said: 'I will put enmities between you and the woman and your seed and her seed.' In these words of the Lord is presaged another Woman whose enmity with the devil will be as absolute as the enmity of her Seed, the Divine Word made Man, a woman who will be associated with the Redeemer in crushing the head of the serpent. The Son of God became man 'that He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say the devil.' Thus from the very dawn of revelation the Woman and her Child are placed together by God Himself.

"HAIL, FULL OF GRACE..."

It took long centuries for God to prepare mankind for the fulfilment of this promise. But when the fullness of time was come, the bountiful Lord admirably made good His word. Then, as Saint Paul writes to the Galatians (4:4-5), God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. From the beginning and before all ages He had chosen the Woman who was to be His Mother. To her predestination, the Church applies in a spiritual sense, intended by the Holy Ghost, words which primarily apply to the eternal generation of the divine Word. 'I was set up from eternity and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet and I was already conceived... When he prepared the heavens, I was present... I was with him forming all things.' (Proverbs 8:23-30)

The one chosen was the humblest maiden of all the people of God, the lowliest of all the children of men. Whilst nearly all young Israelite maidens laid up in their heart the hope that they might perhaps be the woman of promise, the Virgin whose name was Mary never dreamt of such an honour for herself. One day as Mary, the virgin of Nazareth, the comely daughter of Joachim and Anne, poured out her soul in prayer in her lowly home, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to her by God with a breath-taking message. Being come in to her, he said: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.' The humility of the prudent virgin took fright at this unusual greeting. The Greek word translated 'full of grace' is used instead of Mary's proper name and it means one endowed permanently with grace or favour. Little wonder that Mary was troubled at his word and kept wondering what this greeting might mean. Her trouble was set at rest by the heavenly messenger who said to her: 'Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God.' Then he went on to unfold to her the divine plan of redemption.

'Behold, you shall conceive in the womb and shall bring forth a son; and you shall call his name Jesus.

'He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father, and he shall rule over the house of David forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'

These words left no doubt in Mary's mind that she was being offered the motherhood of the Messiah, nay more, the motherhood of God. But again she wonders, not doubting the power of God as Zachary did, and she asked: 'How can this be done for I know not man?' These words, as Catholic tradition holds, point to the fact that Mary had vowed her virginity to God even though she had entered into marriage with Joseph. Once more, the archangel set her mind at rest by explaining to her the admirable design of the Creator: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you and therefore the Holy One that shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.' What a marvellous plan! The whole human race had fallen in Adam, its head; all mankind is to be redeemed by the new Adam, the true Head of the race. Eve cooperated with Adam in the downfall of man; the new Eve was chosen by God to co-operate with the new Adam in the restoration of the race. So is she the true Mother of all the living. She plays an essential role in the working out of the redemption, and she is the only human person who does. She was predestined and chosen in the same decree of divine providence as her Son. To minimize or overlook Mary's part is to reject the Incarnation as God willed it and falsify God's design. It is just as important to believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary as to believe that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost as the Creeds remind us. The early Fathers of the Church pay eloquent to Mary's role as the Second Eve through whose co-operation the world was redeemed.

MARY'S DECISION.

Mary was chosen, but she also freely chose. In His courtesy towards man, God asked her consent, to be given on behalf of all mankind, to the espousals of human nature by the divine Word. From all eternity, of course, God knew that she would fall in with His designs; but yet her consent was free and richly meritorious.

Not a moment did she hesitate as soon as the divine plan had been explained to her, but made that perfect reply 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word.' This was the word for which heaven, earth and hell waited breathlessly. If Mary consented, heaven would have a new queen, earth would be redeemed, hell would be finally defeated. Mary's words

were the most perfect answer to God's invitation. By them God got His way absolutely in the soul of Mary. Her 'Fiat' (Be it done to me) meant a new creation in grace for mankind; her 'Ecce ancilla Domini' (Behold the handmaid of the Lord) was the echo of the words of her divine Son who at that very instant had become man in her womb: 'Ecce venio'; 'Behold I come to do Your will, O God.' (Hebrews 10:9) Mary's submission to the divine will of the Father was as absolute as that of Jesus. And so it was immensely meritorious. From her reading of the prophets, especially Isaiah (Isaias), she knew that in consenting to be the Mother of the Messiah she was to share in His sorrows, that she was to become the Mother of Sorrows and the Queen of Martyrs.

Theologians teach that Mary's grace was vastly increased at the moment of the Annunciation because of her perfect conformity to the will of God as well as because the divine Word then took up His abode in her.

I.

MOTHER OF GOD.

No sooner was the Blessed Virgin's consent given than the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The Messiah so long expected and desired was our Emmanuel; the Incarnation was a fact, man's redemption had begun. At that blessed moment, Mary became in literal truth the Mother of God. This is a fundamental dogma of our Catholic faith and indeed a touchstone of orthodox belief in the Incarnation of the divine Word.

It was solemnly defined at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 against the insidious heresy of Nestorius. This Patriarch of Constantinople objected to Mary's title Mother of God and contended that she should be styled only Mother of Christ. His error was a complete misunderstanding of the hypostatic Union of the divine with the human nature in the one Person of the Word. Nestorius held that there were two persons in Christ, the one human, the other divine. Mary was, in his view, only the Mother of the human person and therefore could not be styled Mother of God. This heresy struck at the very foundations of the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Redemption. The true teaching is that there is no human person in Christ but only the divine, which subsists in two natures. We do not claim that Mary is the Mother of the divinity which exists from all eternity, but she is the Mother of the divine Person. Saint Leo the Great wrote that just as the mother of an ordinary human being is the mother of the whole being, not merely of the body, although she begets only the body, so Mary is truly the mother of the divine Person of the Word. Nestorius found a doughty opponent in Saint Cyril of Alexandria who pointed out that the term 'Theotokos' ('Mother of God' or 'God-bearer') was consecrated among the Fathers and doctors of the Church from early times and had even been used by Julian the Apostate, the enemy of all Christians. Cyril's teaching was defined by the Council of Ephesus amid the plaudits of the Christian people who accompanied the Fathers of the Council to their lodgings with lighted torches. The Christian consciousness of the faithful realized that a basic dogma had been vindicated.

The definition of the Council was couched in these words: If anybody does not confess that Emmanuel is truly God, and that the holy Virgin is therefore "Theotokos" (Mother of God), since she brought forth according to the flesh the Word of God who became flesh, let him be anathema.' The Person of the Word, the term of Mary's motherhood, is identical with the term of the fatherhood of the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. To Jesus Christ the eternal Father and Mary could both say with perfect truth: 'You are my beloved son, this day have I begotten You.' (Hebrews 1:5)

It is true that in Sacred Scripture Mary is not called in so many words 'Mother of God,' but Scripture is not the sole rule of faith. The New Testament, however, frequently calls her the Mother of Jesus, and surely according to the Gospels and Epistles Jesus is God. The archangel declared that Mary's child would be called the Son of the Most High. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, greeted Mary as the 'Mother of my Lord'. Saint Gregory Nazianzen writes that anyone who does not believe Mary to be the Mother of God is far from God.

Luther himself, in one of his more lucid moments, could write: 'All Mary's glory is implied in calling her the Mother of God. And nobody can proclaim anything greater about her than that.' Saint Thomas Aquinas, the prince of Theologians, speaks of her dignity as all but infinite. Jesus Christ is essentially Son of God and Son of Mary; Son of God by His eternal generation by the Father; Son of Man by His conception in the fulness of time in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary. Thus Mary can be said to enter the hypostatic order, or, as some of the Fathers of the Church put it, to border on the confines of the divinity.

Perhaps we have grown too used to the title 'Mother of God,' and, as the poet says, use lessens marvel. But when we reflect on it, we realize at least dimly the all but infinite dignity bestowed by God upon a child of Adam's race. The Man-God was her very own child, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, yet He was also God, the Word who eternally proceeds from the Father, who with the Father breathes forth the Holy Ghost. To what dizzy heights does not this lead our minds! But contemplate it how we will Mary's dignity remains a sublime mystery, the contemplation of which will rejoice our souls eternally. The title Theotokos is a summary of the whole mystery of the Incarnation, a touchstone of orthodoxy. To deny her that title is to make shipwreck of the faith. Saint John Damascene wrote: 'The word Theotokos implies the whole mystery of the Incarnation, for if she who conceived and brought forth is Mother of God, then surely He who is born of her is God. But He is also fully man.'

CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN.

The Son of God was Mary's Son too. He had for her all the tender affection which a good son bestows upon his mother. He chose her before all ages and, in the words of liturgy made her a fitting dwelling-place for the godhead. Now when God loves He gives — love is the gift of self. He gave to His Mother with a truly divine profusion. The fulness of grace was hers from the first moment of her conception, and grace, as we know is the life of God shared by the creature. Mary, it is true, had need of redemption because she was a child of Adam. The Church has defined that Mary's Immaculate Conception is a singular privilege of grace bestowed on her in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race. Her redemption therefore was unique. All others are redeemed by being freed from original sin which they have contracted in their conception. She was redeemed by being preserved from original sin by the infusion of sanctifying grace in the very instant of her conception. In her Magnificat ('My soul, it magnifies the Lord') she sang 'He that is mighty has done great things to me and holy is His name.' So did God prepare for himself a worthy mother, untouched by sin, full of divine life, never for an instant in the power of the infernal serpent which deceived Eve.

Mary's fulness of grace and immunity from sin imply that she was free also from the harmful consequences of sin. That is why Christians style her Mater Amabilis, 'Mother most lovable', since it is sin and its consequences that mar the loveliness of a human being. We are all attracted by the innocence of a child; something of the divine seems to shine out from those candid eyes; and yet

that child has been touched at least by original sin. What then must be the loveliness and attractiveness of Mary, more innocent than any child? Sinlessness is but the negative aspect of Mary's Immaculate Conception. The positive aspect is her fulness of grace which made her God's masterpiece, the most beautiful soul ever created by God if we except the soul of her divine Son to which hers was most like. The infused virtues were hers in the highest degree; the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out in profusion upon her. Her soul was as a lyre responsive to the slightest touch of the divine Musician. Like her Son, she lived entirely for God. Not only was Mary more richly endowed with grace and the virtues than any other creature; she corresponded most perfectly with every grace received and so grew more pleasing to God at every instant.

MARY'S BEAUTY.

The beauty of her soul irradiated her body. She was specially chosen by God to be the only earthly parent of the most beautiful of the sons of men. The likeness between the mother and Child must have been very striking, and so Mary was in body the most comely of women. Hence, she is at once the inspiration and the despair of every great artist. He conceives an ideal of lovely womanhood and tries to express it on canvas, in stone or in bronze, but he fails. No human artist could perfectly imitate the masterpiece of the divine Artist.

What painter or sculptor could limn the beauty of her features, express the loveliness of those eyes, the windows of a soul where all is purity and grace? Surely, the divine Artist must have contemplated with complacency this masterpiece of His creation.

ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN.

Because Mary was His Mother, because God had dwelt in her body, and because too she was immaculate, her Son anticipated in her regard the general resurrection of bodies at the end of the world. Her comely body was not permitted to suffer the corruption of the tomb; her heart of flesh, the symbol of her interior life of love for God and man, was not destined to crumble into dust. When her earthly pilgrimage was ended, she was assumed body and soul into heaven. Such had ever been the belief of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, and this belief was solemnly defined by Pope Pius XII on the feast of All Saints 1950. Later the same Pope proclaimed her universal Queenship. She reigns in heaven on the right hand of her divine Son, Queen of heaven and of earth, Queen of angels and of men. There her lovely hands and eyes are ever raised to the face of Jesus in supplication for her earthly children. She has been well styled Omnipotentia supplex, 'Almighty in her prayer'.

EVER VIRGIN.

Mary is a mother, but could God's Mother lack the special splendour which virginity confers on body and soul? No, in this respect too God wrought a miracle for His Mother, conferring on her together the two naturally incompatible perfections of motherhood and virginity. 'Unheard of privilege,' writes Saint Augustine, 'but a fitting one. A virgin could have no child but God; God could have only a virgin for His Mother.' Mary was a virgin before giving birth to Jesus; she remained a virgin in His actual birth and ever after. This is one of the most treasured doctrines of the Church regarding Our Lady. It was prophesied in the Old Testament by Isaiah to whose prophecy the archangel obviously referred when he brought the good tidings to the humble virgin of Nazareth. The vindications of this privilege of Mary written by the Fathers of the Church against its deniers still vibrate with holy indignation.

II.

OUR MOTHER.

There is another truth about Mary, which appeals more to our hearts even than her divine motherhood. She is our Mother too. In saying this, we are not indulging in wishful thinking or in emotion. We are stating a dogmatic truth believed from the beginnings of Christianity, which implies that she really co-operates with God in begetting us to the spiritual life. She is in principle the Mother of all the living; she becomes the Mother of each one of us from the moment of our incorporation in Christ by baptism. Her motherhood of men is bound up with her motherhood of Christ. It is a favourite saying of the Fathers of the Church that he that has not Mary for his mother cannot have God for his father. Christ, the Son of Man, is the first-born of many brethren. At the Incarnation Mary became the Mother of the whole Christ, Head and members. Her motherhood of men is not an afterthought of her motherhood of God. In God's mind, the two are inseparable.

As Saint Paul puts it: 'When the fulness of time was come God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law... that we might receive the adoption of sons.' (Galatians 4:4-5) Our Lord Himself bore witness to this truth as He hung upon the Cross and at its foot stood Mary, His Mother and the disciple whom he loved. To His Mother He said with His dying breath 'Woman, behold your son.' 'Woman', an obvious allusion to the first promise of the redemption in the Garden of Eden; 'woman', among the Jews a title of honour and veneration. To the disciple He said 'Behold your mother.' John's own natural mother was present at this scene. That John there stood for the whole of humanity seems to be implied in words written by Pope Leo XIII in his Bull *Gloriosae Dominae*.

Tradition is clear on the spiritual motherhood of Mary. Let us quote the eloquent Pope Saint Leo the Great:

'Christ's generation is also the origin of the Christian people, and the birth of the Head is the birth also of the body.'

In his Marian encyclical to commemorate the golden jubilee of the definition of the Immaculate Conception another great Pope Saint, Pius X wrote: 'Is not Mary the Mother of Christ? She is for that reason our mother too... In the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Jesus took mortal flesh, but He also took to Himself a mystical Body, and we can say that when Mary had Jesus in her womb she bore there also all those who live the Christ-life.' To Mary therefore we owe all our supernatural life under God. When God chose her to be the spiritual mother of all the living, He gave her a great wide heart capable of embracing us all in its virginal love. What a note of tenderness the spiritual motherhood of Mary introduces into our religion! It is the counterpart of the fatherhood of God. All motherhood in heaven and on earth is named from Mary. Only the Creator Himself could have so plumbed the depths of the human heart as He did when He gave an earthly Mother to his heavenly Son and a heavenly Mother to us His earthly children.

Pope Pius XII concludes his magnificent encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ with a touching invocation of the Virgin Mother. In it, he writes: 'It was she who gave miraculous birth to Christ our Lord, adorned already in her virginal womb with the dignity of Head of the Church, and so brought forth the source of all heavenly life. She it was who offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and motherly love, like a new Eve, for all the children of Adam and thus she who was the mother of our Head according to the flesh, became by a new title of sorrow and glory the spiritual mother of all His members.'

MOTHER OF LOVE.

We have all experienced the love of an earthly mother and we know that in all the world there is no love like it, none so tender, none so selfless. Round that tender name of mother what a wealth of wistful memories clings for each of us, memories of the innocent joys of childhood passed in the sunshine of a mother's smile, of our first lessons in the love of God, our first prayers lisped at a mother's knee. But all the love of a natural mother is but a pale reflection of Mary's love, poured into her heart by the Spirit who is love subsistent. A mother's love is not divided by the number of her children; be they few or many, she loves each with her full heart. Though Mary's children are numberless, she knows and loves each one with a personal and unspeakable love. In her eyes, each of us is another Jesus for whose sake she was created and predestined.

Our Blessed Lord admonished us that unless we become as little children we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Children indeed we are spiritually; as long as this life lasts, we are not fully grown. Often we prove ourselves very foolish children and we have great need of mothering by Mary who watches over us at every moment. Sorry the plight of the child who has no mother, and sorry indeed would be our plight if we had not Mary for our nursing-mother. One of our Irish poets, Piaras MacGearailt, (died in 1782) who for a time became a Protestant, (he converted to Protestantism to retain the family farm,) wrote a poignant poem bewailing the want of Mary's love in his new found religion.

May we not say that a mother always has a special love for the wayward son? And so our heavenly Mother has a particular love for the sinner, whence her consoling title 'Refuge of sinners.' How often, even in our own experience, has she shown how well she merits that appellation! Confidently the Church prays: 'Remember, O Virgin Mother, when you stand in the presence of the Lord, that you plead for us and avert His anger from us.'

III.

OUR DEVOTION TO MARY.

We have briefly considered Mary's all but divine dignity as Mother of God and our Mother and her unique part in the scheme of the redemption. Now we must consider our duties towards her, duties of veneration, of filial devotion and trustful prayer to her who has been saluted as the Mediatrix of all graces. Sometimes we Catholics are accused of Mariolatry as if we paid to the Blessed Virgin the worship due to God alone. This hoary calumny is due to ignorance or prejudice or to both. No Catholic would ever dream of adoring Our Blessed Lady as if she were a divine person. We acknowledge that she is a creature, that all she is and has is the gift of God bestowed upon her in view of her unique relation to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

But short of 'latría' or adoration there is no 'cultus' which we can pay to Mary which is worthy of her surpassing dignity. It is clear that Mary is worthy of a veneration immeasurably passing that which we pay to the saints.

Theologians distinguish three kinds of cultus, 'latría', which is due to God alone, 'hyperdulia', which is proper to our Lady and 'dulia', which we offer to the saints. Hyperdulia is the just recognition of Mary's divine motherhood, of the undeniable fact that she is God's most noble creature. It is not just a higher degree of dulia; it is specifically distinct from the cultus of the saints because Mary belongs to the hypostatic order. The saints are venerated only because of their eminent holiness, a sharing in the holiness of Christ of whose mystical Body they are members.

Mary is venerated in a special way not only because of her supreme holiness but also because of her unique relation to God.

This veneration of Our Blessed Lady goes back to the very beginnings of Christianity. One wonders if our Protestant brethren have ever read the glowing tributes of praise poured out by the early Fathers, for example the lyric compositions of a Saint Ephrem, the Deacon of Syria. Protestants fear that our devotion to Mary detracts in some way from our worship of Jesus Christ. Rather does it enhance it since all the veneration we pay to Mary is in view of her unique relation to her Son, her role as the second Eve, her co-operation in the work of the redemption. Our devotion to God's Mother is passed on to Him by her, embellished with her own sublime merits. Let us repeat that if this role of Mary is overlooked or minimized, faith in the Incarnation and in the divinity of Christ soon weakens and fades away. Mary's motherhood is the touchstone of orthodoxy in Christology.

HOW GOD HONOURED HIS MOTHER.

Do what we will, we can never pay her as much honour as God Himself showed to her. He chose her as His Mother and prepared her for that sublime office, made her a fitting dwelling-place for His Son. He filled her with grace from the first instant of her conception, derogating in her case from the universal law of original sin. With her fulness of grace went the plenitude of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He made His merciful plan of redemption to depend on her free consent and sent the archangel Gabriel to address her in words of unique greeting. For nine months, divine Wisdom subsistent dwelt in her womb and virginally she gave Him birth. For long years, the Son of God lived with her and was subject to her; at her knee, He deigned to learn the lessons of human wisdom. At Cana of Galilee He forestalled 'His time' to work His first miracle at her delicate suggestion. As we find her thus at the beginning of the public ministry so too we see her at the end of it, standing at the Cross and hearing her spiritual motherhood confirmed by the dying voice of her Son. She is the comfort of the infant Church in the days between the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost and is with the disciples when the Spirit is poured out upon them in the profusion of Pentecost.

The Holy Ghost had once inspired her to sing her Magnificat, the canticle of her lowliness and of her exaltation and in it to foretell that all nations should call her blessed because He that is mighty had done great things in her. She was proclaimed blessed among women by her cousin Saint Elizabeth, likewise filled with the Holy Spirit. A woman in the crowd hails her as blessed for bearing such a Son, and the Son Himself proclaims her blessed because of her entire submission to the will of God. Yet there are those who call themselves Christians and who profess to venerate the sacred Scriptures and yet will not give to her the title which is hers, the title of Blessed, but speak coldly of her as 'the Virgin'; nor will they accord Mary her place in the designs of God.

CO-REDEMPTRIX.

Several of the Popes have spoken of Mary as Co-Redemptrix of the human race, meaning that she cooperated with the Redeemer in His mission of salvation. Her co-operation was, of course, secondary to that of her Son. At the close of the extraordinary Holy Year of 1933, Pope Pius XI invoked her as Co-Redemptrix and said that God willed to associate His Mother with Jesus as the Dispenser and Mediatrix of all graces. The many miracles wrought at her shrines in every age, not least in our own, testify to God's approval of the veneration of His Mother and of her children's trust in her powerful intercession.

AFFECTION.

Since Mary is our own mother, we must honour her with a child-like affection and gratitude. Nothing serves to keep in us the heart of a child-like affection for our Blessed Lady than reflection on the fact that she really is our mother. Indeed, it would be monstrous on our part to be cold and wanting in affection to so good a mother. Child-like love of Mary is the true hallmark of holiness and a characteristic of all the saints. The holier they were the greater was their affection for Mary.

The saints assure us too that devotion to the Mother of God is a mark of predestination. We must love her too because she has first loved us. Her heart was specially formed by the Holy Trinity to love Jesus and His members. In thankfulness, also, we are bound to love Mary. To what pain did she not expose herself in her motherly love of men, especially sinners. She brought forth her firstborn painlessly, but how great was her suffering when the mystical Body of Christ was formed from the wounded side of the Saviour. Surely, we her children should not forget the groanings of our mother. In the words of Pope Pius XII, on the mystical Body of Christ 'she bestowed that same motherly care with which she fostered and nurtured the suckling infant Jesus in the cradle.'

Reigning in heaven our mother knows our needs and she loves us even more than we love ourselves, hence our prayer to her must be full of trust. Under her mothering care, we shall grow in wisdom and age and grace before God and men as Jesus did.

IMITATION OF MARY.

Our devotion should be one of imitation. We are bound to imitate Christ if we would be saved and Mary is a spotless mirror of all His perfections. Her whole life was a living out of her words at the Annunciation:

'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.'

If we, like her, hand ourselves over to the divine will completely, we shall make rapid strides in holiness. To her, the Church in her liturgy applies the words of the Holy Ghost: 'Now, ye children, hear me. Blessed are they that keep my ways... He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.' (Proverbs 8:32-35) Our love for her should be as like as possible to that which Jesus gave her.

QUEEN.

Mary is our Queen as well as our mother. As such, she has a right to our loyalty and fidelity. That will be an efficacious means of ensuring our loyalty to Christ Our King, which is so tested in these days of ours. 'Let all pay unswerving homage, mingled with the beauteous veneration of her children, to the royal sceptre of that great Mother.' So wrote Pope Pius XII in his encyclical on the Queenship of Mary. He hopes that the celebration of the feast of her Queenship will contribute towards keeping, strengthening and continuing peace among the nations. In the dark days of war, our Holy Father consecrated the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is for each one of us to see that that consecration be effective by our obedience to the behest of our Queen: 'Whatsoever He shall say to you do ye.' In doing this lies the only salvation of the world.

Many times a day we address to our Queen and Mother the 'Hail Mary', the prayer of the Incarnation, saluting her with the words of the archangel and Saint Elizabeth, or rather with the words of God Himself. Each time it should be with a greater faith in and realization of the mystery, hidden from the ages in God. If we had nothing else in sacred Scripture but this, it would be more than ample to justify all our Catholic devotion and veneration for Mary. God Himself declares her full of grace and blessed among all women. The Church, the bride of the Word, the pillar and

ground of truth, (1 Timothy 3:15) guided by the Holy Spirit, adds her own petition, surely a worthy companion to the Lord's own prayer: 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.' A simple but profound prayer that greatly increases our trust.

'Holy' we style her because she more than any saint shares in the sanctity of Him who alone is essential holiness. God alone can know what are the depths of holiness of Mary's soul, hallowed in its conception and growing in grace at every moment of earthly life. 'Mary', 'a name that is kin to prophecy, salutary to the regenerate, the hall-mark of virginity... fellowship in holiness.' (Saint Vincent of Lerins, died 445). Saint Germanus of Constantinople (died in 713) writes that the very invocation of the name of Mary turns aside from her servants the attacks of the enemy, and keeps them safe and unharmed. 'Mother of God,' we invoke her knowing that God can refuse nothing to His only earthly parent, that where saints beg she commands. We beseech her help now in our present need, and above all at the hour of our death. 'If', writes Saint Alphonsus Liguori in his 'Glories of Mary', 'at the hour of death we have the protection of Mary, what need we fear from all our infernal enemies?' Pastoral experience confirms what we should in any case expect, that Mary's clients die in happiness and hope. If often during life we have so prayed we may rest assured that when now is the hour of our death the glorious Queen of heaven will be near us to lead our souls to heaven and after this our exile to show unto us the blessed fruit of her womb, JESUS.
