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Our Lady's Month

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Decidified

Our Lady's Month

First Day.

MORNING STAR.

*"Hail, thou 'Star-of-Ocean,'
Portal of the sky,
Ever Virgin Mother
Of the Lord Most High!"*

MARY is the Morning Star. In the early dawn it shines clear and brilliant in the heavens. It is the harbinger of another day of God's service. We may well imagine with what a perfect act of consecration Mary's heart offered each day just dawning to God: with what joy she greeted its opportunities for active resignation, zeal, devotion, true love of service no matter what the outcome. She looked unflinchingly to the light of the Holy Spirit within her for counsel and support. Each day was to her a messenger from God asking her what it would bear back to Him Who sent it.

Mary is our Morning Star. Her light shines as a beacon to rouse us to greet "the Day-Spring from on high" with our act of consecration, our thanksgiving for His opportunities, our petition for His counsel, our trust in His support. Her light illumines with fuller meaning each Christian day.

Morning Star, pray for us.

*"Show thyself a Mother—
Offer Him our sighs,
Who, for us Incarnate,
Did not thee despise.*

*"Still as on we journey,
Help our weak endeavor,
Till with thee and Jesus,
We rejoice for ever."*

Second Day.

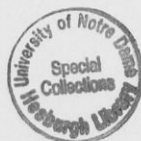
QUEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN.

*"Thou art all fair, O Mary!
There is no spot of original sin in thee."*

ONE creature alone is all-perfect in God's sight. The Eternal Son, One with the Father, in the bosom of the Trinity, was to come in time into the womb of a woman, and be made Man. For the all-spotless One an all-spotless place must be prepared. He would empty Himself and accept the humiliation of human birth. But of His holiness He could never empty Himself. The body from which He drew His human life, the breasts that nursed Him, the hands that bathed and caressed Him, the bosom upon which He slept, the voice that sang to Him, the mind that trained Him, and the soul that was closest to His soul, must be purer than the cloudless sky, or the fresh mountain stream. No strain of the discord that created hell, and overturned earth could reach to her. The object of Jesus' love was to be the spotless, the perfect one. His heart was to love His Mother with a direct and supreme love. It could know no reservation in her. She must be most perfect, most pure, most worthy. God made her and kept her as His own.

Every virtue shone perfect in the "Crystal Christ," every virtue possible for a creature shone perfect in Mary. She who was no more than human trod most faithfully in the footsteps of her divine Son. Therefore is Mary the Star of Hope. Christ asks us to mirror Him perfectly before men. "Be ye perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect." The stain of our original sin has been washed away by Baptism; Penance has secured us the pardon of our actual offences; through the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are fed with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Surely we can go forward in zeal and love, determined to keep ourselves stainless in God's sight, and by the power of his divine Son to show forth Christ to the world.

Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.



Third Day.

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS.

*"The God, Whose will by moon and sun,
And all things in due course is done,
Is borne upon a maiden's breast,
By fullest heavenly grace possessed."*

MARY, "full of grace," is the model of perfection in a creature. Her secret is the secret of all sanctity and all growth—to do the will of God. The Eternal "Wisdom reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly;" it is the music of the spheres, the order of the universe, the law of growth of every atom of creation. The angels who showed themselves the willing instruments of God's order and wisdom and love, live to His glory and their own: those who would "not serve," live apart from God in eternal shame and loss. In His loving desire to communicate His glory to creatures, God made man. Again a sin of disobedience put the whole human race out of harmony with the purposes of its Creator. God, from the beginning, longed for perfection in those whom He had made, to whom He had given all. Only one answers completely, Mary, the Virgin of virgins. Mary's will was to do the will of Him Who made her. Mary found her love not in the peace of God: nor in the knowledge He infused: nor in the suffering He ordained—not in any of His gifts, but solely in Himself above all gifts.

If we would follow Mary, the perfect follower of her divine Son, we must grow in secret to be the Father's. To have the courage to do this and to cultivate this, is the beginning and end of sanctity. Through tears and penance and good works, to be our Father's and His completely is the end of our progress. This immolation of self must be an entire abandonment to the wisdom and love of the Father—His supreme Providence and our subject hearts. As often as the grace is within us, and as long as we can stand it, we must seek the Father directly: not indirectly through created things: not altogether through good works, but immediately—"Alone with Him alone." For "in His will is our peace."

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Fourth Day.

VIRGIN MOST FAITHFUL.

*"Hail, O Lady, bright and glorious,
Clad in beauty, pure and true,
Virgin! o'er sin's stain victorious,
Sinners for thy succor sue."*

FROM Mary's life we learn the lesson that the will of God is not our will, but what God ordains. Mary at an early age determined to give herself to God, but after the manner that befitted a humble and unworthy creature. Her own will as far as it went was to serve God in virginity and self-consecration. Others might be worthy to become the Mother of the Messiah, but not so she. She merited but to lead a quiet, unknown life, serving God in His temple in prayer and penance, and thus to pass from earth leaving no name, no fame behind her. But we know that God ordained far otherwise. God regarded the humility of His handmaid, and exalted her over all His angels and His saints. For He willed the highest call: the greatest trial: the keenest martyrdom. Witness the wonderful example of Mary's faithfulness and the simplicity of God's action. The Angel told her she was chosen of God for the highest work of a creature. That it would mean to her burdens most heavy, trials most bitter, sacrifices most complete, she who knew the prophecies of her people, could not doubt; but she asked no question, and returned the bold yet humble answer of faith: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word."

So God made her the Mother of His Son and co-redemptrix of the human race. At His command she stepped into the darkness of the future with a personal, intense love of her Creator, with a confidence in Him that knew no hesitation nor complaint. At every step God asked of her sacrifice, but sacrifice with her was but the glad test of love.

Our work also is to place ourselves willingly, confidently in God's hands: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," and to pray that He will make us the instruments of His will: to say with our divine Saviour: "Father, not my will but Thine be done."

Fifth Day.

HOLY MARY.

*"O Mary, highly graced,
Your home was as a garden,
Made glad with fairest flowers;
May life thus blossom sweetly
In every home of ours."*

MARY spent the greater part of her days in the humble cares of the home at Nazareth, that "tabernacle of God with men" on earth. Often, she must have left the side of her sleeping Child to tend the fire, to sweep the hearth, to prepare the simple meal. For these homely, imperative duties she must often have had to forego sweet converse with her Son. While He worked with St. Joseph, it was her part to make and keep the home for them both. Often and often she must have ceased to contemplate the beloved face of her Jesus in order to clothe Him; for it was her duty also to spin, to weave, to sew the garments of her husband and her Son. All this demanded her strict attention, her unceasing labor. In Mary of Nazareth we have the perfect example of "leaving God for God." She sanctified every moment and every task by her habitual consecration of self to God; she was ever and always "the handmaid of the Lord;" her one desire was that it be done unto her according to His will.

Mary teaches us that every work is good if done for God, that every good work therefore is of itself directed to God. For its perfect fulfillment, we must often give to it such strict attention and intense labor as will not permit conscious thought of, or explicit consecration to God. From Mary we may learn how to make holy every moment and every task; how "to leave God for God." The habitual consecration of self to God at morning, at evening: that which prevents us from forgetting Him by anger, impatience, conceit, despondence, etc., will consecrate us as "the servants of the Lord" and cover with merit our whole life.

*"Mary, blessed Maid of maidens,
Be our advocate with God."*

Sixth Day.

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD.

*"O glorious Virgin ever blest,
All daughters of mankind above,
Who gavest nurture from thy breast
To God, with pure maternal love."*

MARY, the Mother, conceived, gave birth to and nursed the Son of God. She adored Him Who is her God; and with passionate tenderness, she cared for and caressed Him Who is also her Infant Child. As the Incarnate Word was in human flesh the perfect symbol of the love of God for man, so Mary is the perfect example of a mother's love for her child, and is our Mother and our example in our life for the children of men.

Grace comes not to destroy nature but to elevate it. Mary who was full of grace, the spouse of the Holy Spirit, loved intensely the Babe at her breast, the Boy she sought sorrowing in Jerusalem, the Man she followed to Calvary. In Mary nature is not denied, but the love of her Child is made one with her love of God. So, too, with us nature is not to be denied, but to be uplifted and absorbed in the supernatural. No saint ever possessed a cold heart: a loving mother will be a self-sacrificing mother, a filial son will be a good religious. "For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?" True love of parents will never drive up from God: grace may urge us and lead up to forego its immediate expression to make it more certain in God's love. If the end of all be love; if love be "the fulfilling of the law," we lose nothing by making the heart as large as possible. From Mary we learn not to crucify love but to cultivate it, and to let it crucify us with her divine Son. In Mary, the Mother of God and the Mother of us all, the love of men is one with the love of God.

Holy Mother of God, pray for us.

Seventh Day.

MOTHER MOST AMIABLE.

*"O that this low earth of ours,
Answering th' angelic strain,
With thy praises might reëcho,
Till the heavens replied again."*

MARY is called most amiable, that is, most loving, most worthy to be loved. From the standpoint of the world, she surely had every reason to be justly unamiable towards a world which rejected her Son, yet history records no harsh or hasty word, no ungracious look. We see her receiving with thanks the shepherds and the wise men at Bethlehem; we read of the trustful peace with which she accepted her exile with Joseph and the Infant in the strange land of Egypt; with patient industry she attended her little household, as other Jewish mothers, at Nazareth; her request to her divine Son, for the sake of others, to give wine at the marriage feast was not a demand, but a sweet suggestion; Mary pondered, not questioning, upon those great silences of Scripture; she met her heavy-laden Son upon the road to Calvary and followed Him in silent sympathy, not reviling His enemies; she lived helpfully with John for long years of waiting at Ephesus. Let us think for a short moment of these things and put to shame our restless, self-important souls.

Time is short; eternity is long. He who lives in the light of Christian truth waits, like Mary, upon God. He who lives, like Mary, with Christ, loves with Him all humankind. His soul may be sorrowful even unto death, as was Christ Jesus', but it will not taste of disgust for its fellows, nor of despair, because He, with Whom Mary lived and we live, knew not these things. The amiable man offers himself as a sacrifice. He is silent; he boasts not of his goodness nor his worthy motives; he storms not; he judges not. The sinner may go to him and find in him a mysterious strength; the worried and depressed, an inexplicable peace; the demonstrative, a silent and sure confidant. All feel a power that they know is not of this world, that inevitably raises their thoughts to heaven—the power of Him Who "lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth."

Loving Mother of all-embracing Love, pray for us.

Eighth Day.

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT.

"Let us come and hold Mary by the feet, let us lie at those blessed feet and most earnestly entreat her. Let us hold her, and not let her go, except she bless us."

MARY is the model of that silence which we ought at times to practise assiduously. If we would understand the depth of her virtue of silence, we must ponder the distress of her soul when she realized Joseph's suspicions and fears. How strong must have been the desire and inclination to speak and vindicate herself, both for her own sake and for the love she bore her husband. A word would have cleared matters, or so, at least, it would seem. Had she not every right to speak? And if she did not, who would? Duty, truth, virtue would seem to have commanded an explanation. Yet Mary held her peace. She restrained her desire; she accepted her humiliation; she waited upon God. The secret of God's mercies to her was His secret. It was hers only to keep, not to reveal. No impetuosity, no thought of self, not even the sorrow of Joseph could tempt her to break the seal of God's confidence.

We are apt to exalt sensitiveness to honor, into a virtue. Self-vindication is almost the reflex action of accusation, yet self-vindication effects little, and, still less, the hasty resentment of charges. The desire always to explain and to appear in a good light is not of God and does not profit much. We must go on our way with trust in God. He will see to it that those whom He wishes to, will understand; not always immediately, perhaps, but, as with Joseph, in His own good time.

The secrets of God, His hidden message to the soul, must be kept in sacred silence, safe from all save those messengers of God whom He would have stand to us as "other Christs." Those who hold inviolable the secrets of God, will win and keep the confidences of men, for there is strength in silence, a strength born of unflinching faith, abiding hope, constant charity.

Virgin most prudent, obtain for us a humble and prudent silence.

Ninth Day.

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR.

*"How blest that Mother in whose shrine
That great Artificer divine,
Whose hand contains the earth and sky,
Vouchsafed, as in His ark, to lie."*

IN the quiet room at Nazareth, Mary received the Angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she had found grace with God, that the Holy Ghost would come upon her and that the Holy One that would be born of her would be called the Son of God. Mary became the Mother of God, and her star increased in glory from its rising at Bethlehem even unto its zenith on Calvary.

Within the quiet room of the Cenacle, Mary waits again to receive the Holy Spirit. This time she is not alone. This time the Holy Spirit comes not to her, privileged and alone, through the message of an Archangel, but to all equally who are gathered there, and directly as a tongue of fire resting upon each one of them. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Mary knew that this was the fire that would enkindle the world. These men were to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature. Their names were to be heralded by the nations and honored by that Church with which her Son had promised to be "all days, even to the end of the world." Her mission was ended, her star must decline—at least before the world. She would live on in obscurity at Ephesus with apparently no evident purpose except to give St. Luke the account of the Nativity. The work the "Fruit of her womb" had founded would go on without her. At least so might Mary have thought with every warrant in external evidences. Yet at that very hour the Holy Spirit was making sure that all generations would call her blessed. For God does not give and take away. His gifts are not always decorated with external evidences. But the ways of God are very sure to those who, like Mary, submit and trust.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Tenth Day.

HELP OF CHRISTIANS.

*“Mother of grace, O Mary blest,
To thee, sweet fount of love, we fly;
Shield us through life, and take us hence
To thy dear bosom when we die.*

*“O Jesu, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.”*

THE aim and purpose of our Blessed Lord and His Church, with its divine truths and Sacraments, is to enable us to purify ourselves, to make ourselves perfect, to make ourselves one with God.

In this Mary is our example and our inspiration. Historically, reverence for her has begotten the Christian virtues in the hearts of men—purity, respect for women, the dignity of motherhood, the love of children, the worth of the home—all that go to make up the Christian life. Reverence for her has inspired men and women to consecrate themselves entirely to Jesus Christ.

To each and everyone of us she must be the same inspiration. We cannot love her without being drawn to that purity, humility, unselfishness, so characteristic of her; we cannot love her without being urged to purify ourselves more and more and to give our heart wholly, as she did, to Him Who says to each and every one of us: “My child, give Me thy heart.”

O holy Mary, be thou a help to the helpless, a strength to the fearful, a comfort to the sorrowful.

“Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Death be brought to the glory of His resurrection through the same Christ, our Lord.”

Eleventh Day.

SEAT OF WISDOM.

*"My soul doth magnify the Lord;
And my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.
Because He hath regarded the humility
of His handmaid."*

MARY made much of the Lord and rejoiced in God, her Saviour. Her service was the service of purest joy to the utmost of her favored soul. "All these things she cherished in her heart." God was all in all to her. Life might bring what it would, but she lived in and with and for God. Her delight was to think upon Him: her pleasure to know creation, from the least to the greatest, as His work: her passion to show forth in herself His glory.

Mary is in this the Seat of Wisdom. Unless we have a taste for God we are lost. God seeks to give it to us: to nourish and increase it in us, but unless the cultivation on our part be sincere and supreme, He will withdraw it. We can destroy it; the hundred thousand voices of sense; of interest; of motive may shut God out of our hearts. We can blind ourselves, and then we cannot see. Or our fidelity may be formal, and then we cannot taste, nor desire to taste. The tragedy is that we do not appreciate our loss. The very power of this spiritual taste is from God. Let us, with Mary, cling to Him and hold Him and never let Him go.

"O God, Who by the light of the Holy Ghost, dost instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us, we beseech Thee, by that same Holy Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just, and a constant enjoyment of His comforts through Christ our Lord."

Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

Twelfth Day.

ARK OF THE COVENANT.

*"It is Almighty God
Who girdeth me with strength.
And maketh my way perfect."*

FROM the first moment of her calling, Mary was conscious that it was God Who had called her. Hence her trust in all that God asked her to do was not in herself but in Him. This was the strength of her perfect act of consecration: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." This was the power that led her on to victory.

Often the Holy Spirit speaks to the soul; suggests this or that; gently urges to a more selfless service, and we hesitate or refuse because of ourselves we cannot do it. If God invites, He will give the strength, too, although He may not tell us so. Christ says: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should be abiding." This certainty of God's calling alone can give the greatest requisite for the spiritual life: the intimate, actual, personal sense of God's love. Love begets love and love spells trust. We cannot measure the years that are to come; we cannot direct the actions and circumstances we know not of; we cannot stretch safe hands now to seize on motives, purposes, desires still unborn, and make secure what as yet is not, but with Mary we can know and believe that the Holy Spirit Who prompts will also accompany and perfect; with Mary we can say, in humble trust: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word."

*"Come Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
From Thy bright heavenly throne!
Come take possession of our souls,
And make them all Thine own!*

*O guide our minds with Thy blest light—
With love our hearts inflame—
And with Thy strength which ne'er decays
Confirm our mortal frame."*

Thirteenth Day.

VESSEL OF SINGULAR DEVOTION.

*"My Beloved is mine and I am His:
Who feedeth among the lilies."*

*"Until the day break, and the
shadows flee away. Alleluia."*

MARY was the perfect lover of our Lord, and by reason of this all jealousy was excluded from her heart. Her trust was perfect. Her union with His heart and work knew not the slightest discord. Jesus left her and went forth on His public mission. He made His friends. He gave much of His time to His disciples. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and was wont to visit at their home. In His Mother's very presence He used her to preach the greater truth, the higher duty of faithfulness to God's word over every human tie, no matter how precious or sacred. When He was dying He gave her to John and John to her with the confident assurance that she would love Him in His friend and His friend in Him.

Through all this Mary's heart was in perfect peaceful accord with the heart of her Divine Son. Self was utterly lost in Him. The work that was dear to Him was dear to her; the friends that were dear to Him were dear to her. Her joy was to love, to suffer with Him. She gave, asking nothing in return.

No jealous heart can know unselfish love. No suspicious heart, no heart that weighs and measures can know peace in human love, much less joy in the divine. "Love envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; thinketh no evil; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed." Such is the ideal of love realized by Mary, to which we must dare aspire, and, by God's grace, expect to attain.

Vessel of singular devotion, intercede for us with our Lord and thine.

Fourteenth Day.

MIRROR OF JUSTICE.

"She is the brightness of Eternal Light, the unspotted Mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness."

MARY knew not the taint of original sin. Her soul was full of grace. It was the spotless mirror of God's justice: the "garden enclosed" wherein no breath of sin had entered, and where supernatural virtue blossomed. Rare was its beauty; exquisitely fine its perfection; great its trial; supreme its martyrdom; equally great, we may say, its temptations, for these must have been in proportion to its powers and its perfections. "Blessed art thou who hast believed," Elizabeth said to her. Had Mary yielded to doubt, had Mary refused to trust, there could not have been "the performance of those things" which God had destined for her. Yet how great must have been the temptation in the overwhelming nature of the Annunciation, in the utter destitution of the Nativity, in the black night of Calvary! Had the brightness of Eternal Light shone less clearly in her soul, had she mirrored less truly the Infinite Justice, had the image of God's goodness been blurred in her soul, she would have faltered and failed. In the lesser temptations that regard the reign of the spirit over the body, she had that habit of purity which knew not the possibility of wavering. The grosser things of sense had no appeal to her. No slightest cloud of impurity ever darkened her soul.

To us, born under sin, and knowing actual sin in the flesh, the height of Mary's purity is impossible, but, at least, she can be to us the brilliant, faithful Mirror of God's perfections. By the light of her example, we can endeavor to put sense and sensuality more and more behind us: to divest the soul of its winding sheet, and to hasten its journey on to the habit of absolute purity, of perfect faith and trust.

"O God, Who didst keep Mary clean from all stain, grant that by her prayers, we also who are presently defiled, may finally be made pure, and so with her attain unto Thee. Amen."

Fifteenth Day.

MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE.

*" Ah Mother! bravest of the brave,
Wounded at heart by love most pure,
Lightly all troubles thou dost bear,
And flight's discomforts dost endure.*

*" To thy poor servants gracious be,
And make their troubles thy concern,
And those, whom sin has exiles made,
To their true country make return."*

MARY is our lesson of patience. Her youth was full of enthusiasms, of ardor: her intense nature, desiring to love and accomplish, consecrated itself body and soul in very childhood to the service of the Almighty God. At Nazareth she received the great summons of her calling: "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," yet He was born on a cold and lonely night at Bethlehem; to save Him from death, the discomforts of flight and sojourn in a foreign land were endured; the long commonplace years at Nazareth followed in which she could only watch and wait for His "hour" to come. And then His public ministry began. Reports would come to her of His success, of how the people would fain proclaim Him King, only to be followed by news of how they tried to stone Him. She saw His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; she heard the rabble shout to "Crucify Him." With the admirable courage of a patience born of perfect faith and hope and love, she bore the outrageous betrayal on Thursday, the horrors of the Crucifixion on Friday, the deathly silence of the tomb on Saturday. For long years at Ephesus she crowned her patience waiting, oh, so willingly and patiently, until in His own good time God should send His angel death to close her eyes to earth and open them to heaven. Surely "patience hath a perfect work." A doubting, restless zeal is but the cloak of an impatient soul.

Mother, most admirable in thy patience, pray for us.

Sixteenth Day.

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

*"Ah! succor us if cares oppress,
Or adverse fortune should impend;
With peace serene life's journey bless,
Till dawns the day that knows no end."*

LOVE desires to possess, for possession is the satisfying of love.

For twelve years Mary had possessed her Child. Never had day been lengthened, nor night made lonely by His absence. Our hearts rest in the present, they dread to mar its comforting peace by thought of the uncertain future. But to her who had heard Simeon's words, the future could not but be present. Indeed the present bright, consoling light shot its rays into the future and only emphasized its shadows. Terror clutched her heart when, on the return from Jerusalem, she found she had lost her Child. What terrible portent was this: was this the "sword of sorrow," or was greater yet to be?

Mary looked for Him, her Child, and found Him not. He had said nothing. He was gone. Search as she might, she could not find Him. For three days she sought sorrowing Him Whom her soul loved, Whom her womb had borne, and her breasts had nursed. At last she found Him in the Temple, and in answer to her agonized question, He replied: "Know you not that I must be about my Father's business?"

This, then, was but the beginning; the beginning for her who was to be the Mother of Sorrows. On the way home she begged God earnestly for strength to bear worthily all that was to come. Mary made a perfect offering of herself as "she pondered all these things in her heart."

Sorrow and waiting and parting we have known. God has sent us through death the message of heaven. Love has its penalty: the love of our own and of friends—the penalty of death and loss. The love of God—the penalty of sorrow and penitence, and the surrender of death. By pondering these things in our hearts, holy counsel will beget, even in us, the wisdom of God.

Comforter of the afflicted, teach us the lesson of sorrow and much prayer and penance, from the Holy Spirit Himself.

Seventeenth Day.

VIRGIN MOST MERCIFUL.

*"Thou, my Saviour's Cross who bearest,
Thou, thy Son's rebuke who sharest,
Let me share them both with thee."*

THE fiat of Mary was the perfect surrender of self into the hands of God. Her life before and after the birth of her Son was hidden. Self found itself in Another. For her Son she labored. His glory alone did she seek. Her sole desire was to serve Him, and for over thirty years she did serve Him. She felt the persecution He endured from the hands of men. She saw Him condemned and forced to bear the Cross of ignominy to Calvary. She heard Him derided as He was dying. She made herself one with Him in His agony. She sought not self, but accepted His will and her portion therein, even to the parting from Him.

The measure of saintliness is this: How little do I seek self; how completely do I seek God? The ways to God are infinite in variety, because conditions, duties, temperaments are infinitely various. Saint differs from saint in the expression of his sanctity. But all are alike in this, that they try to purify themselves of self and fill their souls with God. The greatest problem of the supernatural life is to learn what is self and what is God. Such is the power of self-deception, that we often use, and even desire the things of God for a motive in which self is the greater factor. Self-advancement may be sought while we comfort ourselves we are doing good; injustice to others may be done because self is not willing to forget personalities, and look clearly at objective worth. Self may lay low a cause because of obstinacy, which it terms strength, and blindness, which it terms zeal, thinking that it is serving God. Charity is the greatest gift of the soul, and fraternal charity is its first-born. But fraternal charity means such an emptying of self that few of us are able to attain it.

For self to empty itself; to refuse to assert that dignity and defence native to it; for self to lose itself in God and try to view men and things with the long-suffering patience and trust and charity of God, is a gift that comes, and comes only after death.

Eighteenth Day.

MYSTICAL ROSE.

*"A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse,
A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed.
O Mary, thy perfumes are a garden of delights."*

THE world loves and admires visible activity and accomplishment. It is the slave of what it hears and sees. It forgets God and prayer, and boasts of doing things and of the worth of human efficiency. The heart naturally yearns for love. When it seeks it solely in human affections, human appreciation, the well-springs of immortal life become dried up; choked by worldliness and externalism.

Mary's life was a hidden life, far apart from the world. Even as a little child she deliberately put herself away from the world; gave herself to the study and service of God in the Temple. She chose virginity; renounced the desire, common to every Jewess, to become the mother of a man. Mary prepared herself for her life-work in secret, alone with God.

We too must prepare ourselves in secret; we too must learn to live alone with God, in inward patience, perfect trust, incessant prayer. The unseen is more powerful than the seen; God is more powerful than men. When we live externally, we forget this. The measure of our inward cultivation and hidden life will be the measure of our real worth, of the worth of our work, of our harmony with God's will. God sees the heart. God judges the heart. As the love of our heart here, so shall our life be for all eternity.

"Draw us, Maiden undefiled.

We will run after thee in the odor of thy perfumes."

Nineteenth Day.

VIRGIN MOST RENOWNED.

"Rejoice with me, all ye that love the Lord, for while I was yet a little one, I pleased the Most High. And I have brought forth from my bowels God and Man."

IN all her wonder and perplexity, in all her trials and sorrows Mary was much comforted by God: her spirit rejoiced in God, her Saviour. The joy of bringing forth her Child, in spite of the hardships of Bethlehem; the adoration of the shepherds; the coming of the Magi; the safe return from the exile of Egypt; the long companionship at Nazareth; the meetings with her Son after the opening of His public ministry, all brought consolation and strength to her spirit. She might have said with the Psalmist: "Thy consolations have brought joy to my soul."

From Mary we learn the strength of joy, the courage of true humility. After Mary's example we must dare to draw strength from those things, those occasions wherein, by God's grace, we know we have been strong; to acknowledge God's favors as the whisper of His encouraging voice; to measure ourselves by the best that we have done: not by the worst. For true humility is very conscious of the great things God has done for us. It knows that without God we fail: and equally that with God we achieve. True humility dares to cry out: "By the grace of God, I am what I am; and His grace hath not been void in me." The grateful meditation of God's consolations gives us that joy and confident hope without which achievement is impossible.

"I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up.
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."

Twentieth Day.

TOWER OF DAVID.

*"Thou Tower, against the dragon proof!
Thou star, to storm-toss'd voyagers dear!
Our course lies o'er a treacherous deep;
Thine be the light by which we steer."*

A GAINST all the ungodly forces of the world, Mary stands as The Tower of David, the tower of the city of God.

The mystery of evil and injustice and suffering can be solved only as she solved it, by a supreme confidence in God born of His revelation to us.

Mary had to meet and to answer all the difficulties and the trials that the world of men, of sense, of time, could bring to bear upon the soul. What shock is there that she did not suffer and endure? The exaltation and certainty of her calling lessened not, but rather increased the bitterness of her trial. The power of every attack brought out virtues more sublime, more heroic than humanity has ever known. Because her heart was made so tender, so affectionate by divine love, the sword of sorrow sank the more deeply. No heart, save One, was opened so often or so deeply to the painful wounds of adversity and suffering as was the heart of Mary. It is hard to bear suffering in ourselves; it is most hard to bear the suffering of those whom we love. Only divine power can give the strength to bear without resentment and with conquering love the unjust persecution and torture even unto death of one dearer to us than our own life.

Mary from Bethlehem to Nazareth and to Calvary is the valiant woman who loves and trusts God. At the supreme moment of trial, when her Son was dead upon the Cross, she stood beneath its shadows.

O Tower of David, be my help unto the strongest and the best. Enable me through thy intercession not only to accept, not only to endure, but to coöperate with my Saviour, your Son, in His Passion. Beg for me the grace to know but one desire—to be made, through God's mysterious grace, the living expression of His will.

Twenty-first Day.

HOUSE OF GOLD.

"That she who was to conceive and bear the Holy of Holies might be holy in body, she received the gift of virginity; and that she might be holy in mind, she received the gift of lowliness."

THE humility of Mary is wonderfully illustrated by her presence in the Cenacle. Well might she have claimed the prerogatives of the most favored of God and have expected some unique signs of recognition, something apart, something greater than the others. But Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the Apostles were *together* persevering with one mind in prayer. They, the Apostles, had deserted her Son: some of them were reprimanded by Him even after His resurrection for their incredulity. Yet as one of their number, Mary waited and prayed. As no greater, no worthier than others, even after her martyrdom, she, like her Son, was content to take her place among sinners. Honor had not set her apart: but humility had made her most humble. The Apostles must have marveled, and have realized better than ever they had before that "he that is the least among you will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Humility that is so strong, so great, is the mark of a great soul.

If it was meet for Mary, the House of Gold, the treasure-house of heaven, to be thus humble, is it not fitting for us sinners to take our place among sinners; to know ourselves, of ourselves, to be no worthier, no better than the worst; to find the lowest place ours by right, the highest only ours by God's mercy and love; to be as ready to leave the highest for the lowest at His bidding as we were to leave the lowest for the highest; to know that God's gifts are His to give or to withhold, for "who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made him?" to see ever in the light of God's blessings the halo of His glory, not our own?

"The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Twenty-second Day.

GATE OF HEAVEN.

*"O Gate, through which hath passed the King!
O Hall, whence light shone through the gloom!
The ransomed nations praise and sing
The Offspring of thy virgin womb."*

AT the marriage feast of Cana, Mary showed herself the Mother of divine faith. Through her intercession, our blessed Lord performed His first miracle, and the first seeds of faith were planted in the souls of the Apostles, for "from that moment they began to believe in Him."

Mary is, in herself, the perfect example of living faith. Not only was her belief in the revealed truth of God unflinching, but her cultivation of it was unceasing: she "kept all these words in her heart." For faith is an active not a passive virtue. It is not enough to submit our minds to Mother Church and believe. By the gift of faith we inherit from her the great treasure of eternal truth which should be to us a Life—the Life of Faith: "that believing we may have *life* in His name." Christian dogma is not a lifeless thing. It is the light that shows us the life that is to come, and illumines our way here and now with the glory of the living God.

Mary is the gate through which passed to earth the heavenly "Light which enlighteneth every man." Those who begin by challenging Mary's title of Mother of God, end by dethroning her Son and kill the virtue of faith. Through Mary's intercession at Cana of Galilee, the light of holy faith in the divine power of Jesus first shone in the hearts of the Apostles who were to preach His dogmas throughout the whole world. Devotion to Mary will beget in us also an increase of holy faith. Through her intercession let us ask the grace to study and meditate the teachings of Holy Church, that faith may bear fruit in our souls and unfold to us more and more God's eternal purpose in us and in all creation.

"Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope," pray for us.

Twenty-third Day.

VESSEL OF HONOR.

*"Blessed art thou among women, and
blessed is the fruit of thy womb."*

*"For thou hast borne in thy breast
Him Whom the heavens cannot contain."*

MARY was chosen by the ever Blessed Trinity to show forth the most perfect obedience to the Divine Will, the most perfect union with the Divine Life. She stands above all other creatures both in the greatness of the work she was called upon to do; and the unique perfection with which that work was done. Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the trinity of the divine virtues was infused into her being. Faith deeply rooted in the rich soil of her innocence, brought forth the rod of Hope and blossomed unceasingly in Charity.

The Blessed Trinity, one God and three Divine Persons, is in Itself infinite Life, infinite Perfection. Its peace and joy and love, beyond what has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, are Its own, infinite, eternal. No action of any creature can add to, or detract from, that Life. Love is eager to communicate self, and although God needs us not, it is the wondrous purpose of the Blessed Trinity to share that peace and joy and love with us, to make us participators in the Divine Life. We will share it as much as God in His inscrutable mercy decrees and our good works permit. Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord, possesses it in all the fullness possible to a creature.

Like Mary, let our first thought be to make ourselves one by offering of prayer with the Divine Will, that the Divine Word may live in us in the fullness of holy Love; that Faith deeply rooted in our obedient hearts may bring forth Hope and blossom in Charity. Let us incessantly crave of the Holy Spirit the grace to be a sharer in the Eternal Divine Life.

"Send forth Thy Holy Spirit and our hearts shall be regenerated. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

Twenty-fourth Day.

SPIRITUAL VESSEL.

*"Blest, in the message Gabriel brought;
Blest, by the work the Spirit wrought;
From whom the great Desire of earth
Took human Flesh and human birth."*

MARY from the first moment she heard: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," surely dwelt in intimate converse with the Holy Spirit within her. The work He wrought in her was not only the conception of our blessed Lord, her Child, but it was His work, also, to guide and sustain her through all that the Incarnation meant. With the Holy Spirit she treasured all things in her heart. He it was Who had done great things for her and in her; and Who would make her name blessed among the nations and through all generations. He it was Who sustained her when the sword pierced her heart; with Him she dwelt in the lonely years at Ephesus.

So, too, we may be sure that the God Who calls us to His service, will never desert us, for "He Who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Confirmation is the complement of Baptism; by Baptism we are made children of God, members of Christ; by Confirmation we become full grown and stalwart soldiers in His service. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the flowering and fruitage of the seed of Baptism. The Holy Spirit should be for us as for Mary: "The Living Spring, the Living Fire. Sweet Unction, and True Love."

Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Spiritual Vessel pray for us.

Twenty-fifth Day.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES.

*"Let flesh, and heart, and lips, and mind,
Sound forth our witness to mankind;
And love light up our mortal frame
Till others catch the living flame."*

MARY is the Model and Queen of Apostles. We may well imagine how often she spoke to others of her divine Son: how she gave testimony of Him Who had been with her from the beginning of His earthly career: how, when she heard His work discussed: approved by some: condemned by others, she must have striven to direct and to suggest unto a better understanding. We may well ponder how she would try to persuade the doubting: to correct the erring: to win the hard-hearted: and how, when she failed, her heart was tried. Was any temptation of doubt allowed to come to her concerning the whole heavenly mystery? Or did her eyes see so clearly that she knew not the shadow of temptation? At least it was cruel pain and sorrow not to have others love Jesus as she loved Him; to have them deaf to the words of Eternal Life; to have them blind to the Light of the world; to love them, to yearn over them and not to be able to help. To have expended herself, and yet seemingly to have done nothing. But that no great, immediate fruit was borne was not God's failure. Above all was God's mysterious will. Like a true daughter of David she would still "wait on the Lord and be of good courage."

Amid disappointment and failure, temptation and distress, Mary, the model of apostles, "magnified the Lord and rejoiced in God, her Saviour."

"O blessed Mary, what we ask faithfully, do thou obtain effectively; receive thou that which we offer; give us that which we entreat; save us from that which we fear, for thou art the sinner's only hope."

Twenty-sixth Day.

TOWER OF IVORY.

"I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord. Then the Creator of all things commanded and said to me: and He that made me rested in my tabernacle. And He said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in My elect."

MARY lived with God. To her life was continuity and hope. The past was never to be forsaken nor denied; the future was never to be held certain simply because of the past. Her willingness to accept the Archangel's message held in germ her glorious martyrdom beneath the Cross; but, had her will wavered, at any time the stem might have been bruised to death and the flower never blossomed. No weakness entered her heart to lead her through false humility to deny or forget the great things God had done for her; no self-confidence led her to deny the one Source of all her worth, or to forget that the Lord exalts only the humble.

At times we assert that we are instruments too unworthy for God to handle. But the choice is not ours. The inspiration, the call, if God sees fit to give it, should receive our entire acceptance. At times, through present fault or serious sin, we forget all that God has done for us; whereas the remembrance of it, in shame, should be the strongest motive of penance and reform.

At times again, when we have grown fat upon the pastures of God, we begin to believe that we can walk alone. The spiritual aspiration and idealism are there; but the humility is not. We grow inconsiderate, severe, censorious. In the end we forget, we may even deny, God.

We must live with God; we cannot live without Him. His hand has supported us and will support us. In His strength we can do all things; of ourselves we can do nothing. If we loosen our hold of His supporting hand we will no longer be sustained, but will sink in the depths of our own sinful nothingness.

Mary, Tower of Ivory, tower of God's strength, pray for us.

Twenty-seventh Day.

QUEEN OF MARTYRS.

*"Fount of love and holy sorrow,
Mother! may my spirit borrow
Somewhat of thy woe profound;
Unto Christ, with pure emotion,
Raise my contrite heart's devotion,—
Love to read in every wound."*

WITH great profit might we make Mary, the sorrowful Mother, the Queen of Martyrs, our companion in meditating upon the Passion. That she is the co-redemptrix is proof enough that the Passion is not solely a punishment for sin. Mary was sinless: nor did she become one with sin for our sakes as did our blessed Lord. Her suffering is called her Compassion: her intense love of Him crucified her with Him. Adversity, ingratitude, the agony and the betrayal of her Son, Whom she knew to be God, lashed her soul. Every blow that tore the flesh of His sacred body, cut deep into her soul; every thorn that pierced His sacred head, pierced her tender heart; every drop of blood that flowed from His sacred wounds was the ebbing of her own heart's blood; every cry of His broken heart echoed and throbbed within her own. She, who would gladly have given her life for Him with a mother's joy in sacrifice, had to watch Him die in torture, and not lift a hand to soothe His pain nor to assuage His thirst. "Was there ever sorrow like unto this sorrow?" Love agonizes love, "deep calleth unto deep." Well might Mary have said: "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me!" But the waters could not drown her charity. They suffocated her; they tortured her; they came in even unto her heart, but they did not shake her. No thought of self turned her gaze from compassion of Him; no compassion of Him weakened her coöperation in the bitter draught of the Chalice which His Father had given Him.

We are not entitled to her intimacy, but as we stand beneath the cross of our Lord, we can at least pray for the strength to bear our little ills patiently and thus, in our measure, even as Mary, comfort the heart of our Lord.

Twenty-eighth Day.

VIRGIN MOST POWERFUL.

*"Very worshipful is blessed John,
who leaned on the Lord's breast at
supper."*

*"To him did Christ upon the Cross
commit His Mother, Virgin to virgin."*

FROM the day that Mary, the Virgin Mother, brought forth Jesus Christ, her Divine Son, true God and true Man, she had possessed Him as her own. He was the one, the sole-satisfying object of her love. When He was dying and about to leave her, He gave to her His beloved disciple, John. He, God and her Son, took Himself away and gave her a disciple in His place. He, the Perfect One, her own, her only Son, was gone. One of His disciples, one of those who had deserted Him, remained to her in His place!

Her perfect love of God was not lessened, but rather increased in her love for John whom God had given in His own place. Mary's full and immediate coöperation in the work of Redemption had proved her love for mankind. Now she manifests it again most visibly. Love for man is a necessary part of our love of God. "My dearest," says St. John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and having before him the memory of Mary, that living example of perfect love for one's neighbor and for God, "this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." This necessary love for man must be real and personal. It should actually fire the heart with affection and sympathy, with a personal concern and care that drive us, for their sake, to share in the sorrow and sacrifice of Mary beneath the Cross of her Son. It is a hard yoke—true love of our fellows. Only because of His love for humankind did Christ know the Cross and death. It is pleasant to dwell with God in the heaven of our thoughts; it is hard indeed to walk and suffer and to be with Christ on earth. Heaven is not yet ours. The Passion of Christ is still ours to fulfill. Mary showed how perfectly she had fulfilled that Passion when she permitted John "from that hour to take her to his own."

Twenty-ninth Day.

QUEEN OF ANGELS.

*"Maiden most wise, whither goest
thou up, like the dawn gloriously
rising?"*

*"The Virgin Mary hath been taken
into the chamber on high where the
King of kings sitteth on a throne amid
the stars."*

IN the hour of her triumphant Assumption; when, by the power of God, her spotless body was lifted with her pure spirit unto Himself, Mary still "made much of the Lord" and little of herself. Had she looked back to earth and witnessed the trail of her glory reaching from the day when she was espoused of the Holy Ghost even to this hour when the King of kings took her to Himself, she would but have repeated: "His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation." At any time during her life journey, had she been asked, she would have said that she had done little or nothing, but "He that is mighty hath done to me great things: and holy is His name." The generations, in calling her "blessed," would but re-echo the wonders of the Lord Who had "regarded the nothingness of His handmaid." So Mary thought, yet all the while God was making her soul more and more glorious, and she was putting forth more and more evidence of her oneness with the Divine Will, and the divine glory.

Thus does God work in our souls, secretly, gently. He asks a love big enough not to need commendation or flattery; a love big enough to lose self in Him, to seek and find our glory solely in His glory.

*"Thou who art exalted over choirs of angels,
Plead for us with the Lord our God."*

Thirtieth Day.

CAUSE OF OUR JOY.

*"Rejoice! O Queen of heaven, Alleluia,
For He Whom thou wast made worthy to bear, Alleluia,
Has arisen as He promised, Alleluia.
Pray for us to God, Alleluia!"*

OUR Blessed Lord called Mary to be the Queen of Martyrs, that she might also be the Cause of our Joy. "Her soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God, her Saviour," even while she earned the title of the Mother of Sorrows. She was given to us as our mother, that we who are the children of sorrow, may also be children of joy. From her we learn that abiding joy which, even in deepest affliction, finds comfort in the all-merciful and all-loving will of God. Through her we have received the fellowship of Christ, by Whose stripes we are healed, in Whose chastisement we have peace. The weight of our sins has been lifted by the pardon of Christ, and the soul knows joy in the fact that it is again a child of God. Suffering is none the less real to us because Christ, our Saviour, has borne it in Himself; but that He has borne it enables us to see its meaning, to have joy in its purpose of divine love. It will lead us to greater victories than human comfort ever knew. Our weaknesses; our failures; the distance we have yet to travel even to draw near the goal, confound, perplex and sadden us. But above all, and greater than all, is the joy that our Lord loves us even in our weakness; that He came to save sinners; that if we put our trust in Him instead of ourselves, His heart will know joy in our surrender, and our hearts will rejoice in a new life.

Life with Him changes our own life. Every duty, even the smallest, fulfilled; every temptation overcome; every trial, however slight, that is endured, is known to Him, has been endured through Him, and will be blessed by Him a hundred-fold. Thus the heart possesses in joy what it desires in thought and affection. Joy is perfect when the possession of the things we love is complete and eternal. In the knowledge that we are no longer our own, but Christ's, earth becomes illumined with the light of heavenly joy.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

OUR LADY'S MONTH

Thirty-first Day.

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS.

"The Lord hath clothed her with the garments of salvation, and hath covered her with the robe of righteousness, yea, as a bride He hath adorned her with jewels."

GOD gave to Mary not only supernatural life, but the fullness of that life, "Hail Mary full of Grace." God not only made her to His image and likeness, but the Blessed Trinity chose her as the instrument of that most glorious work of heaven, in which the Blessed Trinity is One, the Incarnation of the Second Person, the Son of God.

The Blessed Trinity dwelt, therefore, with her and in her, not only substantially as the Trinity dwells in the soul of every just man, but also in an unique and perfect way, because she is to the Blessed Trinity the chosen of all creatures.

The fullness of glory and love which God designed to give to His creatures was given in divine completeness to Mary. In so far as a creature can compass the possession of the Trinity in its fullness Mary compassed it. All the glory that the Trinity could bestow was bestowed upon her. All the worthiness and worth which a creature could give back to her Maker was given by Mary. Therefore is she to-day the Queen of Angels and of Saints.

We, too, must ever recall that the Trinity dwells in us. We are made in the image of the Father; redeemed by the blood of the Son; the Holy Spirit, Who is Love, fires our hearts with the divine love of perfection.

The Holy Spirit is the evidence of God's fullness of love for us. Our devotion to Him is the evidence of our fullness of love for God.

Mary, Queen of all Saints, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

OUR LADY MONTH

October 1924

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS

The Lord hath called me with his
gentle voice of love and grace,
and with the love of righteousness,
as a lamb he hath adorned my soul
with his precious blood.

GOD gave to Mary not only supernatural life but the fullness of that life. "Full Mary full of grace," that was only made her to His image and likeness, but the Blessed Trinity chose her as the instrument of that most precious gift of heaven, in which the Blessed Trinity is one. The incarnation of the Son of God, the Son of Mary, will be and is her glory.

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