

## CHAPTER I.

**SALVE REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ.**

**Hail queen, Mother of mercy.**

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### SECTION I.

**OF THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE SHOULD HAVE IN MARY,  
BECAUSE SHE IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.**

THE Holy Church justly honors the great Virgin Mary, and would have her honored by all men with the glorious title of queen, because she has been elevated to the dignity of mother of the King of kings. If the Son is king, says St. Athanasius, his mother must necessarily be considered and entitled queen.\* From the moment that Mary consented, adds St. Bernardine of Sienna, to become the mother of the Eternal Word, she merited the title of queen of the world and all creatures.† If the flesh of Mary, says St. Arnold, abbot, was the flesh of Jesus, how can the mother be separated from the Son in his kingdom? Hence it follows that the regal glory must not

\* Si ipse Rex est qui natus est de Virgine, mater, quæ eum genuit, Regina et Domina proprie ac vere censetur. Sermon de Deip.

† Iunc autem Virgo in illo consensu meruit primatum orbis, dominum mundi, sceptrum regni super omnes creaturas. Tom. 2d, cap. 51.

only be considered as common to the mother and the Son, but even the same.\*

If Jesus is the king of the whole world, Mary is also queen of the whole world :† therefore, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, all creatures who serve God ought also to serve Mary; for all angels and men, and all things that are in heaven and on earth being subject to the dominion of God, are also subject to the dominion of the glorious Virgin.‡ Hence Gueric, abbot, thus addresses the divine mother: Continue, Mary, continue in security to reign; dispose, according to thy will, of every thing belonging to thy Son, for thou, being mother and spouse of the King of the world, the kingdom and power over all creatures is due to thee as queen.§

Mary, then, is queen; but let all learn for their consolation that she is a mild and merciful queen, desiring the good of us poor sinners. Hence the holy Church bids us salute her in this prayer, and name her the *Queen of Mercy*. The very name of queen signifies, as blessed Albertus Magnus remarks, compassion, and provision for the poor; differing in this from the ti-

\*Neque a dominatione filii Mater potest esse sejuncta, una est Mariæ et Christi caro.

Filii gloriam cum Matre, non tam communem judico, quam eamdem. S. Arnol. de Laud. Virg.

†Regina constituta, totum jure possidet filii regnum. Rupert, abb.

‡ Tot creaturæ serviunt gloriosæ Virgini, quot serviunt Trinitati; omnes namque creaturæ sive angeli, sive homines, et omnia quæ sunt in cælo et in terra, quia omnia sunt divino imperio subjecta, gloriosæ Virgini sunt subjectæ. Tom. 2, cap. 61.

§ Perge Maria, perge segura in bonis filii tui; fiducialite age tamquam regina, mater regis et sponsa; tibi debetur regnum et potestas.

tle of empress, which signifies severity and rigor. The greatness of kings and queens consists in comforting the wretched as Seneca says.\* So that whereas tyrants, in reigning, have only their own advantage in view, kings should have for their object the good of their subjects. Therefore at the consecration of kings their heads are anointed with oil, which is the symbol of mercy, to denote that they, in reigning, should above all things cherish thoughts of kindness and beneficence towards their subjects.

Kings should then principally occupy themselves with works of mercy, but not to the neglect of the exercise of justice towards the guilty, when it is required. Not so Mary, who, although queen, is not queen of justice, intent upon the punishment of the guilty, but queen of mercy, solely intent upon compassion and pardon for sinners. Accordingly, the Church requires us explicitly to call her queen of mercy. The High Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, meditating on the words of David, "These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee, O Lord,"† says, that the kingdom of God consisting of justice and mercy, the Lord has divided it: he has reserved the kingdom of justice for himself, and he has granted the kingdom of mercy to Mary, ordaining that all the mercies which are dispensed to

\* Hoc reges habent magnificum, prodesse miseris.

† Duo hæc audiui, quia potestas Dei est, et tibi, Domine, misericordia. Psal. lxi. 12.

men should pass through the hands of Mary, and should be bestowed according to her good pleasure.\* St. Thomas confirms this in his preface to the Canonical Epistles, saying that the holy Virgin, when she conceived the divine Word in her womb, and brought him forth, obtained the half of the kingdom of God by becoming queen of mercy, Jesus Christ remaining king of justice.†

The eternal Father constituted Jesus Christ king of justice, and therefore made him the universal judge of the world; hence the prophet sang: "Give to the king thy judgment, Oh God; and to the king's son thy justice."‡ Here a learned interpreter takes up the subject, and says: Oh Lord, thou hast given to thy Son thy justice, because thou hast given to the mother of the king thy mercy.§ And St. Bonaventure happily varies the passage above quoted by saying: Give to the king thy judgment, Oh God, and to his mother thy mercy.|| Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also says, that the eternal Father has given to the Son the office of judging and punishing, and to the mother the office of

\* Regnum Dei consistit in potestate et misericordia; potestate Deo remanente, cessit quodammodo misericordiae pars matri regnanti. Psal. iii. Tr. 4th, S. Magn.

† Quando filium Dei in utero concepit, et post modum peperit, dimidiam partem regni Dei impetravit, ut ipsa sit regina misericordiae, ut Christus est rex justitiæ.

‡ Deus judicium tuum regi da; et justitiam tuam filio regis. Psal. lxxi. 2.

§ Quia misericordiam tuam dedisti Matri Regis.

|| Deus judicium tuum regi da, et misericordiam tuam matri ejus.

compassionating and relieving the wretched.\* Therefore the Prophet David predicted that God himself, if I may thus express it, would consecrate Mary queen of mercy, anointing her with the oil of gladness,† in order that all of us miserable children of Adam might rejoice in the thought of having in heaven that great queen, so full of the unction of mercy and pity for us; as St. Bonaventure says: Oh Mary, so full of the unction of mercy and the oil of pity, that God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness!‡

And how well does blessed Albertus Magnus here apply the history of Queen Esther, who was indeed a type of Our Queen Mary! We read in the 4th chap. of the Book of Esther, that in the reign of King Assuerus, there went forth, throughout his kingdom, a decree commanding the death of all the Jews. Then Mardochai, who was one of the condemned, committed their cause to Esther, that she might intercede with the king to obtain the revocation of the sentence. At first Esther refused to take upon herself this office, fearing that it would excite the anger of the king more. But Mardochai rebuked her, and bade her remember that she must not think of saving herself alone, as the Lord had placed her upon the throne to obtain salvation for all the Jews: "Think not that thou mayest

\* *Pater omne iudicium dedit filio, et omne officium misericordiæ dedit matri.*

† *Unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ. Psal. xlv. 8.*

‡ *Maria, plena unctione misericordiæ et oleo pictatis; propterea unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ. In spec. cap. 7.*

save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews." \* Thus said Mardochai to Queen Esther, and thus might we poor sinners say to our Queen Mary, if she were ever reluctant to intercede with God for our deliverance from the just punishment of our sins. Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all men. Think not, oh Lady, that God has exalted thee to be queen of the world, only to secure thy own welfare; but also that thou, being so greatly elevated, mayest the more compassionate and the better relieve us miserable sinners. Assuerus, when he saw Esther before him, affectionately inquired of her what she had come to ask of him: "What is thy petition?" Then the queen answered, "If I have found favor in thy sight, oh king, give me my people for which I request." † Assuerus heard her, and immediately ordered the sentence to be revoked. Now, if Assuerus granted to Esther, because he loved her, the salvation of the Jews, will not God graciously listen to Mary, in his boundless love for her, when she prays to him for those poor sinners who recommend themselves to her and says to him: If I have found favor in thy sight, oh King, my King and my God, if I have ever found favor with Thee (and well does the di-

\* Ne putes quod animam tuam tantum liberes, quia in domo regis es præ cunctis Judæis. Esth. iv. 15.

† Quæ est petitio tua? Si inveni gratiam in oculis tuis o rex, dona mihi populum meum, pro quo obsecro.

vine mother know herself to be the blessed, the fortunate, the only one of the children of men who found the grace lost by man; she knows herself to be the beloved of her Lord, more beloved than all the saints and angels united), give me my people for which I request: if thou lovest me, she says to him, give me, oh my Lord, these sinners in whose behalf I entreat Thee. Is it possible that God will not graciously hear her? Is there any one who does not know the power of Mary's prayers with God? The law of clemency is on her tongue.\* Every prayer of hers is as a law established by our Lord, that mercy shall be exercised towards those for whom Mary intercedes. St. Bernard asks, Why does the Church name Mary *Queen of Mercy*? and answers, Because we believe that she opens the depths of the mercy of God, to whom she will, when she will, and as she will; so that not even the vilest sinner is lost, if Mary protects him.†

But it may, perhaps, be feared that Mary disdains interposing in behalf of some sinners, because she finds them so laden with sins? Perhaps the majesty and sanctity of this great queen should alarm us? No, says St. Gregory, in proportion to her greatness and holiness are her clemency and mercy towards sinners who desire to

\*Lex clementiæ in lingua ejus. Prov. xxxi. 26.

†Quod divini pietatis abyssum cui vult, quando vult et quomodo vult, creditur aperire; ut nemo tam enormis peccator pereat, cui sancta sanctorum patrocini suffragia præstat. In Salve Regina.

amend, and who have recourse to her.\* Kings and queens inspire terror by the display of their majesty, and their subjects fear to enter their presence; but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the wretched have of going to this queen of mercy since she never shows herself terrible or austere to those who seek her, but all sweetness and kindness?† Mary not only gives, but she herself presents to us milk and wool: the milk of mercy to inspire us with confidence, and wool to shield us from the thunderbolts of divine justice!

Suetonius narrates of the Emperor Titus, that he never could refuse a favor to any one who asked it, and that he even sometimes promised more than he could perform; and he answered to one who admonished him of this, that a prince should not dismiss any one from his presence dissatisfied. Titus said this, but, in reality, was perhaps often either guilty of falsehood, or failed in his promises. But our queen cannot lie, and can obtain whatever she wishes for her devoted servants. She has a heart so kind and compassionate, says Blossius, that she cannot send away dissatisfied any one who invokes her aid.‡ But, as St. Bernard says, how couldst thou, oh Mary, refuse succor to the wretched, when thou art queen of mercy? and who are the

\* *Maria quanto altior et sanctior, tanto clementior et dulcior circa conversos peccatores. Lib. 1, ep. 47.*

† *Quid ad Mariam accedere trepidat humana fragilitas? Nihil austerum in ea, nihil terribile; tota suavis est, omnibus offerens lac et lanam. Super Sign. Magn.*

‡ *Ita benigna est, ut neminem tristem redire sinat. Lib. 4, c. 12.*

subjects of mercy, if not the miserable? Thou art the queen of mercy, and I the most miserable of all sinners; if I, then, am the first of thy subjects, then thou shouldst have more care of me than of all others.\*

Have pity on us, then, oh queen of mercy, and give heed to our salvation; neither say to us, oh most holy Virgin, as St. Gregory of Nicomedia would add, that thou canst not aid us because of the multitude of our sins, when thou hast such power and pity that no number of sins can ever surpass it! Nothing resists thy power, since thy Creator and ours, while he honors thee as his mother, considers thy glory as his own, and exulting in it, as a Son, grants thy petitions as if he were discharging an obligation.† By this he means to say, that though Mary is under an infinite obligation to her Son for having elected her to be his mother yet it cannot be denied that the Son also is greatly indebted to his mother for having given him his human nature; whence Jesus, as if to recompense Mary as he ought, while he enjoys this his glory, honors her especially by always graciously listening to her prayers.

How great then should be our confidence in

\* Tu es regina misericordiæ, et ego miserrimus peccator, subditorum maximus. Rege nos ergo, o regina misericordiæ. In Salv. Reg,

† Habes vires insuperabiles, ne clementiam tuam superet multitudo peccatorum. Nihil tuæ resistet potentiæ; tuam enim gloriam Creator existimat esse propriam, et filius in ea exultans, quasi ~~con~~ solvens debitum, implet petitiones tuas. Or. de exitu, R. V.

this queen, knowing how powerful she is with God, and at the same time how rich and full of mercy; so much so that there is no one on earth who does not share in the mercies and favors of Mary! This the blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget: "I am," she said to her, "the queen of heaven and the mother of mercy; I am the joy of the just, and the gate of entrance for sinners to God; neither is there living on earth a sinner who is so accursed that he is deprived of my compassion; for every one, if he receives nothing else through my intercession, receives the grace of being less tempted by evil spirits than he otherwise would be; no one, therefore," she added, "who is not entirely accursed" (by which is meant the final and irrevocable malediction pronounced against the damned), "is so entirely cast off by God that he may not return and enjoy his mercy if he invokes my aid. I am called by all the mother of mercy, and truly the mercy of God towards men has made me so merciful towards them." And then she concluded by saying, "Therefore he shall be miserable, and forever miserable in another life, who in this, being able, does not have recourse to me, who am so compassionate to all, and so earnestly desire to aid sinners."\*

\* Ego regina cœli; ego mater misericordiæ; ego justorum gaudium et aditus peccatorum ad Deum. Nullus est adeo maledictus, qui quamdiu vivit careat misericordia mea; quia propter ne levius tentatur a dæmonibus, quam alias tentaretur. Nullus est ita abjectus a Deo. nisi fuerit omnino maledictus, qui si me invocaverit, non revertatur ad Deum, et habiturus sit misericordiam. Ego vocor ab

Let us then have recourse, let us always have recourse to this most sweet queen, if we would be sure of our salvation; and if the sight of our sins terrifies and disheartens us, let us remember that Mary was made queen of mercy for this very end, that she might save by her protection the greatest and most abandoned sinners who have recourse to her. They are to be her crown in heaven, as her divine spouse has said: "Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards."\* And what are these dens of wild beasts and monsters, if not miserable sinners, whose souls become dens of sins, the most deformed monsters? Now, by these same sinners, as Rupert, the abbot, remarks, who are saved by thy means, oh great Queen Mary, thou wilt be crowned in heaven; for their salvation will be thy crown, a crown indeed worthy and fit for a queen of mercy;† and let the following example illustrate this.

## EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of sister Catherine, an Augustinian nun, that in the place where that servant of God lived, there lived also a woman

omnibus mater misericordiæ, et vere misericordia illius misericordem me fecit. Ideo miser erit qui ad misericordem, cum possit, non accedit. Rev. Lib. 1, cap. 6.

\* Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni; coronaberis . . . de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum. Cant. 4. 8.

† De talium leonem cubiculis tu coronaberis. Eorum salus corona tua erit. Rup. Vid. 1. 3., in Cant.

named Mary, who, in her youth, was a sinner, and obstinately persevered in her evil courses, even to extreme old age. For this she was banished by her fellow-citizens, forced to live in a cave beyond the limits of the place, and died in a state of loathsome corruption, abandoned by all, and without the sacraments; and on this account was buried in a field, like a beast. Now sister Catherine, who was accustomed to recommend very affectionately to God the souls of those who had departed this life, after learning the miserable death of this poor old woman, did not think of praying for her, as she and every one else believed her already among the damned. Four years having past, a soul from purgatory one day appeared to her, and said, "Sister Catherine, how unhappy is my fate! you commend to God the souls of all those who die, and for my soul alone you have had no pity." "And who are you?" said the servant of God. "I am," answered she, "that poor Mary who died in the cave." "How! are you saved?" exclaimed sister Catherine. "Yes, I am saved," she said, "by the mercy of the Virgin Mary." "And how?" "When I saw death drawing near, finding myself laden with sins, and abandoned by all, I turned to the mother of God and said to her, Lady, thou art the refuge of the abandoned, behold me at this hour deserted by all; thou art my only hope, thou alone canst help me; have pity on me. The holy Virgin obtained for me the grace of,

making an act of contrition; I died and am saved, and my queen has also obtained for me the grace that my pains should be abridged, and that I should, by suffering intensely for a short time, pass through that purification which otherwise would have lasted many years. A few masses only are needed to obtain my release from purgatory. I pray thee cause them to be offered for me, and I promise to pray God and Mary for thee." Sister Catherine immediately caused those masses to be said for her, and that soul, after a few days, appeared to her again, more brilliant than the sun, and said to her, "I thank thee, sister Catherine: behold I am now going to paradise to sing the mercy of God and pray for thee."

## PRAYER.

Oh Mother of my God and my Lady Mary, as a poor wounded and loathsome wretch presents himself to a great queen, I present myself to thee, who art the queen of heaven and earth. From the lofty throne on which thou art seated, do not disdain, I pray thee, to cast thy eye upon me, a poor sinner. God hath made thee so rich in order that thou mayest succor the needy, and hath made thee queen of mercy that thou mayest help the miserable, look upon me, then, and have pity on me. Look upon me, and do not leave me until thou hast changed me from a sinner into a saint. I see I merit noth-

ing, or rather I merit for my ingratitude to be deprived of all the graces which, by thy means, I have received from the Lord. But thou, who art the mother of mercy, dost not require merits, but miseries, that thou mayest succor those who are in need; and who is more poor and more needy than I?

Oh glorious Virgin, I know that thou, being queen of the universe, art also my queen; and I, in a more especial manner, would dedicate myself to thy service; that thou mayest dispose of me as seemeth best to thee. Therefore I say to thee with St. Bonaventure, Oh, Lady, I submit myself to thy control, that thou mayest rule and govern me entirely. Do not leave me to myself.\* Rule me, oh my queen, and do not leave me to myself. Command me, employ me as thou wilt, and punish me if I do not obey thee, for very salutary will be the punishments that come from thy hand. I would esteem it a greater thing to be thy servant than Lord of the whole earth. *Thine I am, save me!*† Accept me, oh Mary, for thy own and attend to my salvation, as I am thine own. I no longer will be my own, I give myself to thee. And if hitherto I have so poorly served thee, having lost so many good occasions of honoring thee, for the time to come I will unite myself to thy most loving and most faithful servants. No one

\* Domina, me tuæ dominationi volo committere, ut me plenarie regas et gubernes. Non mihi me relinquas.

† Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.

from this time henceforth shall surpass me in honoring and loving thee, my most lovely queen. This I promise, and I hope to perform with thy assistance. Amen."

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## SECTION II.

HOW MUCH GREATER SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN  
MARY BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

Not by chance, nor in vain, do the servants of Mary call her mother, and it would seem that they cannot invoke her by any other name, and are never weary of calling her mother; mother, indeed, for she is truly our mother, not according to the flesh, but the spiritual mother of our souls and of our salvation. Sin, when it deprived our souls of divine grace, also deprived them of life. Hence, when they were dead in misery and sin, Jesus our Redeemer came with an excess of mercy and love to restore to us, by his death upon the cross, that lost life, as he has himself declared: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly."\* *More abundantly*, because, as the theologians teach us, Jesus Christ by his redemption brought us blessings greater than the injury Adam inflicted upon us by his sin; he reconciled us to God, and thus became the father of our souls, under the new law of grace, as the

\* *Veni, ut vitam. habeant et abundantius habeant. Joab.*

prophet Isaiah predicted: "The Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace."\* But if Jesus is the father of our souls, Mary is the mother; for, in giving us Jesus, she gave us the true life; and offering upon Calvary the life of her Son for our salvation, she then brought us forth to the life of divine grace.

At two different times, then as the holy Fathers show us, Mary became our spiritual mother; the first when she was found worthy of conceiving in her virginal womb the Son of God, as the blessed Albertus Magnus says.

St. Bernardine of Sienna more distinctly teaches us that when the most holy Virgin, on the annunciation of the angel, gave her consent to become mother of the eternal Word, which he awaited before making himself her Son, she by this consent even from that time demanded of God, with lively affection, our salvation; and she was so earnestly engaged in obtaining it, that from that time she has borne us, as it were, in her womb, as a most loving mother.†

St. Luke says, speaking of the birth of our Saviour, that Mary "brought forth her first-born son."‡ Therefore, says a certain writer, if the evangelist affirms that Mary brought forth her first-born, is it to be supposed that she afterwards

\* Pater futuri sæculi, princeps pacis. Isa. ix. 6.

† Virgo per hunc consensum in incarnatione filii omnium salutem vigorosissime expetiit et procuravit; et omnium salvationi per hunc consensum se dedicavit, ita ut ex tunc omnes in suis viscæribus bajulat, tanquam verissima mater filios suos. Tr. de B. V. serm. 6.

‡ Peperit filium suum primogenitum. Luc. cap. ii. 7.

had other children? But the same author adds: If it is of faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh except Jesus, then she must have other spiritual children, and these we are.\* Our Lord revealed this to St. Gertrude, who, reading one day the passage of the Gospel just quoted, was troubled, not knowing how to understand it, that Mary being mother of Jesus Christ alone, it could be said that he was her first-born. And God explained it to her, by telling her that Jesus was her first-born according to the flesh, but men were her second-born according to the spirit.

And this explains what is said of Mary in the holy Canticles: "Thy belly is as a heap of wheat, set about with lilies."† St. Ambrose explains this and says: Although in the pure womb of Mary there was only one grain of wheat, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of grain, because in that one grain were contained all the elect, of whom Mary was to be the mother.‡ Hence, William the Abbot wrote, Mary, in bringing forth Jesus, who is our Saviour and our life, brought forth all of us to life and salvation.§

\* Si primogenitus, ergo alii filii secuti sunt secundogeniti? Carnales nullos habet B. Virgo, præter Christum; ergo spirituales habeat necesse est.

† Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici, vallatus liliis. Cant. vii. 2.

‡ Unum granum frumenti fuit in utero Virginis, Christus Dominus; et tamen acervus tritici dicitur, quia granum hoc virtute omnes electos continet, ut ipse sit primogenitus in multis fratribus. De Instit. Virg.

§ In illo uno fructu, in uno salvatore omnium Jesu plurimos Maria

The second time in which Mary brought us forth to grace was, when on Calvary, she offered to the eternal Father with so much sorrow of heart the life of her beloved Son for our salvation. Wherefore, St. Augustine asserts, that, having then co-operated by her love with Christ in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became also by this co-operation the spiritual mother of us all, who are members of our head, Jesus Christ.\* This is also the meaning of what is said of the blessed Virgin in the sacred Canticles: "They have made me the keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept."† Mary, to save our souls, was willing to sacrifice the life of her Son,‡ as William the Abbot remarks. And who was the soul of Mary, but her Jesus, who was her life and all her love? Wherefore St. Simeon announced to her that her soul would one day be pierced by a sword of sorrow;§ which was the very spear that pierced the side of Jesus, who was the soul of Mary. And then she in her sorrow brought us forth to eternal life; so that we may all call ourselves children of the dolours of Mary. She, our most loving mother, was always and wholly united to

peperit ad salutem. Pariendo vitam, multos peperit ad vitam. *Im Cant. iv. 13.*

\* Illa spiritu mater est membrorum salvatoris, quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in ecclesia nascerentur. *De Virg. cap. 6.*

† Posuit me custodem in vineis; vineam meam non custodivi. *Cant. i. 5.*

‡ Ut multas animas salvas faceret, animam suam morti exposuit.

§ Et tuam ipsius animam doloris gladius pertransibit. *Luc. ii.*

the divine will; whence St. Bonaventure remarks, that when she saw the love of the eternal Father for men, who would have his Son die for our salvation, and the love of the Son in wishing to die for us, she too, with her whole will, offered her Son and consented that he should die that we might be saved, in order to conform herself to that exceeding love of the Father and Son for the human race.\*

It is true that, in dying for the redemption of the world, Jesus wished to be alone. I have trodden the wine-press alone,† “Torcular calcavi solus.” But when God saw the great desire of Mary to devote herself also to the salvation of men, he ordained that by the sacrifice and offering of the life of this same Jesus, she might co-operate with him in the work of our salvation, and thus become mother of our souls. And this our Saviour signified, when, before expiring, he saw from the cross his mother and the disciple St. John both standing near him, and first spoke to Mary: Behold thy son, “Ecce filius tuus;”‡ as if he said to her: Behold the man who, by the offering thou hast made of my life for his salvation, is already born to grace. And then turning to the disciple, he said: Behold thy mother, “Ecce mater tua.”§ By which words, says St.

\* Nullo modo dubitandum est, quia Mariæ animus voluit etiam tradere filium suum pro salute generis humani, ut mater per omnia conformis fieret Patri et Filio.

† Isa. lxiii. 3.

‡ Joan. xix. 26.

§ Deinde dicit discipulo: Ecce mater tua. Joan. xix. 27.

Bernardine of Sienna, Mary was then made mother not only of St. John, but of all men, for the love she bore them. \* On this account, as Silveira observes, St. John himself, when recording this fact in his Gospel, wrote, "After that he said to the disciple: "Behold thy mother."† Let it be remarked that Jesus Christ did not say this to John, but to the disciple, to signify that the Saviour appointed Mary for common mother of all those who, being Christians, bear the name of his disciples.‡

I am the mother of fair love,§ "Ego sum mater pulchræ dilectionis," said Mary; because her love, as an author remarks, which renders the souls of men beautiful in the eye of God, prompts her, as a loving mother, to receive us for her children.¶ And as a mother loves her children, and watches over their welfare, so thou, oh our most sweet queen, lovest us, and dost procure our happiness, says St. Bonaventure.¶¶

Oh, happy those who live under the protection of a mother so loving and so powerful! The prophet David, although Mary was not yet

\* In Joanne intelligimus omnes, quorum B. Virgo per dilectionem facta est mater. Tom 1, Sermon. 55.

† Deinde dicit discipulo; Ecce mater tua. Joan. xix. 27.

‡ Joanne est nomen particulare, discipulus commune, ut denotatur quod Maria omnibus detur in matrem.

§ Ego sum mater pulchræ dilectionis. Eccli. xxiv. 24.

¶ Quia tota es amor erga nos, quos in filios recepit. Paciuccha. de B. V.

¶¶ Nonne plus sine comparatione nos diligis, ac bona nostra precor, quam mater carnalis?

born, besought of God salvation, by dedicating himself to Mary as her son, and thus prayed: "Save the son of thy handmaid."\* Whose handmaid?" asks St. Augustine,† "she who says: Behold the handmaid of the Lord."‡ And who, says Cardinal Bellarmine, who would dare to snatch these children from the bosom of Mary, where they have taken refuge from their enemies? What fury of hell or of passion can conquer them, if they place their trust in the protection of this great mother?§ It is narrated of the whale, that when she sees her young in peril, from the tempest or their pursuers, she opens her mouth and receives them into her bowels. Just so, says Novarino, does this compassionate mother of the faithful, when the tempest of the passions is raging. She then, with maternal affection, protects them as it were in her bowels, and continues to shelter them until she has placed them in the secure haven of paradise.¶ Oh, most loving mother! Oh, most compassionate mother, be ever blessed! and may that God be ever blessed, who has given us thee as a mother, and as a secure refuge in all the dangers of this life. The bless-

\* *Salvum fac filium ancillæ tuæ. Psal. lxxxv. 16.*

† *Cujus ancillæ?*

‡ *Quæ dit; Ecce ancilla Domini. In Psal. lxxxv.*

§ *Quam bene nobis erit sub præsidio tantæ matris? Quis detrahere audebit de sinu ejus? Quæ nos tentatio, aut turbatio superare poterit confidentes in patrocinio matris Dei et nostræ Bell. de sept verb.*

¶ *Fidelium plissima mater, furente tentationum tempestate, materno affectu eos, velut intra viscera propria receptos protegit, donec in beatum portum reponat. V. cap. 14, exc. 81.*

ed Virgin herself revealed this to St. Bridget, saying: "As a mother who sees her son exposed to the sword of the enemy, makes every effort to save him, thus do I, and will I ever do for my children, sinful though they be, if they come to me for help."\* Behold, then, how in every battle with hell we shall always conquer, and certainly conquer, if we have recourse to the mother of God and our mother, always repeating: "We fly to thy protection, oh holy mother of God; we fly to thy protection, oh holy mother of God."† Oh, how many victories have the faithful obtained over hell, by having recourse to Mary with this short but powerful prayer! That great servant of God, Sister Mary of the Crucifixion, a Benedictine nun, by this means always conquered the evil spirits.

Be joyful then, all ye children of Mary; remember that she adopts as her children all those who wish her for their mother. Joyful; for what fear have you of being lost when this mother defends and protects you? Thus says St. Bonaventure: Every one who loves this good mother and trusts in her protection, should take courage and repeat: What do you fear, oh my soul? The cause of thy eternal salvation will not be lost, as the final sentence depends upon Jesus, who is thy brother, and upon Mary who is thy

\* Ita ego facio, et faciam omnibus peccatoribus misericordiam meam potentibus. Lib. 4, c. 38.

† Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei genetrix.

mother.\* And St. Anselm full of joy at this thought, exclaims, in order to encourage us: Oh, blessed confidence! Oh, secure refuge! The mother of God is my mother also. With what certainty may we hope, since our salvation depends upon the sentence of a good brother and of a kind mother!† Hear, then, our mother who calls us, and says to us; "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me."‡ Little children have always on their lips the word mother, and in all the dangers to which they are exposed, and in all their fears, they cry mother, Ah, most sweet Mary! Ah, most loving mother! this is exactly what thou dost desire; that we become little children, and always call upon thee in our dangers, and always have recourse to thee, for thou wishest to aid and save us, as thou hast saved all thy children who have had recourse to thee.

\* Dic, anima mea, cum magna fiducia: Exultabo et lætabor, quia quicquid judicabitur de me pendet ex sententia fratris et matris mee.

† Oh beata fiducia, oh tutum refugium! Mater Dei est mater mea. Qua certitudine igitur debemus sperare, quoniam salus de boni fratris et piæ matris pendet arbitrio! In Depr. ad. V.

‡ Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me. Prov. ix. 4.

### EXAMPLE.

In the history of the foundations of the Company of Jesus, in the kingdom of Naples, is related the following story of a noble youth of Scotland, named William Elphinstone. He was a relation of King James. Born a heretic, he

followed the false sect to which he belonged; but enlightened by divine grace, which showed him his errors, he went to France, where, with the assistance of a good Jesuit father, who was like himself a Scotchman, and still more by the intercession of the blessed Virgin, he at length saw the truth, abjured heresy, and became a Catholic. He went afterwards to Rome, where a friend of his found him one day very much afflicted, and weeping. He asked him the cause, and he answered, that in the night his mother had appeared to him and said: "My son, it is well for thee that thou hast entered the true Church; I am already lost, because I died in heresy." From that time he became more fervent in his devotion to Mary, chose her for his mother, and by her was inspired to become a religious. He made a vow to do so, but being ill, he went to Naples to restore his health by a change of air. But the Lord ordered it so that he should die in Naples, and die a religious; for, having become dangerously ill soon after his arrival there, he by prayers and tears obtained from the superiors admittance, and when about receiving the viaticum, he made his vows in presence of the blessed sacrament, and was enrolled in the society. After this, in the tenderness of his feelings, he gave thanks to his mother Mary for having rescued him from heresy, and brought him to die in the true Church, and in a religious house in the midst of his brethren. Therefore, he exclaimed: "Oh! how glorious it is to die in

the midst of so many angels!" Being exhorted to take a little rest, he answered: "Ah, this is not the time to rest when the end of my life is drawing near." Before dying, he said to the persons present: "Brethren, do you not see the angels of heaven around me?" One of the religious having heard him murmuring something to himself, asked him what he had said. He answered, that his angel-guardian had revealed to him that he should be in purgatory but a short time, and would soon enter paradise. Then he began again to talk with his sweet mother Mary, and repeating the word, mother, mother, he tranquilly expired, like a child falling asleep in the arms of its mother. Soon after, it was revealed to a devout religious that he had already entered paradise.

## PRAYER.

Oh, my most holy mother, how is it possible that, having so holy a mother, I should be so wicked? A mother so inflamed with love to God, and that I should so love creatures? A mother so rich in virtue, and that I should be so poor? Oh, my most amiable mother! I no longer deserve, it is true, to be thy son, because by my bad life I have rendered myself unworthy. I am content if thou wilt accept me as thy servant. I am ready to renounce all the kingdoms of the earth, to be admitted among the lowest of thy servants. Yes, I am content, but do not

forbid me to call thee my mother. This name wholly consoles me, melts me, and reminds me of my obligation to love thee. This name encourages me to confide in thee. When I am the most terrified at the thought of my sins and of the divine justice, I feel myself comforted by the remembrance that thou art my mother. Permit me, then, to call thee my mother, my sweetest mother. Thus I call thee, and thus I will ever call thee. Thou, next to God, shalt always be my hope, my refuge, and my love, in this valley of tears. And thus I hope to die, commending my soul, at the last moment, into thy sacred hands, saying: "My mother, my mother Mary, help me, have pity on me." Amen.

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### SECTION III.

#### HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE OF OUR MOTHER FOR US.

IF, then, Mary is our mother, let us consider how much she loves us. The love of parents for their children is a necessary love, and for this reason, as St. Thomas observes,\* children are commanded in the divine law to love their parents; but there is no command, on the other hand, given to parents to love their children, for love towards one's own offspring is a love so deeply planted in the heart by nature her-

\* Opusc. 60, cap. 4

self, that even the wild beasts, as St. Ambrose says, never fail to love their young.\* It is said that even tigers, hearing the cry of their whelps when they are taken by the hunters, will plunge into the sea to swim after the vessels where they are confined. If, then, says our most loving mother Mary, even tigers cannot forget their young, how can I forget to love you, my children? And, she adds, even if it should happen that a mother could forget her child, it is not possible that I can forget a soul which is my child.†

Mary is our mother, not according to the flesh, but by love: "I am the mother of fair love."‡ Hence she becomes our mother only on account of the love she bears us; and she glories, says a certain author, in being the mother of love; because, having taken us for her children, she is all love towards us.§ Who can describe the love of Mary for us miserable creatures? Arnold of Carnotensis says that, at the death of Jesus Christ, she ardently desired to die with her Son for our sake.|| So that, as St. Ambrose adds, when her Son hung dying on the cross,

\* *Natura hoc bestiis infundit, ut catulos parvulos ament. Lib. 6, Exa. c. 4.*

† *Nunquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui? Et si illa oblita fuerit ego tamen non obliviscar tui. Isa. xlix. 15.*

‡ *Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis. Eccl. xxiv. 24.*

§ *Se dilectionis esse matrem gloriatur, quia tota est amor erga nos, quos in filios recepit. Paciucch.*

|| *Flagrabat Virgo æstuante charitate incensa, ut pro humani generis salute simul cum prole profunderet vitam. Tract de Verb. Dom.*

Mary offered herself to his murderers, that she might give her life for us.\*

But let us consider the reasons of this love, for thus we shall better understand how this good mother loves us. The first reason of the great love that Mary bears to men, is the great love she bears to God. Love to God and man is contained in the same precept, as St. John has written: "This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother;"† so that one increases as the other increases. Hence what have the saints not done for love of the neighbor, because they have loved God so much? They have gone so far as to expose and lose liberty and even life for his salvation. Let us read what St. Francis Xavier did in India, where, for the sake of the souls of those barbarians, he climbed mountains, and exposed himself to innumerable dangers to find those wretched beings, in the caverns where they dwelt like wild beasts, and to lead them to God. St. Francis de Sales, to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, risked his life by crossing a river every day for a year, on his hands and knees, upon a frozen beam, that he might go to the other side to preach to those stubborn men. St. Paulinus became a slave, to obtain liberty for the son of a poor widow. St. Fidelis, to bring the heretics of a

\* Pendeat in cruce filius, mater persecutoribus se offerebat. *De Inst. Virg.* c. 7.

† Hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligit Deum, diligit et fratrem suum. 1 Joan. iv. 21.

Certain place back to God, willingly consented, in preaching to them, to lose his life. The saints, then, because they have loved God so much, have done much for love of the neighbor. But who has loved God more than Mary? She loved God more, in the first moment of her life, than all the saints and angels have loved him in the whole course of theirs; as we shall consider at length, when we speak of the virtues of Mary. She herself revealed to sister Mary of the Crucifixion,\* that the fire of love with which she burned for God was so great, that it would in a moment inflame heaven and earth; and that, in comparison to it, all the flames of the burning love of the seraphim were as cool breezes. Therefore, as there is none among the blessed spirits who loves God more than Mary; so there is, and can be none, except God, who loves us more than this our most loving mother. If the love of all mothers for their children, of all husbands for their wives, and of all saints and angels for their devoted servants, were united, it would not be so great as the love that Mary bears to one soul alone. Father Nierembergh says that the love which all mothers have borne to their children is a shadow when compared with the love which Mary bears to any one of us. Truly she alone loves us more, he adds, than all the angels and saints united.

Moreover, our mother loves us much, because

\* Vita, Lib. 2, cap. 5.

we have been commended to her as children by her beloved Jesus, when, before expiring, he said to her: "Woman, behold thy son;"\* signifying by the person of John, all men, as we have before remarked. These were the last words of her Son to her. The last remembrances left by beloved friends at the moment of their death are greatly valued, and the memory of them is never lost. Moreover, we are children extremely dear to Mary, because we cost her so much suffering. Those children are much dearer to a mother whose lives she has preserved;—we are those children, for whom, that we may have the life of grace, Mary suffered the pain of sacrificing the dear life of her Jesus; submitting, for our sake, to see him die before her eyes in cruel torments. By this great offering of Mary we were then born to the life of divine grace. So, then, we are children very dear to her, because we were redeemed at such a cost of suffering. Accordingly, as we read of the love which the eternal Father has manifested for men by giving his own Son to death for us, "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son:"† as St. Bonaventure remarks, it may be said of Mary also, that she so loved us as to give her only-begotten Son.‡ And when did she give him to us? She gave him to us, says Father Nieremberg, when first she consented to his death; she gave him to

\* *Mulier ecce filius tuus.*

† "*Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.*"  
Joan. iii. 16.

‡ *Sic Maria dilexit nos, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.*

us, when others deserted him through hatred or through fear, and she alone could have defended, before the judges, the life of her Son. We can easily believe that the words of so wise and tender a mother would have had a great power, at least with Pilate, to induce him to abstain from condemning to death a man whom he knew and declared innocent. But no, Mary would not utter even one word in favor of her Son, to prevent his death, upon which our salvation depended; finally, she gave him to us again at the foot of the cross, in those three hours when she was witnessing his death; because then, at every moment, she was offering up for us his life, with the deepest grief, and the greatest love for us, at the cost of great trouble and suffering, and with such firmness, that if executioners had been wanting, as St. Anselm and St. Antoninus tell us, she herself would have crucified him in obedience to the will of the Father, who had decreed he should die for our salvation. And if Abraham showed a similar fortitude in consenting to sacrifice his son with his own hands, we must believe that Mary would certainly have done the same, with more resolution, as she was holier, and more obedient than Abraham. But to return to our subject. How grateful should we be to Mary, for an act of so much love! for the sacrifice she made of the life of her Son, in the midst of so much anguish, to obtain salvation for us all! The Lord, indeed, rewarded Abraham for the sacrifice he was pre-

pared to make to him of his son Isaac; but what can we render to Mary for the life of her Jesus, as she has given us a Son more noble and beloved than the son of Abraham? This love of Mary, says St. Bonaventure, greatly obliges us to love her, seeing that she has loved us more than any other created being loves us, since she has given for us her only Son, whom she loved more than herself.\*

And from this follows another reason why we are so much beloved by Mary: because she knows that we have been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ. If a mother should see a servant redeemed by a beloved son of hers, by twenty years of imprisonment and suffering, for this reason alone how much would she esteem that servant! Mary well knows that her Son came upon earth solely to save us miserable sinners, as he himself declared: "I have come to save what was lost."† And to save us he has consented to lay down his life for us: "Becoming obedient unto death."‡ If Mary, then, had little love for us, she would slightly value the blood of her Son, which was the price of our salvation. It was revealed to St. Elizabeth, the nun, that Mary, from the time she was in the temple, was always praying that God would quickly send his Son to save the world. Now, how much more

\* Nulla post eam creatura ita per amorem nostrum exardescet, quam filium suum unicum, quem multo plus se amavit, nobis dedit, et pro nobis obtulit.

† Veni salvum facere, quod perierat. Luc. xix. 10.

‡ Factus obediens usque ad mortem. Phil. ii. 8.

certainly must we believe that she loves us, after she has seen us so greatly prized by her Son, that he deigned to purchase us at such a cost!

And because all men have been redeemed by Jesus, Mary loves and favors all. She was seen by St. John clothed with the sun: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun."\* She is said to be clothed with the sun, because, as "There is no one that can hide himself from his heat," † so there is no one living on the earth who is deprived of the love of Mary. From the heat of the sun, as it is explained by the venerable Raymond Jordan, who through humility called himself the Idiot, that is, from the love of Mary. ‡ And who, says St. Anthony, can comprehend the care which this loving mother has of us all? Therefore, to all she offers and dispenses her mercy. § For our mother has desired the salvation of all, and has co-operated with her Son in the salvation of all.

It is certain that she is concerned for the whole human race, as St. Bernard affirms;|| hence the practice of some devout servants of Mary is very useful, who, as Cornelius à Lapide relates, have the habit of praying our Lord to grant

\* Et signum magnum apparuit in cœlo, mulier amicta sole. Apoc. xii. 1.

† Non est qui se abscondet a calore ejus. Psal. xviii. 7.

‡ A calore ejus, idest a dilectione Mariæ.

§ Oh quanta cura est Virgini matri de nobis! Omnibus aperit salum misericordiæ suæ.

|| Constat pro universo genere humano fuisse sollicitam. Ho. 2. Mis.

them those graces which the blessed Virgin is seeking for them, using these words: "Oh Lord, give me what the most holy Virgin Mary is asking for me."\* And this is well, as à Lapide adds, for our mother desires greater things for us than we think of asking for ourselves.† The devout Bernardine de Bustis says, that Mary is more desirous to do us good, and bestow favors upon us, than we are to receive them.‡ Therefore blessed Albertus Magnus applies to Mary the words of wisdom: "She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them." § So great is the love, says Richard of St. Laurence, which this good mother bears us, that when she perceives our necessities, she comes to relieve them. She hastens before she is invoked. ||

If Mary, then, is good to all, even to the ungrateful and negligent, who have but little love for her, and seldom have recourse to her, how much more loving must she not be to those who love her and often invoke her! "She is easily seen by them that love her." ¶ Oh, how easy it is, exclaims the same blessed Albertus, for those who love Mary to find her, and find her full of love and pity! "I love them that love

\* Domine, da mihi, quod pro me postulat Ss. Virgo Maria.

† Ipsa enim majora optat, quam nos optare possumus.

‡ Plus ipsa desiderat facere tibi bonum, et largiri gratiam quam tu accipere concupiscas. Mar. 1, Sermon. 5.

§ Præoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se prior ostendat Sap. vi. 14.

| Prins occurrit, quam invocetur. Ric. in Cant. iv. 5.

¶ Facile invenitur ab his qui diligunt illam. Sap. vi. 18.

me,"\*she assures us, and declares that she cannot but love those who love her. And although our most loving lady loves all men as her children, yet, says St. Bernard, she recognizes and loves especially those who most tenderly love her. Those happy lovers of Mary, as the Idiot asserts, are not only loved, but served by her.†

Leonard the Dominican, as we read in the chronicles of his order, who was accustomed to recommend himself two hundred times a day to this mother of mercy, when he was on his death-bed, saw one beautiful as a queen by his side, who said to him: "Leonard, do you wish to die and come to my Son and me?" "Who are you?" answered the religious. "I am the mother of mercy," replied the Virgin; "you have many times invoked me, and now I come to take you: let us go to paradise." On that same day Leonard died, and we hope that he followed her to the kingdom of the blessed.

"Ah, most sweet Mary, blessed is he who loves you!" the venerable brother John Berchmans, of the society of Jesus, used to say: "If I love Mary, I am sure of perseverance, and I shall obtain from God whatsoever I wish." And this devout youth was never satisfied with renewing his intention, and often repeated to himself: "I will love Mary, I will love Mary."

\* Ego diligentes me diligo. Prov. viii. 17.

† Inventa Maria Virgine, invenitur omne bonum. Ipsa namque diligit diligentes se, immo sibi servantibus servit. De contempi. Virgin. in Prolog.

Oh, how much this our good mother exceeds all her children in affection, even if they love her to the extent of their power! "Mary is always more loving than her lovers," says St. Ignatius, martyr.\* Let us love her as much as St. Stanislaus Kostka, who loved this his dear mother so tenderly, that when he spoke of her, every one who heard him desired to love her also; he invented new titles by which he honored her name; he never commenced an action without first turning to her image and asking her blessing; when he recited her office, her rosary, and other prayers, he repeated them with such affectionate earnestness, that he seemed speaking face to face with Mary; when he heard the *Salve Regina* sung, his soul and even his countenance was all on fire; when asked one day by a father of the society, as they were going together to visit an altar of the blessed Virgin, how much he loved her, "Father," he answered, "what can I say more than she is my mother?" And that father tells us how the holy youth spoke these words with such tender emotion of voice, countenance, and heart, that he appeared not a man, but an angel discoursing the love of Mary.

Let us love her as much as blessed Hermann, who called her his beloved spouse, whilst he also was honored by Mary with the same name. As much as St. Philip Neri, who felt wholly consoled in merely thinking of Mary, and on this

\* *Semper Maria cum amantibus est amantior.* Ep. ad., Ep. aur.

account named her his delight. As much as St. Bonaventure, who not only called her his lady and mother, but, to show the tender affection he bore her, went so far as to call her his heart and his soul: "Hail, lady, my mother; yea, my heart, my soul."\* Let us love her as much as her great lover St. Bernard, who loved his sweet mother so much, that he called her "the ravisher of hearts:" † whence the saint, in order to express to her the ardent love he bore her, said to her, "Hast thou not stolen my heart?" ‡ Let us name her our beloved mistress, as St. Bernardine of Sienna named her, who went every day to visit her before her sacred image, in order to declare his love in the tender colloquies he held with his queen. When he was asked where he went every day, he answered that he went to find his beloved. Let them love her as much as St. Louis of Gonzaga, who burned continually with so great love of Mary, that as soon as he heard the sound of the sweet name of his dear mother, his heart kindled, and a flame perceptible to all, lighted up his countenance. Let us love her like St. Francis Solano, who, distracted by a holy passion for Mary, sometimes went with a musical instrument to sing of love before her altar, saying that, like earthly lovers, he was serenading his beloved queen.

\* Ave Domina, mater mea; imo cor meum, anima mea.

† Raptrix cordium.

‡ Nonne rapuisti cor meum?

Let us love her as so many of her servants have loved her, who had no way left of manifesting their love to her. Father Jerome of Trexo, of the Society of Jesus, delighted in calling himself the slave of Mary, and as a mark of his servitude went often to visit her in a church; and what did he do there? He watered the church with the tears of that tender love which he felt for Mary; then he wiped them with his lips, kissing that pavement a thousand times, remembering that it was the house of his beloved mistress. Father Diego Martinez, of the same society, who, on account of his devotion to our Lady, on the feasts of Mary, was carried by angels to heaven, that he might see with how much devotion they were celebrated there, said, "Would that I had all the hearts of the angels and the saints to love Mary as they love her. Would that I had the lives of all men, to devote them all to the love of Mary!" Let others love her as Charles the son of St. Bridget loved her, who said that he knew of nothing in the world which gave him so much consolation as the thought of how much Mary was beloved by God; and he added, that he would accept every suffering rather than that Mary should lose, if it were possible for her to lose it, the least portion of her greatness; and if the greatness of Mary were his, he would renounce it in her behalf, because she was more worthy of it. Let us desire to sacrifice our life in testimony of our love to Mary, as Alphonso Rodriguez desired to do. Let us, like Francesco

Binanzio, a religious, and Radagunde, wife of King Clotaire, engrave with sharp instruments of iron upon our breast the sweet name of Mary. Let us, with red-hot iron, impress upon our flesh the beloved name, that it may be more distinct and more enduring, as did her devoted servants Battista Archinto and Agostino d'Espinosa, both of the Company of Jesus.

If, then, the lovers of Mary imitate, as much as possible, those lovers who endeavor to make known their affection to the person beloved, they can never love her so much as she loves them. I know, oh Lady, said St. Peter Damian, how loving thou art, and that thou lovest us with unconquerable love.\* The venerable Alphonso Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, was once standing before an image of Mary; and there burning with love for the most holy Virgin, broke forth into these words: "My most amiable mother, I know that thou lovest me, but thou dost not love me so much as I love thee." Then Mary, as if wounded in her love, spoke to him from that image and said: "What dost thou say—what dost thou say, oh Alphonso? Oh, how much greater is the love I bear thee than the love thou bearest me! Know that the distance from heaven to earth is not so great as from my love to thine."

With how much reason, then, did St. Bonaventure exclaim: Blessed are those whose lot it

\* Scio, Domina, quia amantissima es et amas nos amore invincibili. Serm. 1, de Nat. B. V.

is to be faithful servants and lovers of this most loving mother!\* For this most grateful queen is never surpassed in love by her devoted servants.† Mary, in this respect, imitating our loving Redeemer Jesus Christ, makes by her favors a twofold return to him who loves her. I will exclaim, then, with the enamored St. Anselm: May my heart languish, may my soul melt with your never-failing love.‡ May my heart always burn and my soul be consumed with love for you, oh Jesus, my beloved Saviour, oh my dear mother Mary. Grant then, oh Jesus and Mary, since without your grace I cannot love you, grant to my soul, not through my merits, but through yours, that I may love you as you deserve. Oh, God! the lover of men, thou hast died for thy enemies, and canst thou deny to him who asks it, the grace of loving thee and thy mother?§

#### EXAMPLE.

It is narrated by Father Auriemma,|| that a poor shepherdess loved Mary so much that all her delight was to go to a little chapel of our

\* Beati quorum corda diligunt Mariam! Beati qui ei famulantur!

† Nunquam in hoc certamine a nobis vincitur. Amorem redhibet, et præterita beneficia semper novis adauget. Paciucc. de B. Virg.

‡ Vestri continuo amore langueat cor meum, liquefiat anima mea. In Depr. ad V.

§ Date itaque supplicanti animæ meæ, non propter meritum meum sed propter meritum vestrum, date illi quantum digni estis amorem vestrum. Oh amator hominum, tu potuisti reos tuos usque ad mortem amare, et poteris roganti amorem tui et matris tuæ negare? Lee cit.

|| Affett Scamb. tom. 2, cap. 7.

Lady, on a mountain, and there in solitude, while her sheep were feeding, to converse with her beloved mother and pay her devotion to her. When she saw that the figure of Mary, in relief, was unadorned, she began, by the poor labor of her hands, to make a drapery for it. Having gathered one day some flowers in the fields, she wove them into a garland, and then ascending the altar of that little chapel, placed it on the head of the figure, saying: "Oh, my mother, I would that I could place on thy head a crown of gold and gems; but as I am poor, receive from me this poor crown of flowers, and accept it as a token of the love I bear thee." Thus this devout maiden always endeavored to serve and honor her beloved Lady. But let us see how our good mother, on the other hand, rewarded the visits and the affection of her child. She fell ill, and was near her end. It happened that two religious passing that way, weary with traveling, stopped to rest under a tree; one fell asleep and the other watched, but both had the same vision. They saw a company of beautiful virgins, and among them there was one who, in loveliness and majesty, surpassed the rest. One of the brothers addressed her, and said: "Lady, who art thou? and where art thou going?" "I am the mother of God," she replied, "and I am going to the neighboring village, with these holy virgins, to visit a dying shepherdess, who has many times visited me." She spoke thus and disappeared. These two good servants of

God proposed to each other to go and visit her also. They went towards the place where the dying maiden lived, entered a small cottage, and there found her lying upon a little straw. They saluted her, and she said to them: "Brothers, ask of God that he may permit you to see the company that surrounds me." They were quickly on their knees, and saw Mary, with a crown in her hand by the side of the dying girl, consoling her. Then those holy virgins began to sing, and with that sweet music the blessed soul was released from the body. Mary crowned her, and took her soul with her to paradise.

## PRAYER.

*Oh Lady, Ravisher of hearts!* I would exclaim with St. Bonaventure; who, with the love and favor thou dost bestow upon thy servants, dost ravish their hearts; take my miserable heart also, which desires so earnestly to love thee. Thou, oh my mother, with thy beauty hast enamored a God, and hast drawn him from heaven into thy bosom, and shall I live without loving thee? No. I will say to thee with thy loving child John Berchmans: "I will never rest until I have attained a tender love for my mother Mary."\* No, I will not rest until I am certain of having obtained a love—a constant and tender love for thee, my mother, who hast loved me with so much tenderness even when I was so un-

\* Nunquam quiescam, donec habuero tenerum amorem erga matrem meam Mariam.

grateful towards thee. And where should I now be if thou, oh Mary, hadst not loved me, and obtained so many favors for me? If then thou hast loved me so much when I did not love thee, how much more may I confide in thy goodness, now that I love thee? I love thee, oh my mother, and would wish for a heart capable of loving thee, for all those unhappy beings who do not love thee. Would that my tongue could praise thee with the power of a thousand tongues, in order to make known thy greatness, thy holiness, thy mercy, and thy love, with which thou lovest those who love thee. If I had riches, I would employ them all for thy honor; if I had subjects, I would make them all thy lovers; for thee and for thy glory I would give my life, if it were required. I love thee, oh my mother, but at the same time I fear that thou dost not love me, for I have heard that love makes lovers like those they love.\* If then I find myself so unlike to thee, it is a proof that I do not love thee. Thou so pure, I so unclean; thou so humble, I so proud; thou so holy, I so sinful. But this, oh Mary, is to be thy work; since thou lovest me, make me like unto thyself. Thou hast the power to change the heart; take then mine and change it. Let the world see what thou canst do for those who love thee. Make me holy—make me worthy of thy Son. Thus I hope; thus may it be.

\* *Amor aut similes invenit, aut facit. Aristot.*