

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

*A Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin
Preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ*

Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort
1673–1716

About This Work

Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673–1716) was a missionary priest of western France, a preacher of parish missions in Brittany, Poitou, and the Vendée, and the founder of the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom. He wrote this treatise near the end of his life, about the year 1712, at the height of his missionary labors. The manuscript, hidden during the French Revolution, lay unknown until 1842, when it was rediscovered in the motherhouse of his missionaries at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre; it was first published in 1843 and has since become one of the most influential Marian works ever written. Montfort was canonized in 1947.

The opening pages and the conclusion of the manuscript have never been found: the treatise begins where the surviving pages begin, in full flight. Montfort himself foretold the fate of his book: “I foresee many raging beasts who come in fury to tear apart with their diabolical teeth this little writing ... or at least to bury it in the darkness and silence of a chest” (§114). Its teaching is simple and total: perfect devotion to Jesus Christ through a complete consecration of oneself to him through the hands of Mary.

The paragraph numbers 1–273, standard in all modern editions, are given here as citation anchors. A note on this edition and its sources stands at the end of the book.

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I. THE NECESSITY WE HAVE OF DEVOTION TO THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN

A. NECESSITY OF DEVOTION TO MARY

1. It is through the Most Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world.

2. Mary was very hidden in her life: that is why she is called by the Holy Spirit and the Church *Alma Mater*: hidden and secret Mother. Her humility was so profound that she had on earth no attraction more powerful and more continual than to hide herself from herself and from every creature, so as to be known by God alone.

3. God, to grant the requests she made to him to hide her, impoverish her, and humble her, took pleasure in hiding her in her conception, in her birth, in her life, in her mysteries, in her resurrection and assumption, from almost every human creature. Her own parents did not know her; and the angels often asked one another: *Quae est ista?* Who is she? Because the Most High hid her from them; or, if he revealed something of her to them, he hid infinitely more from them.

4. God the Father consented that she should work no miracle in her life, at least none that was striking, although he had given her the power to do so. God the Son consented that she should scarcely speak at all, although he had communicated his wisdom to her. God the Holy Spirit consented that his Apostles and Evangelists should speak of her only very little, and only as much as was necessary to make Jesus Christ known, although she was his faithful Spouse.

5. Mary is the excellent masterpiece of the Most High, of which he has reserved to himself the knowledge and the possession. Mary is the admirable Mother of the Son, who took pleasure in humbling and

hiding her during his life, to favor her humility, addressing her by the name of woman, *mulier*, as a stranger, although in his heart he esteemed and loved her more than all angels and men. Mary is the sealed fountain and the faithful Spouse of the Holy Spirit, where he alone enters. Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity, where God is present more magnificently and divinely than in any place in the universe, not excepting his dwelling upon the cherubim and seraphim; and no creature, however pure it may be, is permitted to enter there without a great privilege.

6. I say with the saints: The divine Mary is the earthly paradise of the new Adam, where he became incarnate by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in order to work there incomprehensible marvels. She is the great and divine world of God, where there are ineffable beauties and treasures. She is the magnificence of the Most High, where he hid, as in his bosom, his only Son, and in him all that he has that is most excellent and most precious. Oh! oh! what great and hidden things this mighty God has done in this admirable creature, as she herself is obliged to say, despite her profound humility: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est* [He that is mighty has done great things for me]. The world does not know them, because it is incapable and unworthy of them.

7. The saints have said admirable things of this holy city of God; and they were never more eloquent and more content, as they themselves confess, than when they spoke of her. After that, they cry out that the height of her merits, which she has raised up to the throne of the Divinity, cannot be perceived; that the breadth of her charity, which she has extended wider than the earth, cannot be measured; that the greatness of her power, which she has even over a God himself, cannot be comprehended; and finally, that the depth of her humility and of all her virtues and graces, which are an abyss, cannot be sounded. O incomprehensible height! O ineffable breadth! O measureless greatness! O impenetrable abyss!

8. Every day, from one end of the earth to the other, in the highest heavens, in the deepest abysses, everything preaches, everything proclaims the admirable Mary. The nine choirs of angels, men of every sex, age, condition, and religion, good and bad, even the very devils, are obliged to call her blessed, willingly or unwillingly, by the force of truth. All the angels in heaven cry out to her incessantly, as Saint Bonaventure says: *Sancta, sancta, sancta Maria, Dei Genitrix et Virgo* [Holy, holy, holy Mary, Mother of God and Virgin]; and they offer her, millions upon millions of times every day, the Salutation of the angels: *Ave, Maria*, etc., prostrating themselves before her, and asking her as a grace to honor them with some of her commands. Even Saint Michael, says Saint Augustine, though the prince of all the heavenly court, is the most zealous in rendering to her, and in causing to be rendered to her, every kind of honor, always waiting to have the honor of going, at her word, to render service to some one of her servants.

9. The whole earth is full of her glory, especially among Christians, where she is taken as tutelary patroness and protectress in many kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and cities. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God under her name. Not a church without an altar in her honor; not a country or canton where there is not some one of her miraculous images, where all sorts of evils are cured and all sorts of goods obtained. So many confraternities and congregations in her honor! So many religious orders under her name and protection! So many brothers and sisters of all the confraternities, and so many religious men and women of all the orders, who publish her praises and proclaim her mercies! There is not a little child who, lisping the *Ave Maria*, does not praise her; there is scarcely a sinner who, even in his hardness of heart, does not have in her some spark of confidence; there is not even a devil in hell who, while fearing her, does not respect her.

10. After that, we must say, in truth, with the saints: *De Maria numquam satis* [Of Mary there is never enough]. Mary has not yet been praised, exalted, honored, loved, and served enough. She deserves still more praise, respect, love, and service.

11. After that, we must say with the Holy Spirit: *Omnis gloria ejus filiae Regis ab intus*: All the glory of the King's daughter is within: as if all the exterior glory which heaven and earth vie in rendering her were nothing in comparison with that which she receives within from the Creator, and which is not known by little creatures, who cannot penetrate the secret of the King's secrets.

12. After that, we must cry out with the Apostle: *Nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit*: Neither has eye seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man comprehended the beauties, the grandeurs, and the excellences of Mary, the miracle of miracles of grace, of nature, and of glory. If you wish to comprehend the Mother, says a saint, comprehend the Son. She is a worthy Mother of God: *Hic taceat omnis lingua*: Let every tongue remain mute here.

13. My heart has just dictated all that I have just written, with particular joy, to show that the divine Mary has been unknown until now, and that this is one of the reasons why Jesus Christ is not known as he ought to be. If, then, as is certain, the knowledge and the reign of Jesus Christ are coming into the world, it will be only a necessary consequence of the knowledge and the reign of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who brought him into the world the first time and will make him shine forth the second.

1- God willed to begin and to complete his greatest works through the Most Blessed Virgin

14. I confess, with the whole Church, that Mary, being only a pure creature come forth from the hands of the Most High, compared with his infinite Majesty, is less than an atom, or rather is nothing at all, since he alone is “He who is”, and that, consequently, this great Lord, always independent and sufficient to himself, has not had, nor does he yet have, any absolute need of the Most Blessed Virgin for the accomplishment of his will and for the manifestation of his glory. He has only to will in order to do everything.

15. I say, nevertheless, that, supposing things to be as they are, since God willed to begin and to complete his greatest works through the Most Blessed Virgin ever since he formed her, it is to be believed that he will not change his conduct in the ages of ages; for he is God, and he does not change in his sentiments or in his conduct.

16. God the Father gave his Only-Begotten to the world only through Mary. Whatever sighs the patriarchs may have heaved, whatever requests the prophets and the saints of the old law may have made, for four thousand years, to obtain this treasure, it was Mary alone who merited it and found grace before God by the force of her prayers and the height of her virtues. The world being unworthy, says Saint Augustine, to receive the Son of God immediately from the hands of the Father, he gave him to Mary so that the world might receive him through her. The Son of God became man for our salvation, but in Mary and through Mary. God the Holy Spirit formed Jesus Christ in Mary, but after having asked her consent through one of the first ministers of his court.

17. God the Father communicated to Mary his fruitfulness, so far as a pure creature was capable of it, to give her the power to produce his Son and all the members of his Mystical Body.

18. God the Son descended into her virginal womb, as the new Adam into his earthly paradise, to take his delight there and to work marvels of grace there in secret. This God made man found his liberty in seeing himself imprisoned in her womb; he made his strength blaze forth in letting himself be carried by this little girl; he found his glory and that of his Father in hiding his splendors from all creatures here below, to reveal them to Mary alone; he glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this lovable Virgin in his conception, in his birth, in his presentation in the temple, in his hidden life of thirty years, even to his death, at which she was to be present, that he might make with her but one and the same sacrifice, and be immolated to the eternal Father by her consent, as Isaac of old was by Abraham's consent to the will of God. It is she who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, brought him up, and sacrificed him for us. O admirable and incomprehensible dependence of a God, which the Holy Spirit could not pass over in silence in the Gospel, although he has hidden from us almost all the admirable things that this incarnate Wisdom did in his hidden life — that he might show us its infinite price and glory. Jesus Christ gave more glory to God his Father by the submission he rendered to his Mother during thirty years than he would have given him by converting the whole earth through the working of the greatest marvels. Oh! how highly we glorify God when, to please him, we submit ourselves to Mary, after the example of Jesus Christ, our only model!

19. If we examine closely the rest of the life of Jesus Christ, we shall see that he willed to begin his miracles through Mary. He sanctified Saint John in the womb of his mother Saint Elizabeth, by the word of Mary; as soon as she had spoken, John was sanctified, and this is his first and greatest miracle of grace. He changed water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, at her humble prayer, and this is his first miracle of nature. He began and continued his miracles through Mary; and he will continue them until the end of the ages through Mary.

20. God the Holy Spirit, being barren in God — that is to say, producing no other divine Person — became fruitful through Mary, whom he espoused. It is with her, and in her, and of her that he produced his masterpiece, which is a God made man, and that he produces every day, until the end of the world, the predestined and the members of the body of this adorable Head: which is why the more he finds Mary, his dear and indissoluble Spouse, in a soul, the more operative and powerful he becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ.

21. This is not to say that the Most Blessed Virgin gives the Holy Spirit fruitfulness, as if he did not have it, since, being God, he has fruitfulness, or the capacity to produce, like the Father and the Son, although he does not reduce it to act, producing no other divine Person. But it is to say that the Holy Spirit, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, whom he is pleased to make use of, though he has no absolute need of her, reduces his fruitfulness to act, producing in her and through her Jesus Christ and his members. A mystery of grace unknown even to the most learned and spiritual among Christians.

22. The conduct which the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity observed in the Incarnation and the first coming of Jesus Christ, they keep every day, in an invisible manner, in the holy Church, and they will keep it until the consummation of the ages, in the last coming of Jesus Christ.

23. God the Father made a gathering of all the waters, which he named the sea; he made a gathering of all his graces, which he called Mary. This great God has a treasure or storehouse most rich, in which he has enclosed all that he possesses of beauty, of splendor, of rarity, and of preciousness, even his own Son; and this immense treasure is none other than Mary, whom the saints call the treasure of the Lord, out of whose fullness men are enriched.

24. God the Son communicated to his Mother all that he acquired by his life and his death, his infinite merits and his admirable virtues, and he made her the treasurer of all that his Father gave him as his inheritance; it is through her that he applies his merits to his members, that he communicates his virtues and distributes his graces; she is his mysterious channel, she is his aqueduct, through which he makes his mercies pass gently and abundantly.

25. God the Holy Spirit communicated to Mary, his faithful Spouse, his ineffable gifts, and he chose her to be the dispenser of all that he possesses: so that she distributes to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills, and when she wills, all his gifts and graces, and no heavenly gift is given to men that does not pass through her virginal hands. For such is the will of God, who has willed that we should have everything through Mary; for thus will she be enriched, exalted, and honored by the Most High — she who impoverished, humbled, and hid herself even to the depth of nothingness by her profound humility, throughout her whole life. Such are the sentiments of the Church and of the Holy Fathers.

26. If I were speaking to the freethinkers of this age, I would prove more at length all that I state simply, by Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, whose Latin passages I would quote, and by several solid reasons which may be seen set forth at length by the Reverend Father Poiré in his Triple Crown of the Blessed Virgin. But as I speak particularly to the poor and the simple, who, being of good will and having more faith than the common run of the learned, believe more simply and with more merit, I content myself with declaring the truth to them simply, without stopping to cite for them all the Latin passages, which they do not understand; though I do not fail to quote a few of them, without searching them out overmuch. Let us continue.

27. Since grace perfects nature, and glory perfects grace, it is certain that Our Lord is still in heaven as much the Son of Mary as he was on

earth, and that, consequently, he has kept the submission and obedience of the most perfect of all children toward the best of all mothers. But we must take care not to conceive in this dependence any abasement or imperfection in Jesus Christ. For Mary, being infinitely below her Son, who is God, does not command him as a mother here below would command her child, who is beneath her. Mary, being wholly transformed into God by grace and by the glory which transforms all the saints into him, asks nothing, wills nothing, does nothing that is contrary to the eternal and immutable will of God. When we read, then, in the writings of Saints Bernard, Bernardine, Bonaventure, etc., that in heaven and on earth everything, even God himself, is subject to the Most Blessed Virgin, they mean that the authority which God has been pleased to give her is so great that it seems she has the same power as God, and that her prayers and petitions are so powerful with God that they always pass for commands with his Majesty, who never resists the prayer of his dear Mother, because she is always humble and conformed to his will. If Moses, by the force of his prayer, stayed the anger of God against the Israelites in a manner so powerful that this most high and infinitely merciful Lord, unable to resist him, told him to let him be angry and punish that rebellious people, what must we think, with all the more reason, of the prayer of the humble Mary, the worthy Mother of God, which is more powerful with his Majesty than the prayers and intercessions of all the angels and saints of heaven and earth?

28. Mary commands in the heavens over the angels and the blessed. As a reward for her profound humility, God has given her the power and the commission to fill with saints the empty thrones from which the apostate angels fell through pride. Such is the will of the Most High, who exalts the humble, that Heaven, earth, and hell bend, willingly or unwillingly, to the commands of the humble Mary, whom he has made the Sovereign of heaven and earth, the general of his armies, the treasurer of his treasures, the dispenser of his graces, the worker of his great marvels, the restorer of the human race, the

mediatrix of men, the exterminator of the enemies of God, and the faithful companion of his grandeurs and triumphs.

29. God the Father wills to make children for himself through Mary until the consummation of the world, and he says to her these words: *In Jacob inhabita*, dwell in Jacob, that is to say, make your dwelling and residence in my children and predestined, prefigured by Jacob, and not at all in the children of the devil and the reprobate, prefigured by Esau.

30. As in natural and bodily generation there is a father and a mother, so in supernatural and spiritual generation there is a father, who is God, and a mother, who is Mary. All the true children of God and predestined have God for father and Mary for mother; and whoever does not have Mary for Mother does not have God for Father. That is why the reprobate, such as heretics, schismatics, etc., who hate the Most Blessed Virgin or regard her with contempt or indifference, do not have God for father, although they glory in it, because they do not have Mary for mother: for, if they had her for mother, they would love her and honor her as a true and good child naturally loves and honors his mother who gave him life. The most infallible and most indubitable sign for distinguishing a heretic, a man of bad doctrine, a reprobate, from one of the predestined, is that the heretic and the reprobate have nothing but contempt or indifference for the Most Blessed Virgin, striving, by their words and examples, to diminish the veneration and love of her, openly or in secret, sometimes under fine pretexts. Alas! God the Father has not told Mary to make her dwelling in them, because they are Esaus.

31. God the Son wills to form himself and, so to speak, to become incarnate every day, through his dear Mother, in his members, and he says to her: *In Israel hereditare*: Have Israel for your inheritance. It is as if he said: God my Father has given me for an inheritance all the nations of the earth, all men good and bad, predestined and reprobate; I will lead the former with the rod of gold and the latter with the rod

of iron; I will be the father and the advocate of the former, the just avenger of the latter, and the judge of all; but as for you, my dear Mother, you shall have for your inheritance and possession only the predestined, prefigured by Israel; and, as their good mother, you shall bring them forth, nourish them, and raise them; and, as their sovereign, you shall lead them, govern them, and defend them.

32. “A man and a man is born in her,” says the Holy Spirit: *Homo et homo natus est in ea*. According to the explanation of some Fathers, the first man who is born in Mary is the God-Man, Jesus Christ; the second is a mere man, a child of God and of Mary by adoption. If Jesus Christ, the head of men, is born in her, the predestined, who are the members of this head, must also be born in her by a necessary consequence. One and the same mother does not bring into the world the head or chief without the members, nor the members without the head; otherwise, it would be a monster of nature; likewise, in the order of grace, the head and the members are born of one and the same mother; and if a member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is to say, one of the predestined, were born of a mother other than Mary, who has produced the head, he would not be one of the predestined, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but a monster in the order of grace.

33. Moreover, Jesus being at present as much as ever the fruit of Mary, as Heaven and earth repeat to her a thousand and a thousand times every day: And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, it is certain that Jesus Christ is, for each man in particular who possesses him, as truly the fruit and the work of Mary as for the whole world in general; so that, if any of the faithful has Jesus Christ formed in his heart, he can boldly say: Great thanks to Mary; what I possess is her effect and her fruit, and without her I would not have it; and one can apply to her, more truly than Saint Paul applies them to himself, these words: *Quos iterum parturio, donec in vobis formetur Christus*: I bring forth every day the children of God, until Jesus Christ my Son is

formed in them in the fullness of his age. Saint Augustine, surpassing himself and all that I have just said, says that all the predestined, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, maintained, and made to grow by this good Mother, until she brings them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just. O mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate, and little known to the predestined!

34. God the Holy Spirit wills to form elect ones for himself in her and through her, and he says to her: *In electis meis mitte radices*. Strike, my well-beloved and my Spouse, the roots of all your virtues in my elect, so that they may grow from virtue to virtue and from grace to grace. I took so much complacency in you when you lived on earth in the practice of the most sublime virtues, that I desire still to find you on earth, without your ceasing to be in heaven. To this end, reproduce yourself in my elect: let me see in them with complacency the roots of your invincible faith, of your profound humility, of your universal mortification, of your sublime prayer, of your ardent charity, of your firm hope, and of all your virtues. You are ever my Spouse, as faithful, as pure, and as fruitful as ever: may your faith give me faithful ones; may your purity give me virgins, may your fruitfulness give me elect ones and temples.

35. When Mary has struck her roots in a soul, she produces there marvels of grace which she alone can produce, because she alone is the fruitful Virgin who has never had, and will never have, her like in purity and in fruitfulness. Mary has produced, with the Holy Spirit, the greatest thing that has ever been or ever will be, which is a God-Man, and she will consequently produce the greatest things that will be in the latter times. The formation and the education of the great saints who will come at the end of the world are reserved to her; for only this singular and miraculous Virgin can produce, in union

with the Holy Spirit, singular and extraordinary things.

36. When the Holy Spirit, her Spouse, has found her in a soul, he flies there, he enters there fully, he communicates himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent that it gives place to his Spouse; and one of the great reasons why the Holy Spirit does not now work dazzling marvels in souls is that he does not find in them a great enough union with his faithful and indissoluble Spouse. I say: indissoluble Spouse, for since this substantial Love of the Father and of the Son espoused Mary in order to produce Jesus Christ, the head of the elect, and Jesus Christ in the elect, he has never repudiated her, because she has always been faithful and fruitful.

2- Devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is necessary

37. From what I have just said, one must evidently conclude: First, that Mary has received from God a great dominion in the souls of the elect: for she cannot make her residence in them, as God the Father has ordered her to do; form them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother; have them for her inheritance and her portion; form them in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in them; strike into their heart the roots of her virtues, and be the indissoluble companion of the Holy Spirit for all these works of grace; she cannot, I say, do all these things unless she has right and dominion in their souls by a singular grace of the Most High, who, having given her power over his only and natural Son, has also given it to her over his adopted children, not only as to the body, which would be a small thing, but also as to the soul.

38. Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace, as Jesus is their King by nature and by conquest. Now, as the kingdom of Jesus Christ consists principally in the heart or the interior of man, according to this word: The kingdom of God is within us, so the kingdom of the Most Blessed Virgin is principally in the interior of man, that is to say, his soul; and it is principally in souls that she is more glorified with her

Son than in all visible creatures, and we can call her, with the saints, the Queen of hearts.

39. Secondly, it must be concluded that the Most Blessed Virgin, being necessary to God with a necessity which is called hypothetical, in consequence of his will, is far more necessary to men for arriving at their last end. Devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin must therefore not be mingled with the devotions to the other saints, as if it were not more necessary, and were merely a matter of supererogation.

40. The learned and pious Suarez, of the Society of Jesus, the erudite and devout Justus Lipsius, doctor of Louvain, and several others have proved invincibly, in consequence of the sentiments of the Fathers, among others Saint Augustine, Saint Ephrem, deacon of Edessa, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Saint Germanus of Constantinople, Saint John Damascene, Saint Anselm, Saint Bernard, Saint Bernardine, Saint Thomas, and Saint Bonaventure, that devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is necessary for salvation, and that it is an infallible mark of reprobation, in the sentiment even of Oecolampadius and of some other heretics, not to have esteem and love for the Blessed Virgin, and that, on the contrary, it is an infallible mark of predestination to be entirely and truly devoted or devout to her.

41. The figures and the words of the Old and New Testaments prove it; the sentiments and the examples of the saints confirm it; reason and experience teach and demonstrate it; the devil himself, and his minions, pressed by the force of the truth, have often been obliged to avow it in spite of themselves. Of all these passages of the holy Fathers and Doctors, of which I have made an ample collection to prove this truth, I relate only one, so as not to be too long: *Tibi devotum esse, est arma quaedam salutis quae Deus his dat quos vult salvos fieri* (S. Joan. Damas): To be devout toward you, O Blessed Virgin, says Saint John Damascene, is a weapon of salvation which God gives to those whom he wills to save.

42. I could here relate several stories which prove the same thing, among others: 1. the one related in the chronicles of Saint Francis, when he saw in an ecstasy a great ladder which went up to heaven, at the top of which was the Blessed Virgin, and by which it was shown to him that one must climb in order to arrive at heaven; 2. the one related in the chronicles of Saint Dominic, when fifteen thousand demons possessing the soul of an unhappy heretic, near Carcassonne, where Saint Dominic was preaching the Rosary, were obliged, to their confusion, by the command which the Blessed Virgin gave them, to avow several great and consoling truths touching devotion to the Blessed Virgin, with so much force and clarity that one cannot read this authentic story, and the panegyric which the devil made in spite of himself of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, without shedding tears of joy, if one is at all devout to the Most Blessed Virgin.

43. If devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is necessary to all men simply to work out their salvation, it is still much more necessary to those who are called to a particular perfection; and I do not believe that a person can acquire an intimate union with Our Lord and a perfect fidelity to the Holy Spirit without a very great union with the Most Blessed Virgin and a great dependence on her help.

44. It is Mary alone who found grace before God, without the aid of any other pure creature. It is only through her that all those who have found grace before God since her time have found it, and it is only through her that all those who shall come hereafter shall find it. She was full of grace when she was greeted by the archangel Gabriel; she was superabundantly filled with grace by the Holy Spirit when he covered her with his ineffable shadow; and she has so increased this twofold fullness from day to day and from moment to moment that she has arrived at a point of grace immense and inconceivable; so that the Most High has made her the sole treasurer of his treasures and the sole dispenser of his graces, to ennoble, raise up, and enrich whom she wills, to bring whom she wills into the narrow way of heaven, to bring

whom she wills, in spite of everything, through the narrow gate of life, and to give the throne, the scepter, and the crown of a king to whom she wills. Jesus is everywhere and always the fruit and the Son of Mary; and Mary is everywhere the true tree that bears the fruit of life, and the true mother who produces it.

45. It is Mary alone to whom God has given the keys of the cellars of divine love, and the power to enter into the most sublime and most secret ways of perfection, and to bring others into them. It is Mary alone who gives entrance into the earthly paradise to the wretched children of Eve the unfaithful, that they may walk there pleasantly with God, hide there securely from their enemies, and feed there deliciously, without any longer fearing death, on the fruit of the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, and drink there in long draughts the heavenly waters of that beautiful fountain which springs forth there in abundance; or rather, since she is herself that earthly paradise, or that virgin and blessed land from which Adam and Eve the sinners were driven out, she gives entrance into herself only to those men and women whom she pleases, in order to make them become saints.

46. All the rich among the people, to use the expression of the Holy Spirit, according to the explanation of Saint Bernard, all the rich among the people will entreat your face from age to age, and particularly at the end of the world; that is to say, the greatest saints, the souls richest in grace and in virtues, will be the most assiduous in praying to the Most Blessed Virgin, and in keeping her always present as their perfect model to imitate, and their powerful aid to help them.

47. I have said that this would come to pass particularly at the end of the world, and soon, because the Most High with his holy Mother must form for themselves great saints who will surpass in holiness most of the other saints as much as the cedars of Lebanon surpass the little shrubs, as was revealed to a holy soul whose life was written by M. de Renty.

48. These great souls, full of grace and zeal, will be chosen to oppose the enemies of God, who will rage on every side; and they will be singularly devout to the Most Blessed Virgin, enlightened by her light, nourished with her milk, led by her spirit, sustained by her arm, and kept under her protection, so that they will fight with one hand and build with the other. With one hand they will fight, overthrow, and crush the heretics with their heresies, the schismatics with their schisms, the idolaters with their idolatry, and the sinners with their impieties; and with the other hand they will build the temple of the true Solomon and the mystical city of God, that is to say, the Most Blessed Virgin, called by the holy Fathers the temple of Solomon and the city of God. By their words and their examples they will bring the whole world to true devotion to her, which will draw upon them many enemies, but also many victories and much glory for God alone. This is what God revealed to Saint Vincent Ferrer, the great apostle of his age, as he has sufficiently noted in one of his works. This is what the Holy Spirit seems to have foretold in the 58th Psalm, whose words are these: *Et scient quia Dominus dominabitur Jacob et finium terrae; convertentur ad vesperam, et famem patientur ut canes, et circuibunt civitatem*: The Lord will reign in Jacob and in all the earth; they will be converted toward evening, and they will suffer hunger like dogs, and they will go around the city to find something to eat. This city which men will circle round at the end of the world, to be converted and to satisfy the hunger they will have for justice, is the Most Blessed Virgin, who is called by the Holy Spirit the town and city of God.

B. Necessity of devotion to Mary particularly in the latter times

49. It is through Mary that the salvation of the world began, and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary scarcely appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, so that men, as yet little instructed and enlightened on the person of her Son, might not stray from the truth by attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her; which apparently would have happened if she had been known, because of the admirable charms which the Most High had placed even in her exterior; which is so true that Saint Denis the Areopagite has left us in writing that, when he saw her, he would have taken her for a divinity, because of her secret charms and her incomparable beauty, if the faith in which he was well confirmed had not taught him the contrary. But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary must be known and revealed by the Holy Spirit, in order through her to make Jesus Christ known, loved, and served; the reasons which led the Holy Spirit to hide his Spouse during her life, and to reveal her but very little since the preaching of the Gospel, subsisting no longer.

1- God wills to reveal and disclose Mary in the latter times

50. God therefore wills to reveal and disclose Mary, the masterpiece of his hands, in these latter times. 1. Because she hid herself in this world and placed herself lower than the dust by her profound humility, having obtained from God, from his Apostles and Evangelists, that she should not be made manifest. 2. Because, being the masterpiece of the hands of God, as much here below by grace as in heaven by glory, he wills to be glorified and praised in her on earth by the living. 3. As she is the dawn which precedes and discloses the Sun of justice, who is Jesus Christ, she must be known and perceived, so that Jesus Christ may be known. 4. Being the way by which Jesus Christ came to us the first time, she will be so again when he comes the second time, though not in the same manner. 5. Being the sure means and the straight and immaculate way to go to Jesus Christ and to find him perfectly, it is through her that the holy souls who are to shine forth in holiness must find him. He who finds Mary will find life, that is to say, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. But one cannot find Mary without seeking her; one cannot seek her without knowing her: for one neither seeks nor desires an unknown object. Mary must therefore be more known than ever, to the greater knowledge and glory of the Most Holy Trinity. 6. Mary must shine forth, more than ever, in mercy, in force, and in grace in these latter times: in mercy, to bring back and lovingly receive the poor sinners and strays who will be converted and will return to the Catholic Church; in force against the enemies of God, the idolaters, schismatics, Mahometans, Jews, and hardened impious men, who will rise up terribly to seduce and bring down, by promises and threats, all those who will be contrary to them; and finally she must shine forth in grace, to animate and sustain the valiant soldiers and faithful servants of Jesus Christ who will fight for his interests. 7. Finally, Mary must be terrible to the devil and to his minions, like an army arrayed for battle, principally in these latter times, because the devil, knowing well that he has but little time, and much less than ever, to destroy souls,

redoubles every day his efforts and his combats; he will soon stir up cruel persecutions, and will set terrible snares for the faithful servants and the true children of Mary, whom he has more difficulty in overcoming than the others.

51. It is principally of these last and cruel persecutions of the devil, which will increase daily until the reign of the Antichrist, that we must understand that first and famous prediction and curse of God, pronounced in the earthly paradise against the serpent. It is fitting to explain it here for the glory of the Most Blessed Virgin, the salvation of her children, and the confusion of the devil. *Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo ejus* (Gen., III, 15): I will put enmities between you and the woman, and between your race and hers; she herself shall crush your head, and you shall lay snares for her heel.

52. God has never made and formed but one enmity, but it is an irreconcilable one, which will endure and even increase until the end: it is between Mary, his worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and henchmen of Lucifer; so that the most terrible of the enemies that God has made against the devil is Mary, his holy Mother. He has even given her, from the earthly paradise onward, though she then existed only in his idea, so much hatred against that accursed enemy of God, so much skill to uncover the malice of that ancient serpent, so much strength to conquer, cast down, and crush that proud impious one, that he dreads her more, not only than all angels and men, but, in a sense, than God himself. It is not that the wrath, the hatred, and the power of God are not infinitely greater than those of the Blessed Virgin, since the perfections of Mary are limited; but it is, first, because Satan, being proud, suffers infinitely more from being conquered and punished by a little and humble handmaid of God, and her humility humbles him more than the divine power; secondly, because God has given Mary so great a power against the devils that

they fear more, as they have often been forced to confess, in spite of themselves, by the mouths of the possessed, a single one of her sighs for some soul than the prayers of all the saints, and a single one of her threats against them than all their other torments.

53. What Lucifer lost by pride, Mary won by humility; what Eve damned and lost by disobedience, Mary saved by obedience. Eve, by obeying the serpent, lost all her children with her, and delivered them over to him; Mary, having made herself perfectly faithful to God, saved all her children and servants with her, and consecrated them to his Majesty.

54. God has put not only one enmity, but enmities, not only between Mary and the demon, but between the race of the Blessed Virgin and the race of the demon; that is to say, God has put enmities, antipathies, and secret hatreds between the true children and servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and slaves of the devil; they do not love one another at all; they have no interior correspondence with one another. The children of Belial, the slaves of Satan, the friends of the world (for it is the same thing), have always persecuted until now, and will persecute more than ever, those men and women who belong to the Most Blessed Virgin, as Cain of old persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob, who are the figures of the reprobate and of the predestined. But humble Mary will always have the victory over that proud one, and a victory so great that she will go so far as to crush his head, where his pride resides; she will always uncover his serpent's malice; she will lay bare his infernal mines, she will scatter his diabolical counsels, and will preserve her faithful servants from his cruel paw until the end of time. But the power of Mary over all the devils will shine forth particularly in the latter times, when Satan will lay snares for her heel, that is to say, for her humble slaves and her poor children whom she will raise up to make war on him. They will be little and poor according to the world, and abased before all like the heel, trodden down and persecuted as the heel is in relation to the

other members of the body; but, in exchange, they will be rich in the grace of God, which Mary will distribute to them abundantly, great and exalted in holiness before God, superior to every creature by their ardent zeal, and so strongly supported by divine help that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they will crush the head of the devil and make Jesus Christ triumph.

2. Devotion to Mary necessary particularly in the latter times

55. Finally, God wills that his holy Mother be at present more known, more loved, more honored than she has ever been: which will doubtless come to pass, if the predestined enter, with the grace and light of the Holy Spirit, into the interior and perfect practice which I shall disclose to them in what follows. Then they will see clearly, as far as faith allows, that beautiful star of the sea, and they will come safely to port, despite the tempests and the pirates, by following her guidance; they will know the grandeurs of that Sovereign, and they will consecrate themselves entirely to her service, as her subjects and her slaves of love; they will experience her sweetness and her maternal kindnesses, and they will love her tenderly as her beloved children; they will know the mercies with which she is filled and the need they have of her help, and they will have recourse to her in all things as to their dear advocate and mediatrix with Jesus Christ; they will know that she is the surest, the easiest, the shortest, and the most perfect means of going to Jesus Christ, and they will give themselves to her, body and soul, without division, so as to belong to Jesus Christ in the same way.

56. But who will these servants, slaves, and children of Mary be? They will be a burning fire, ministers of the Lord who will kindle the fire of divine love everywhere. They will be *sicut sagittae in manum potentis* [like arrows in the hand of the mighty], sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful Mary to pierce her enemies. They will be

children of Levi, well purified by the fire of great tribulations and cleaving closely to God, who will carry the gold of love in their heart, the incense of prayer in their spirit, and the myrrh of mortification in their body, and who will everywhere be the good odor of Jesus Christ to the poor and the little ones, while they will be an odor of death to the great, to the rich and proud worldlings.

57. They will be thundering clouds, flying through the air at the least breath of the Holy Spirit, who, without attaching themselves to anything, or being astonished at anything, or troubling themselves about anything, will pour down the rain of the word of God and of eternal life; they will thunder against sin, they will storm against the world, they will strike the devil and his henchmen, and they will pierce through and through, for life or for death, with their two-edged sword of the word of God, all those to whom they shall be sent on behalf of the Most High.

58. They will be true apostles of the latter times, to whom the Lord of hosts will give the word and the strength to work marvels and to carry off glorious spoils from his enemies; they will sleep without gold or silver and, what is more, without care, in the midst of the other priests, ecclesiastics, and clerics, *inter medios clericos*; and yet they will have the silvered wings of the dove, to go, with the pure intention of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wherever the Holy Spirit shall call them; and they will leave behind them, in the places where they have preached, nothing but the gold of charity, which is the fulfillment of the whole law.

59. Finally, we know that they will be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the footsteps of his poverty, humility, contempt of the world, and charity, teaching the narrow way of God in pure truth, according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world, without troubling themselves about anyone or showing partiality to anyone, without sparing, heeding, or fearing any mortal, however powerful he may be. They will have in their mouth the

two-edged sword of the word of God; they will carry on their shoulders the bloodstained standard of the Cross, the crucifix in the right hand, the chaplet in the left, the sacred names of Jesus and Mary on their heart, and the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ in their whole conduct. These are the great men who are to come, but whom Mary will fashion, by order of the Most High, to extend his empire over that of the impious, the idolaters, and the Mohammedans. But when and how will this come to pass?... God alone knows: it is for us to keep silence, to pray, to sigh, and to wait: *Exspectans exspectavi* [With expectation I have waited].

II. IN WHAT DEVOTION TO MARY CONSISTS

A. Fundamental truths of devotion to the Blessed Virgin

60. Having thus far said something of the necessity we have of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, I must now say in what this devotion consists; which I shall do, God helping, after I have presupposed some fundamental truths which will shed light upon this great and solid devotion that I wish to disclose.

Jesus Christ is the last end of all our devotions

61. First truth. Jesus Christ our Savior, true God and true man, must be the last end of all our other devotions; otherwise they would be false and deceptive. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. We labor, as the Apostle says, only to render every man perfect in Jesus Christ, because it is in him alone that all the fullness of the Divinity dwells, together with all the other fullnesses of graces, virtues, and perfections; because it is in him alone that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; because he is our only master who must teach us, our only Lord on whom we must depend, our only head to whom we must be united, our only model to whom we must conform ourselves, our only physician who must heal us, our only shepherd who must feed us, our only way who must lead us, our only truth whom we must believe, our only life who must give us life, and our only all in all things who must suffice us. There has been given no other name under heaven than the name of Jesus, by which we must be saved. God has laid for us no other foundation of our salvation, of our perfection, and of our glory than Jesus Christ: every building that is not set upon this firm rock is founded upon shifting sand, and will infallibly fall sooner or later. Every one of the faithful who is not united to him as a branch to the stock of the vine will fall, will wither, and will be fit only to be cast into the fire. If we are in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in us, we have no damnation to fear; neither the angels of heaven, nor the men of earth, nor the demons of hell, nor any other creature can harm us, because it cannot separate us from the charity of God which is in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, we can do all things: render all honor and glory to the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit; make ourselves perfect, and be to our neighbor a good odor of eternal life.

62. If, then, we establish solid devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, it is only to establish more perfectly devotion to Jesus Christ; it is only

to give an easy and sure means for finding Jesus Christ. If devotion to the Blessed Virgin drew us away from Jesus Christ, it would have to be rejected as an illusion of the devil; but far from it — on the contrary, as I have already shown and will show again hereafter, this devotion is necessary to us only in order to find Jesus Christ perfectly, and to love him tenderly and serve him faithfully.

63. I turn here for a moment to you, O my lovable Jesus, to complain lovingly to your divine Majesty that the greater part of Christians, even the most learned, do not know the necessary bond that exists between you and your holy Mother. You are, Lord, always with Mary, and Mary is always with you and cannot be without you: otherwise she would cease to be what she is; she is so transformed into you by grace that she no longer lives, that she no longer is; it is you alone, my Jesus, who live and reign in her, more perfectly than in all the angels and the blessed. Ah! if we knew the glory and the love that you receive in this admirable creature, we would have quite other sentiments toward you and toward her than we have. She is so intimately united to you that one would sooner separate the light from the sun, the heat from the fire; I say more, one would sooner separate all the angels and the saints from you than the divine Mary: because she loves you more ardently and glorifies you more perfectly than all your other creatures together.

64. After this, my lovable Master, is it not an astonishing and pitiable thing to see the ignorance and the darkness of all the men of this world with regard to your holy Mother? I do not speak so much of idolaters and pagans, who, not knowing you, are far from knowing her; I do not even speak of heretics and schismatics, who are far from being devout toward your holy Mother, having separated themselves from you and from your holy Church; but I speak of Catholic Christians, and even of doctors among the Catholics, who, making profession of teaching the truths to others, do not know you, nor your holy Mother, except in a speculative, dry, sterile, and indifferent

manner. These gentlemen speak only rarely of your holy Mother and of the devotion one ought to have toward her, because they fear, they say, that it will be abused, that injury will be done to you by honoring your holy Mother too much. If they see or hear some devotee of the Blessed Virgin speak often of devotion to this good Mother, in a tender, strong, and persuasive manner, as of a sure means without illusion, a short road without danger, an immaculate way without imperfection, and a marvelous secret for finding you and loving you perfectly, they cry out against him, and give him a thousand false reasons to prove to him that he ought not to speak so much of the Blessed Virgin; that there are great abuses in this devotion, and that one must apply oneself to destroying them, and to speaking of you, rather than to drawing people to devotion to the Blessed Virgin, whom they already love enough. They are sometimes heard speaking of devotion to your holy Mother, not to establish it and persuade souls to it, but to destroy the abuses made of it; while these gentlemen are without piety and without tender devotion for you, because they have none for Mary, regarding the Rosary, the Scapular, the Chaplet as devotions for weak women, fit for the ignorant, without which one can be saved; and if there falls into their hands some devotee of the Blessed Virgin who recites his chaplet or has some other practice of devotion toward her, they will soon change his mind and heart: instead of the chaplet, they will counsel him to say the seven psalms; instead of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, they will counsel him devotion to Jesus Christ. O my lovable Jesus, do these people have your spirit? Do they give you pleasure by acting thus? Is it pleasing you, not to make every effort to please your Mother, for fear of displeasing you? Does devotion to your holy Mother hinder devotion to you? Does she attribute to herself the honor that is paid her? Does she form a party apart? Is she a stranger who has no bond with you? Is it displeasing you to wish to please her? Is it separating oneself or withdrawing from your love to give oneself to her and to love her?

65. Nevertheless, my lovable Master, the greater part of the learned, in punishment for their pride, would not turn souls further away from devotion to your holy Mother, nor instill more indifference toward it, than if all that I have just said were true. Keep me, Lord, keep me from their sentiments and their practices, and give me some share in the sentiments of gratitude, esteem, respect, and love that you have with regard to your holy Mother, so that I may love and glorify you all the more, as I shall imitate and follow you more closely.

66. As if until now I had said nothing in honor of your holy Mother, grant me the grace to praise her worthily: *Fac me digne tuam Matrem collaudare*, despite all her enemies, who are your own; and let me say aloud to them with the saints: *Non presumat aliquis Deum se habere propitium qui benedictam Matrem offensam habuerit*: Let that man not presume to receive God's mercy, who offends his holy Mother.

67. To obtain from your mercy a true devotion to your holy Mother, and to inspire it in all the earth, make me love you ardently, and receive to that end the burning prayer that I offer you with Saint Augustine and your true friends (tom. 9, operum meditat.): "*Tu es Christus, pater meus sanctus, Deus meus pius, rex meus magnus, pastor meus bonus, magister meus unus, adjutor meus optimus, dilectus meus pulcherrimus, panis meus vivus, sacerdos meus in aeternum, dux meus ad patriam, lux mea vera, dulcedo mea sancta, via mea recta, sapientia mea praeclara, simplicitas mea pura, concordia mea pacifica, custodia mea tota, portio mea bona, salus mea sempiterna...*" *Christe Jesu, amabilis Domine, cur amavi, quare concupivi in omni vita mea quidquam praeter te Jesum Deum meum? Ubi eram quando tecum mente non eram? Jam ex hoc nunc, omnia desideria mea, incalescite et effluite in Dominum Jesum; currite, satis hactenus tardastis; properate quo pergitis; quaerite quem quaeritis. Jesu, qui non amat te anathema sit; qui te non amat amaritudinibus repleatur...* O dulcis Jesu, te amet, in te delectetur, te admiretur omnis sensus bonus tuae conveniens laudi. Deus cordis mei et pars mea, Christe Jesu, deficiat cor meum spiritu suo,

et vivas tu in me, et concalescat in spiritu meo vivus carbo amoris tui, et excrescat in ignem perfectum; ardeat jugiter in ara cordis mei, ferveat in medullis meis, flagret in absconditis animae meae; in die consummationis meae consummatus inveniar apud te. Amen.” [You are Christ, my holy father, my loving God, my great king, my good shepherd, my only master, my best helper, my most beautiful beloved, my living bread, my priest forever, my leader to the fatherland, my true light, my holy sweetness, my straight way, my resplendent wisdom, my pure simplicity, my peaceful concord, my whole safeguard, my good portion, my everlasting salvation... Christ Jesus, lovable Lord, why have I loved, why have I desired, in all my life, anything besides you, Jesus my God? Where was I when I was not with you in mind? Now, from this moment, all my desires, grow warm and flow out into the Lord Jesus; run, you have delayed long enough until now; hasten to where you are going; seek him whom you seek. Jesus, let him who does not love you be anathema; let him who does not love you be filled with bitterness... O sweet Jesus, may every good sense fitted for your praise love you, delight in you, admire you. God of my heart and my portion, Christ Jesus, may my heart faint away of its own spirit, and may you live in me; may the living coal of your love glow hot in my spirit and grow into a perfect fire; may it burn continually upon the altar of my heart, may it seethe in my inmost marrow, may it blaze in the hidden depths of my soul; and in the day of my consummation may I be found consummate with you. Amen.] I have wished to set down in Latin this admirable prayer of Saint Augustine, so that those who understand Latin may say it every day, to ask for the love of Jesus, which we seek through the divine Mary.

We belong to Jesus Christ and to Mary as slaves.

68. Second truth. - From what Jesus Christ is in our regard, we must conclude that we are not at all our own, as the Apostle says, but belong wholly to him, as his members and his slaves, whom he purchased infinitely dear, at the price of all his blood. Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as his slaves; and baptism has made us the true slaves of Jesus Christ, who must live, labor, and die only to bear fruit for this God-Man, to glorify him in our body and to make him reign in our soul, because we are his conquest, his purchased people, and his inheritance. It is for this same reason that the Holy Spirit compares us: 1. to trees planted along the waters of grace, in the field of the Church, which must give their fruit in their season; 2. to the branches of a vine of which Jesus Christ is the stock, which must yield good grapes; 3. to a flock of which Jesus Christ is the shepherd, which must multiply and give milk; 4. to a good soil of which God is the husbandman, in which the seed multiplies and yields thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold. Jesus Christ laid his curse upon the fruitless fig tree, and pronounced condemnation against the useless servant who had not turned his talent to profit. All this proves to us that Jesus Christ wills to receive some fruits from our wretched persons, namely, our good works, because these good works belong to him alone: *Creati in operibus bonis in Christo Jesu*: Created in good works in Jesus Christ. Which words of the Holy Spirit show both that Jesus Christ is the sole principle and must be the sole end of all our good works, and that we must serve him, not only as hired servants, but as slaves of love. Let me explain myself.

69. There are two ways here below of belonging to another and of depending on his authority, namely: simple servitude and slavery; which gives rise to what we call a servant and a slave. By the servitude common among Christians, a man engages himself to serve another for a certain time, in return for a certain wage or some such recompense. By slavery, a man is entirely dependent on another for his

whole life, and must serve his master without claiming from him any wage or recompense, like one of his beasts, over which he has the right of life and death.

70. There are three kinds of slavery: a slavery of nature, a slavery of constraint, and a slavery of the will. All creatures are slaves of God in the first manner: *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus* [The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof]; the demons and the damned are so in the second; the just and the saints are so in the third. The slavery of the will is the most perfect and the most glorious to God, who looks upon the heart, who asks for the heart, and who calls himself the God of the heart, or of the loving will, because by this slavery one makes choice, above all things, of God and of his service, even if nature did not oblige one to it.

71. There is a total difference between a servant and a slave: 1. A servant does not give all that he is, all that he possesses, and all that he can acquire through others or through himself, to his master; but the slave gives himself wholly, all that he possesses and all that he can acquire, to his master, without any exception. 2. The servant demands wages for the services he renders to his master, but the slave can demand nothing, whatever assiduity, whatever industry, whatever strength he may have in his work. 3. The servant can leave his master when he pleases, or at least when the time of his service has expired; but the slave has no right to leave his master when he pleases. 4. The master of the servant has no right of life and death over him, so that if he killed him, like one of his beasts of burden, he would commit an unjust homicide; but the master of the slave has, by the laws, the right of life and death over him, so that he may sell him to whomever he pleases, or kill him, as, saving the comparison, he would his horse. 5. Finally, the servant is only for a time in the service of a master, and the slave forever.

72. There is nothing among men that makes us belong more to another than slavery; likewise there is nothing among Christians that

makes us belong more absolutely to Jesus Christ and to his holy Mother than the slavery of the will, after the example of Jesus Christ himself, who took the form of a slave for love of us: *Formam servi accipiens* [taking the form of a slave], and of the Blessed Virgin, who called herself the servant and the slave of the Lord. The Apostle calls himself, as a title of honor, *servus Christi* [slave of Christ]. Christians are many times called in Holy Scripture *servi Christi* [slaves of Christ]; which word *servus*, according to the true remark made by a great man, formerly signified nothing but a slave, because there were as yet no servants like those of today, masters being served only by slaves or freedmen: which the Catechism of the holy Council of Trent, to leave no doubt whatsoever that we are slaves of Jesus Christ, expresses by a term that is not at all equivocal, calling us *mancipia Christi*: slaves of Jesus Christ. This being laid down:

73. I say that we must belong to Jesus Christ and serve him, not only as mercenary servants, but as loving slaves who, by the effect of a great love, give themselves and deliver themselves over to serve him as slaves, for the honor alone of belonging to him. Before baptism, we were slaves of the devil; baptism has made us slaves of Jesus Christ: either Christians must be slaves of the devil, or slaves of Jesus Christ.

74. What I say absolutely of Jesus Christ, I say relatively of the Blessed Virgin: Jesus Christ, having chosen her for the indissoluble companion of his life, of his death, of his glory, and of his power in heaven and on earth, gave her by grace, relative to his Majesty, all the same rights and privileges that he possesses by nature: *Quidquid Deo convenit per naturam, Mariae convenit per gratiam*: All that befits God by nature befits Mary by grace, say the saints; so that, according to them, both having but the same will and the same power, they both have the same subjects, servants, and slaves.

75. One may therefore, following the sentiment of the saints and of many great men, call oneself and make oneself the loving slave of the Most Blessed Virgin, in order thereby to be more perfectly the slave of

Jesus Christ. The Blessed Virgin is the means Our Lord made use of to come to us; she is also the means we must make use of to go to him; for she is not like other creatures, which, if we attached ourselves to them, could rather draw us away from God than bring us near to him; but the strongest inclination of Mary is to unite us to Jesus Christ, her Son, and the strongest inclination of the Son is that we come to him through his holy Mother; and to do so is to do him honor and pleasure, just as it would be doing honor and pleasure to a king if, in order to become more perfectly his subject and his slave, one made oneself the slave of the queen. That is why the holy Fathers, and Saint Bonaventure after them, say that the Blessed Virgin is the way to go to Our Lord: *Via veniendi ad Christum est appropinquare ad illam* [The way of coming to Christ is to draw near to her] (In psalt. min.).

76. Moreover, if, as I have said, the Blessed Virgin is the Queen and Sovereign of heaven and earth: *Ecce imperio Dei omnia subjiciuntur et Virgo; ecce imperio Virginis omnia subjiciuntur et Deus* [Behold, all things, and the Virgin too, are subject to the dominion of God; behold, all things, and God too, are subject to the dominion of the Virgin], say Saint Anselm, Saint Bernard, Saint Bernardine, Saint Bonaventure, does she not have as many subjects and slaves as there are creatures? Is it not reasonable that among so many slaves of constraint there should be slaves of love, who, by a good will, choose, as slaves, Mary for their Sovereign? What! men and demons shall have their voluntary slaves, and Mary should have none? What! a king shall hold it an honor that the queen, his companion, should have slaves over whom she has the right of life and death, because the honor and the power of the one is the honor and the power of the other; and could one believe that Our Lord, who, as the best of all sons, shared all his power with his holy Mother, takes it amiss that she should have slaves? Has he less respect and love for his Mother than Ahasuerus for Esther and Solomon for Bathsheba? Who would dare say it, or even think it?

77. But where is my pen leading me? Why do I stop here to prove a thing so evident? If some do not wish us to call ourselves slaves of the Blessed Virgin, what does it matter! Let them make themselves and call themselves slaves of Jesus Christ! That is to be the slave of the Blessed Virgin, since Jesus is the fruit and the glory of Mary. This is what one does perfectly by the devotion of which we shall speak in what follows.

We must empty ourselves of what is evil in us.

78. Third truth. - Our best actions are ordinarily soiled and corrupted by the evil depths that are in us. When clean, clear water is put into a vessel that smells foul, or wine into a cask whose inside has been spoiled by another wine that was in it, the clear water and the good wine are spoiled by it and easily take on its bad odor. In the same way, when God puts into the vessel of our soul, spoiled by original and actual sin, his graces and heavenly dews, or the delicious wine of his love, his gifts are ordinarily spoiled and soiled by the evil leaven and the evil depths that sin has left in us; our actions, even those of the most sublime virtues, are tainted by them. It is therefore of very great importance, in order to acquire perfection, which is acquired only by union with Jesus Christ, that we empty ourselves of what is evil in us: otherwise Our Lord, who is infinitely pure and who infinitely hates the least stain in the soul, will cast us out from before his eyes and will not unite himself to us at all.

79. To empty ourselves of ourselves, we must, first, know well, by the light of the Holy Spirit, our evil depths, our incapacity for any good useful to salvation, our weakness in all things, our inconstancy at all times, our unworthiness of any grace, and our iniquity in every place. The sin of our first father has spoiled, soured, puffed up, and corrupted us all almost entirely, as leaven sours, puffs up, and corrupts the dough into which it is put. The actual sins we have committed, whether mortal or venial, however pardoned they may be,

have increased our concupiscence, our weakness, our inconstancy, and our corruption, and have left evil remnants in our soul. Our bodies are so corrupted that they are called by the Holy Spirit bodies of sin, conceived in sin, nourished in sin, and capable of anything; bodies subject to thousands upon thousands of maladies, which grow more corrupt from day to day, and which breed nothing but mange, vermin, and corruption. Our soul, united to our body, has become so carnal that it is called flesh: All flesh had corrupted its way. We have for our portion nothing but pride and blindness in the mind, hardness in the heart, weakness and inconstancy in the soul, concupiscence, rebellious passions, and maladies in the body. We are by nature prouder than peacocks, more attached to the earth than toads, filthier than goats, more envious than serpents, greedier than pigs, more wrathful than tigers, and lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more inconstant than weathervanes. We have in our depths nothing but nothingness and sin, and we deserve nothing but the wrath of God and eternal hell.

80. After that, need we be astonished if Our Lord said that whoever wished to follow him must renounce himself and hate his soul; that whoever loved his soul would lose it, and whoever hated it would save it? This infinite Wisdom, who does not give commandments without reason, commands us to hate ourselves only because we are greatly worthy of hatred: nothing is so worthy of love as God, nothing so worthy of hatred as ourselves.

81. Secondly, to empty ourselves of ourselves, we must die every day to ourselves: that is to say, we must renounce the operations of the powers of our soul and of the senses of the body; we must see as if we saw not, hear as if we heard not, use the things of this world as if we used them not — which is what Saint Paul calls dying every day: *Quotidie morior!* Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dies, it remains earth and produces no fruit that is good: *Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet.* If we

do not die to ourselves, and if our holiest devotions do not lead us to this necessary and fruitful death, we shall bear no fruit of any worth, and our devotions will become useless to us; all our righteous deeds will be soiled by our self-love and our self-will, and this will cause God to hold in abomination the greatest sacrifices and the best actions we can perform; and at our death we shall find our hands empty of virtues and merits, and we shall not have a single spark of that pure love which is communicated only to souls dead to themselves, whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God.

82. Thirdly, we must choose, among all the devotions to the Most Blessed Virgin, the one that leads us most to this death to ourselves, as being the best and the most sanctifying; for we must not believe that all that glitters is gold, that all that is sweet is honey, and that all that is easy to do and practiced by the greatest number is the most sanctifying. As there are secrets of nature for performing certain natural operations in little time, at little cost, and with ease, so there are secrets in the order of grace for performing supernatural operations in little time, with sweetness and ease: emptying oneself of oneself, filling oneself with God, and becoming perfect. The practice I wish to reveal is one of these secrets of grace, unknown to the great number of Christians, known to few devotees, and practiced and relished by a far smaller number. To begin to reveal this practice, here is a fourth truth, which is a consequence of the third.

We need a mediator with the Mediator himself.

83. Fourth truth. - It is more perfect, because it is more humble, not to approach God by ourselves without taking a mediator. Our depths, as I have just shown, being so corrupted, if we rely on our own labors, industry, and preparations to reach God and to please him, it is certain that all our righteous deeds will be soiled, or of little weight before God, to move him to unite himself to us and to grant our prayers. For it is not without reason that God has given us mediators with his Majesty: he saw our unworthiness and incapacity, he had pity on us, and, to give us access to his mercies, he provided us with powerful intercessors with his grandeur; so that to neglect these mediators, and to draw near directly to his holiness without any recommendation, is to lack humility, it is to lack respect toward a God so high and so holy; it is to make less account of this King of kings than one would of a king or a prince of the earth, whom one would not wish to approach without some friend to speak on one's behalf.

84. Our Lord is our advocate and our mediator of redemption with God the Father; it is through him that we must pray, with the whole Church triumphant and militant; it is through him that we have access to his Majesty, and we must never appear before him except leaning upon and clothed with his merits, as little Jacob was with the skins of kids before his father Isaac, to receive his blessing.

85. But have we not need of a mediator with the Mediator himself? Is our purity great enough to unite us directly to him, and by ourselves? Is he not God, in all things equal to his Father, and consequently the Holy of holies, as worthy of respect as his Father? If, through his infinite charity, he made himself our surety and our mediator with God his Father, to appease him and to pay him what we owed him, must we for that reason have less respect and less fear for his majesty and his holiness? Let us say boldly, then, with Saint Bernard, that we need a mediator with the Mediator himself, and that the divine Mary is the one most capable of fulfilling this charitable office; it is through

her that Jesus Christ came to us, and it is through her that we must go to him. If we fear to go directly to Jesus Christ, who is God, whether because of his infinite grandeur, or because of our lowliness, or because of our sins, let us boldly implore the aid and intercession of Mary our Mother: she is good, she is tender; there is in her nothing austere or forbidding, nothing too sublime or too brilliant; in seeing her, we see our pure nature. She is not the sun, which by the brightness of its rays might dazzle us because of our weakness; but she is fair and gentle as the moon, which receives its light from the sun and tempers it to make it suited to our little capacity. She is so charitable that she rejects none of those who ask her intercession, however sinful they may be; for, as the saints say, it has never been heard said, since the world has been the world, that anyone has had recourse to the Blessed Virgin with confidence and perseverance and has been rejected. She is so powerful that she has never been refused in her requests; she has only to show herself before her Son to pray to him: at once he grants, at once he receives; he is always lovingly conquered by the breasts and the womb and the prayers of his most dear Mother.

86. All this is drawn from Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure; so that, according to them, we have three steps to climb in order to go to God: the first, which is the nearest to us and the most suited to our capacity, is Mary; the second is Jesus Christ; and the third is God the Father. To go to Jesus, we must go to Mary: she is our mediatrix of intercession; to go to the eternal Father, we must go to Jesus: he is our mediator of redemption. Now, by the devotion that I shall set forth hereafter, this order is perfectly kept.

It is very difficult for us to preserve the graces and treasures received from God.

87. Fifth truth. - It is very difficult, given our weakness and frailty, for us to preserve within ourselves the graces and treasures we have received from God: 1. Because we have this treasure, which is worth more than heaven and earth, in fragile vessels: *Habemus thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus*, in a corruptible body, in a weak and inconstant soul, which a mere nothing troubles and casts down.

88. 2. Because the demons, who are cunning thieves, wish to take us by surprise, unawares, in order to rob and plunder us; they watch day and night for the favorable moment to do so; they circle about ceaselessly to devour us, and to snatch from us in one moment, by one sin, all the graces and merits we have been able to gain over several years. Their malice, their experience, their wiles, and their number ought to make us fear this misfortune infinitely, seeing that persons more full of grace, richer in virtues, more grounded in experience, and more elevated in holiness have been unhappily surprised, robbed, and pillaged. Ah! how many cedars of Lebanon and stars of the firmament have we seen fall miserably and lose all their height and all their brightness in a short time! Whence comes this strange change? It was not for lack of grace, which is wanting to no one, but for lack of humility; they believed themselves stronger and more self-sufficient than they were; they believed themselves capable of guarding their treasures; they trusted in and relied upon themselves; they thought their house secure enough and their coffers strong enough to keep the precious treasure of grace; and it is because of that imperceptible reliance they had upon themselves (though it seemed to them that they relied solely upon the grace of God) that the most just Lord permitted them to be robbed, by leaving them to themselves. Alas! if they had known the admirable devotion that I shall show hereafter, they would have entrusted their treasure to a Virgin powerful and faithful, who would have kept it for them as her own possession, and

would even have made it an obligation of justice for herself.

89. 3. It is difficult to persevere in justice because of the strange corruption of the world. The world is now so corrupt that it is, as it were, necessary that religious hearts be soiled by it, if not by its mud, at least by its dust; so that it is a kind of miracle when a person stands firm in the midst of this impetuous torrent without being swept away, in the midst of this stormy sea without being submerged by it or pillaged by pirates and corsairs, in the midst of this pestilent air without being harmed by it; it is the Virgin, alone faithful, in whom the serpent has never had any part, who works this miracle for those men and women who love her in that excellent way.

B. Marks of true devotion to Mary

90. These five truths being presupposed, it is now more than ever necessary to make a good choice of true devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, for there are now more than ever false devotions to the Blessed Virgin, which it is easy to take for true devotions. The devil, like a counterfeiter and a cunning and experienced deceiver, has already deceived and damned so many souls by a false devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin that he makes daily use of his diabolical experience to damn many others by it, amusing them and lulling them to sleep in sin, under the pretext of a few prayers badly said and a few exterior practices that he inspires in them. As a counterfeiter ordinarily counterfeits only gold and silver, and very rarely the other metals, because they are not worth the trouble, so the evil spirit does not counterfeit the other devotions so much as those of Jesus and of Mary, devotion to Holy Communion and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, because they are, among the other devotions, what gold and silver are among the metals.

91. It is therefore very important to know, first, the false devotions to the Most Blessed Virgin in order to avoid them, and the true one in order to embrace it; secondly, among so many different practices of

true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which is the most perfect, the most pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, the most glorious to God, and the most sanctifying for us, so that we may attach ourselves to it.

1- False devotees and false devotions to the Blessed Virgin

92. I find seven kinds of false devotees and false devotions to the Blessed Virgin, namely: 1. the critical devotees; 2. the scrupulous devotees; 3. the exterior devotees; 4. the presumptuous devotees; 5. the inconstant devotees; 6. the hypocritical devotees; 7. the self-interested devotees.

1. The critical devotees.

93. The critical devotees are, ordinarily, proud scholars, freethinking and self-sufficient minds, who at bottom have some devotion to the Blessed Virgin, but who criticize almost all the practices of devotion to the Blessed Virgin which simple people render simply and holily to this good Mother, because these practices do not suit their fancy. They call into doubt all the miracles and accounts reported by trustworthy authors, or drawn from the chronicles of religious orders, which bear witness to the mercies and the power of the Most Blessed Virgin. It is only with pain that they can see simple and humble people on their knees before an altar or image of the Blessed Virgin, sometimes at a street corner, praying to God there; and they even accuse them of idolatry, as if they adored the wood or the stone; they say that, for their part, they have no love at all for these exterior devotions, and that their minds are not so weak as to give credence to so many tales and little stories that are told about the Blessed Virgin. When the admirable praises which the holy Fathers give to the Blessed Virgin are quoted to them, either they answer that the Fathers spoke as orators, by exaggeration, or they put a bad interpretation on their words. These kinds of false devotees and of proud and worldly people are greatly to be feared, and they do infinite harm to devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, and they effectively turn the people away from it, under the pretext of destroying its abuses.

2. *The scrupulous devotees.*

94. The scrupulous devotees are people who fear to dishonor the Son by honoring the Mother, to abase the one by elevating the other. They cannot bear that the Blessed Virgin should be given the very just praises which the holy Fathers have given her; they can hardly endure that there should be more people kneeling before an altar of the Blessed Virgin than before the Blessed Sacrament, as if the one were contrary to the other; as if those who pray to the Blessed Virgin were not praying to Jesus Christ through her! They do not want us to speak so often of the Blessed Virgin, or to address ourselves to her so often. Here are some of the sayings that are usual with them: What is the good of so many chaplets, so many confraternities and exterior devotions to the Blessed Virgin? There is much ignorance in all that. It makes a mummerly of our religion. Speak to me of those who are devout to Jesus Christ (they often name him without uncovering their heads, I say it by way of parenthesis): we must have recourse to Jesus Christ, he is our only mediator; we must preach Jesus Christ, that is the solid thing! What they say is true in one sense; but with regard to the application they make of it, to hinder devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, it is very dangerous, and a subtle snare of the evil one, under the pretext of a greater good; for never is Jesus Christ more honored than when the Most Blessed Virgin is more honored, since one honors her only in order to honor Jesus Christ more perfectly, since one goes to her only as the way by which to find the end to which one is going, which is Jesus.

95. Holy Church, with the Holy Spirit, blesses the Blessed Virgin first, and Jesus Christ second: *Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus*. Not that the Blessed Virgin is more than Jesus Christ or equal to him: that would be an intolerable heresy; but in order to bless Jesus Christ more perfectly, one must first bless Mary. Let us say, then, with all the true devotees of the Blessed Virgin, against her scrupulous false devotees: O Mary, you are blessed among

all women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

3. Exterior devotees.

96. Exterior devotees are persons who make all devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin consist in exterior practices; who relish only the exterior of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, because they have no interior spirit; who will say a great many chaplets in haste, hear several Masses without attention, go to processions without devotion, enroll in all her confraternities without amending their lives, without doing violence to their passions, and without imitating the virtues of this most holy Virgin. They love only the sensible part of devotion, without relishing what is solid in it; if they have no sensible feelings in their practices, they believe they are no longer doing anything; they become unsettled, they drop everything then and there, or they do everything by fits and starts. The world is full of these sorts of exterior devotees, and there are no people more critical of persons of prayer who apply themselves to the interior as to what is essential, without despising the exterior modesty which always accompanies true devotion.

4. *Presumptuous devotees.*

97. Presumptuous devotees are sinners abandoned to their passions, or lovers of the world, who, under the fair name of Christian and of devotee of the Blessed Virgin, hide pride, or avarice, or impurity, or drunkenness, or anger, or swearing, or slander, or injustice, etc.; who sleep in peace in their bad habits, without doing much violence to themselves to correct themselves, under the pretext that they are devout to the Virgin; who promise themselves that God will pardon them, that they will not die without confession, and that they will not be damned, because they say their chaplet, because they fast on Saturday, because they belong to the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary or of the Scapular, or to her congregations, because they wear the little habit or the little chain of the Blessed Virgin, etc. When they are told that their devotion is only an illusion of the devil and a pernicious presumption capable of destroying them, they will not believe it; they say that God is good and merciful; that he did not make us in order to damn us; that there is no man who does not sin; that they will not die without confession; that a good *peccavi* [I have sinned] at death suffices; moreover, that they are devout to the Blessed Virgin; that they wear the scapular; that every day, without fail and without vanity, they say seven *Pater* and seven *Ave* in her honor; that they even say sometimes the chaplet and the Office of the Blessed Virgin; that they fast, etc. To confirm what they say and to blind themselves further, they bring up certain stories they have heard or read in books — true or false, it matters not — which bear witness that persons who died in mortal sin, without confession, because during their life they had said some prayers or performed some practices of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, were either raised from the dead in order to make their confession, or their soul miraculously remained in their body until confession, or, by the mercy of the Blessed Virgin, obtained from God at their death contrition and the pardon of their sins, and were thereby saved; and so they hope for the same thing.

98. Nothing in Christianity is so damnable as this diabolical presumption; for can one say with truth that he loves and honors the Blessed Virgin when, by his sins, he pitilessly pricks, pierces, crucifies, and outrages Jesus Christ her Son? If Mary made it a law for herself to save these sorts of people by her mercy, she would be authorizing crime, she would be helping to crucify and outrage her Son; who would ever dare to think it?

99. I say that thus to abuse devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin — which, after devotion to Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, is the holiest and most solid — is to commit a horrible sacrilege, which, after the sacrilege of an unworthy Communion, is the greatest and the least pardonable. I admit that, to be truly devout to the Blessed Virgin, it is not absolutely necessary to be so holy as to avoid all sin, though that were to be wished; but one must at least (let it be well noted what I am about to say): First, be sincerely resolved to avoid at least all mortal sin, which outrages the Mother as well as the Son; Secondly, do violence to oneself to avoid sin; Thirdly, enroll in confraternities, recite the chaplet, the holy rosary, or other prayers, fast on Saturday, etc.

100. This is marvelously useful for the conversion of a sinner, even a hardened one; and if my reader is such, even had he one foot in the abyss, I counsel it to him — but on condition that he practice these good works only with the intention of obtaining from God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the grace of contrition and of the pardon of his sins, and of overcoming his bad habits, and not so as to remain peacefully in the state of sin, against the remorse of his conscience, the example of Jesus Christ and of the saints, and the maxims of the holy Gospel.

5. Inconstant devotees.

101. Inconstant devotees are those who are devout to the Blessed Virgin by intervals and by fits: now they are fervent and now lukewarm; now they seem ready to do everything for her service, and then, shortly after, they are no longer the same. They will at first embrace all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin; they will enroll in her confraternities, and then they do not practice their rules with fidelity at all; they change like the moon, and Mary puts them under her feet, with the crescent, because they are changeable and unworthy to be counted among the servants of this faithful Virgin, who have fidelity and constancy for their portion. It is better not to burden oneself with so many prayers and practices of devotion, and to do few of them with love and fidelity, in spite of the world, the devil, and the flesh.

6. Hypocritical devotees.

102. There are also false devotees of the Blessed Virgin who are hypocritical devotees, who cover their sins and their bad habits under the mantle of this faithful Virgin, so as to pass in the eyes of men for what they are not.

7. Self-interested devotees.

103. There are also self-interested devotees, who have recourse to the Blessed Virgin only to win some lawsuit, to avoid some peril, to be cured of some illness, or for some other need of this sort, without which they would forget her; and both the one sort and the other are false devotees, who are in no way acceptable before God or his holy Mother.

104. Let us take great care, then, not to be of the number of the critical devotees, who believe nothing and criticize everything; of the scrupulous devotees, who fear being too devout to the Blessed Virgin, out of respect for Jesus Christ; of the exterior devotees, who make all their devotion consist in exterior practices; of the presumptuous

devotees, who, under the pretext of their false devotion to the Blessed Virgin, wallow in their sins; of the inconstant devotees, who, out of levity, change their practices of devotion, or abandon them altogether at the least temptation; of the hypocritical devotees, who enroll in confraternities and wear the liveries of the Blessed Virgin in order to pass for good; and finally of the self-interested devotees, who have recourse to the Blessed Virgin only to be delivered from bodily ills or to obtain temporal goods.

2. Marks of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin

105. After having exposed and condemned the false devotions to the Blessed Virgin, we must in a few words establish the true one, which is: 1. interior; 2. tender; 3. holy; 4. constant, and 5. disinterested.

1. True devotion is interior.

106. First, true devotion to the Blessed Virgin is interior, that is to say, it proceeds from the mind and the heart; it comes from the esteem in which one holds the Blessed Virgin, from the high idea one has formed of her grandeurs, and from the love one bears her.

2. True devotion is tender.

107. Secondly, it is tender, that is to say, full of confidence in the Most Blessed Virgin, like a child's confidence in its good mother. It causes a soul to have recourse to her in all its needs of body and mind with great simplicity, confidence, and tenderness; it implores the aid of its good Mother at all times, in all places, and in all things: in its doubts, to be enlightened; in its strayings, to be set right; in its temptations, to be upheld; in its weaknesses, to be strengthened; in its falls, to be raised up; in its discouragements, to be heartened; in its scruples, to be freed of them; in its crosses, toils, and adversities of life, to be consoled. Finally, in all its ills of body and mind, Mary is its ordinary recourse, without fear of importuning this good Mother or of displeasing Jesus Christ.

3. True devotion is holy.

108. Thirdly, true devotion to the Blessed Virgin is holy, that is to say, it leads a soul to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of the Most Blessed Virgin, particularly her profound humility, her lively faith, her blind obedience, her continual prayer, her universal mortification, her divine purity, her ardent charity, her heroic patience, her angelic sweetness, and her divine wisdom. These are the ten principal virtues of the Most Blessed Virgin

4. True devotion is constant.

109. Fourthly, true devotion to the Blessed Virgin is constant: it strengthens a soul in good, and it leads her not to abandon her practices of devotion easily; it makes her courageous in opposing the world in its fashions and maxims, the flesh in its weariness and its passions, and the devil in his temptations; so that a person truly devout to the Blessed Virgin is not at all changeable, fretful, scrupulous, or fearful. It is not that she does not fall, and does not sometimes change in the sensible feeling of her devotion; but if she falls, she rises again by stretching out her hand to her good Mother; if she finds herself without taste or sensible devotion, she does not trouble herself at all over it: for the just man and the faithful devotee of Mary lives by the faith of Jesus and of Mary, and not by the feelings of the body.

5. True devotion is disinterested.

110. Fifthly and finally, true devotion to the Blessed Virgin is disinterested; that is to say, it inspires a soul not to seek herself at all, but God alone in his holy Mother. A true devotee of Mary does not serve this august Queen out of a spirit of lucre and self-interest, nor for his temporal or eternal good, bodily or spiritual, but solely because she deserves to be served, and God alone in her; he does not love Mary precisely because she does him good, or because he hopes for good from her, but because she is lovable. That is why he loves her and serves her as faithfully in distaste and dryness as in sweetness and sensible fervor; he loves her as much on Calvary as at the wedding feast of Cana. Oh, how pleasing and precious in the eyes of God and of his holy Mother is such a devotee of the Blessed Virgin, who seeks himself in nothing in the services he renders her! But how rare he is now! It is so that he may no longer be so rare that I have taken pen in hand to write on paper what I have taught with fruit, in public and in private, in my missions, for many years.

111. I have already said many things about the Most Blessed Virgin; but I have still more to say, and I shall omit infinitely more still, whether from ignorance, insufficiency, or lack of time, in the design I have of forming a true devotee of Mary and a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

112. Oh! how well my labor would be employed if this little writing, falling into the hands of a well-born soul, born of God and of Mary, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, should disclose to her and inspire in her, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the excellence and the worth of the true and solid devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin which I am now about to describe! If I knew that my criminal blood could serve to make the truths I write in honor of my dear Mother and sovereign Mistress, of whom I am the last of the children and of the slaves, enter into the heart, I would use it instead of ink to form these characters, in the hope I have of finding

good souls who, by their fidelity to the practice I teach, will make amends to my dear Mother and Mistress for the losses she has suffered through my ingratitude and infidelity.

113. I feel more than ever animated to believe and to hope for all that I have deeply engraved in my heart, and that I have been asking of God for many years, namely: that sooner or later the Most Blessed Virgin will have more children, servants, and slaves of love than ever, and that by this means Jesus Christ, my dear Master, will reign in hearts more than ever.

114. I foresee many raging beasts who come in fury to tear apart with their diabolical teeth this little writing and him whom the Holy Spirit has used to write it, or at least to bury it in the darkness and silence of a chest, so that it may not appear at all; they will even attack and persecute the men and women who read it and put it into practice. But no matter! But so much the better! This sight encourages me and makes me hope for great success, that is to say, a great squadron of brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and of Mary, of both sexes, to fight the world, the devil, and corrupted nature, in the perilous times that are coming more than ever! *Qui legit intelligat. Qui potest capere capiat.* [Let him who reads understand. Let him who can receive it, receive it.]

C. Principal practices of devotion to Mary

115. There are several interior practices of true devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, of which here are the principal ones in brief: 1. To honor her as the worthy Mother of God, with the worship of hyperdulia, that is to say, to esteem and honor her above all the other saints, as the masterpiece of grace and the first after Jesus Christ, true God and true man; 2. to meditate on her virtues, her privileges, and her actions; 3. to contemplate her grandeurs; 4. to make acts of love, of praise, and of gratitude to her; 5. to invoke her heartily; 6. to offer oneself and unite oneself to her; 7. to do one's actions with a view to pleasing her; 8. to begin, continue, and finish all one's actions through her, in her, with her, and for her, in order to do them through Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ, our last end. We shall explain this last practice.

116. True devotion to the Blessed Virgin also has several exterior practices, of which here are the principal ones: 1. To enroll in her confraternities and enter her congregations; 2. to enter the religious orders instituted in her honor; 3. to publish her praises; 4. to offer alms, fasts, and mortifications of spirit or of body in her honor; 5. to wear her liveries, such as the holy rosary or the chaplet, the scapular or the little chain; 6. to recite with attention, devotion, and modesty either the holy rosary, composed of fifteen decades of Ave Marias in honor of the fifteen principal mysteries of Jesus Christ, or the chaplet of five decades, which is a third of the rosary, whether in honor of the five joyful mysteries, which are: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Purification, and the Finding of Jesus Christ in the Temple; or in honor of the five sorrowful mysteries, which are: the Agony of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives, his Scourging, his Crowning with thorns, his Carrying of the Cross, and his Crucifixion; or in honor of the five glorious mysteries, which are: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit or Pentecost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin body

and soul into heaven, and her Crowning by the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity. One may also say a chaplet of six or seven decades in honor of the years the Blessed Virgin is believed to have lived on earth; or the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, composed of three Paters and twelve Aves, in honor of her crown of twelve stars or privileges; or the Office of the Blessed Virgin, so universally received and recited in the Church; or the Little Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, which Saint Bonaventure composed in her honor, and which is so tender and so devout that one cannot recite it without being moved by it; or fourteen Paters and Aves in honor of her fourteen joys; or some other prayers, hymns, and canticles of the Church, such as the *Salve Regina*, the *Alma*, the *Ave Regina coelorum*, or the *Regina coeli*, according to the different seasons; or the *Ave maris Stella*, the *O gloriosa Domina*, etc., or the *Magnificat*, or some other prayers of devotion, with which the books are filled; 7. to sing, and have sung, spiritual canticles in her honor; 8. to make a number of genuflections or reverences to her, saying to her, for example, every morning, sixty or a hundred times: *Ave Maria, Virgo Fidelis* [Hail Mary, faithful Virgin], to obtain from God, through her, fidelity to the graces of God during the day; and in the evening: *Ave Maria, Mater misericordiae* [Hail Mary, Mother of mercy], to ask pardon of God through her for the sins one has committed during the day; 9. to take care of her confraternities, adorn her altars, crown and embellish her images; 10. to carry her images, and have them carried, in procession, and to carry one on one's person, as a powerful weapon against the evil one; 11. to have her images or her name made, and to place them either in churches, or in houses, or on the gates and entrances of cities, churches, and houses; 12. to consecrate oneself to her in a special and solemn manner.

117. There are a great many other practices of true devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, which the Holy Spirit has inspired in holy souls, and which are very sanctifying; they may be read at greater length in the *Paradise Opened to Philagia*, composed by the Reverend Father

Paul Barry, of the Society of Jesus, where he has gathered a great number of devotions which the saints have practiced in honor of the Most Blessed Virgin, which devotions serve marvelously to sanctify souls, provided they are done as they ought to be, that is to say: 1. with a good and right intention of pleasing God alone, of uniting oneself to Jesus Christ as to one's last end, and of edifying one's neighbor; 2. with attention, without voluntary distraction; 3. with devotion, without haste or negligence; 4. with modesty, and a respectful and edifying composure of body.

D. The perfect practice of devotion to Mary

118. After all, I openly protest that, having read almost all the books which treat of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, and having conversed familiarly with the holiest and most learned persons of these latter times, I have never known nor learned of any practice of devotion toward the Blessed Virgin like the one I wish to speak of, which demands of a soul more sacrifices for God, which empties it more of itself and of its self-love, which keeps it more faithfully in grace, and grace in it, which unites it more perfectly and more easily to Jesus Christ, and finally which is more glorious to God, more sanctifying for the soul, and more useful to one's neighbor.

119. As the essence of this devotion consists in the interior which it must form, it will not be equally understood by everyone: some will stop at what is exterior in it, and will go no further, and these will be the greatest number; some, in small number, will enter into its interior, but they will climb only one degree. Who will climb to the second? Who will reach the third? Finally, who is he who will be in it as his settled state? He alone to whom the Spirit of Jesus Christ will reveal this secret, and will himself lead the truly faithful soul there, to advance from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, and from light to light, so as to arrive at the transformation of itself into Jesus Christ, and at the fullness of his age on earth and of his glory in heaven.

1- The perfect consecration to Jesus Christ

120. All our perfection consisting in being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ, the most perfect of all devotions is without question the one which conforms, unites, and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, Mary being the most conformed to Jesus Christ of all creatures, it follows that, of all devotions, the one which most consecrates and conforms a soul to Our Lord is devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, his holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more it will be to Jesus Christ. That is why the perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing other than a perfect and entire consecration of oneself to the Most Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach; or, in other words, a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism.

121. This devotion consists, then, in giving oneself entirely to the Most Blessed Virgin, in order to be entirely Jesus Christ's through her. We must give her: 1. our body with all its senses and its members; 2. our soul with all its powers; 3. our exterior goods, which are called goods of fortune, present and to come; 4. our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits, our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future: in two words, all that we have in the order of nature and in the order of grace, and all that we may have in the future in the order of nature, of grace, or of glory; and this without any reserve, not even of a penny, a hair, or the least good action; and this for all eternity; and this without claiming or hoping for any other reward for one's offering and one's service than the honor of belonging to Jesus Christ through her and in her, even if this lovable Mistress were not, as she always is, the most liberal and the most grateful of creatures.

122. Here it must be noted that there are two things in the good works we do, namely: satisfaction and merit; in other words, the satisfactory or impetratory value and the meritorious value. The satisfactory or impetratory value of a good work is a good action

insofar as it satisfies for the punishment due to sin, or obtains some new grace; the meritorious value, or merit, is a good action insofar as it merits grace and eternal glory. Now, in this consecration of ourselves to the Most Blessed Virgin, we give her all the satisfactory, impetratory, and meritorious value, in other words the satisfactions and the merits, of all our good works: we give her our merits, our graces, and our virtues, not to communicate them to others (for our merits, graces, and virtues are, properly speaking, incommunicable; and only Jesus Christ, by making himself our surety with his Father, was able to communicate his merits to us), but to keep, increase, and embellish them for us, as we shall say further on; we give her our satisfactions to communicate them to whomever she pleases, and for the greater glory of God.

123. From this it follows: 1. that by this devotion one gives to Jesus Christ, in the most perfect manner, since it is by the hands of Mary, all that one can give him, and much more than by the other devotions, in which one gives him either a part of one's time, or a part of one's good works, or a part of one's satisfactions and mortifications. Here everything is given and consecrated, even to the right of disposing of one's interior goods, and of the satisfactions one gains by one's good works from day to day: which is not done even in any religious order. In religious orders one gives to God the goods of fortune by the vow of poverty, the goods of the body by the vow of chastity, one's own will by the vow of obedience, and sometimes the liberty of the body by the vow of enclosure; but one does not give him the liberty or the right one has to dispose of the value of one's good works, and one does not strip oneself, as far as one can, of what the Christian man has that is most precious and most dear, which are his merits and his satisfactions.

124. 2. It follows that a person who has thus voluntarily consecrated and sacrificed himself to Jesus Christ through Mary can no longer dispose of the value of any of his good actions; all that he suffers, all

the good that he thinks, says, and does belongs to Mary, so that she may dispose of it according to the will of her Son and to his greater glory; without, however, this dependence prejudicing in any way the obligations of the state in which one is at present, and in which one may be in the future: for example, the obligations of a priest who, by office or otherwise, must apply the satisfactory and impetratory value of the holy Mass to a particular person; for this offering is made only according to the order of God and the duties of one's state.

125. 3. It follows that one consecrates oneself at one and the same time to the Most Blessed Virgin and to Jesus Christ: to the Most Blessed Virgin as to the perfect means which Jesus Christ has chosen to unite himself to us and to unite us to him; and to Our Lord as to our last end, to whom we owe all that we are, as to our Redeemer and our God.

126. I have said that this devotion could very well be called a perfect renewal of the vows or promises of holy baptism. For every Christian, before his baptism, was the slave of the devil, because he belonged to him. In his baptism, by his own mouth or by that of his godfather and his godmother, he solemnly renounced Satan, his pomps, and his works, and took Jesus Christ for his Master and sovereign Lord, to depend on him in the capacity of a slave of love. This is what is done by this present devotion: one renounces (as is marked in the formula of the consecration) the devil, the world, sin, and oneself, and one gives oneself entirely to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary. And one even does something more, for in baptism one ordinarily speaks by the mouth of another, namely by the godfather and godmother, and one gives oneself to Jesus Christ only by proxy; but in this devotion, it is by oneself, it is voluntarily, it is with full knowledge of what one is doing. In holy baptism one does not give oneself to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary, at least not in an express manner, and one does not give to Jesus Christ the value of one's good actions; one remains, after baptism, entirely free to apply it to whomever one wishes or to keep it

for oneself; but by this devotion one gives oneself expressly to Our Lord by the hands of Mary, and consecrates to him the value of all one's actions.

127. Men, says Saint Thomas, make a vow at holy baptism to renounce the devil and his pomps: *In baptismo vovent homines abrenuntiare diabolo et pompis ejus*. And this vow, says Saint Augustine, is the greatest and the most indispensable: *Votum maximum nostrum quo vovimus nos in Christo esse mansuros* [Our greatest vow, by which we have vowed to remain in Christ] (Epis. 59 ad Paulin). It is also what the canonists say: *Praecipuum votum est quod in baptismo facimus* [The chief vow is that which we make in baptism]. Yet who keeps this great vow? Who faithfully keeps the promises of holy baptism? Do not almost all Christians violate the fidelity they promised to Jesus Christ in their baptism? Whence can this universal disorder come, if not from the fact that men live in forgetfulness of the promises and engagements of holy baptism, and from the fact that almost no one ratifies by himself the contract of covenant which he made with God through his godfathers and godmothers!

128. This is so true that the Council of Sens, convoked by order of Louis the Debonair to remedy the disorders of Christians, which were great, judged that the principal cause of this corruption of morals came from the forgetfulness and the ignorance in which men lived of the engagements of holy baptism; and it found no better means whatsoever of remedying so great an evil than to bring Christians to renew the vows and promises of holy baptism.

129. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, faithful interpreter of the intentions of that holy council, exhorts parish priests to do the same thing and to bring their people to remember and to believe that they are bound and consecrated to Our Lord Jesus Christ as slaves to their Redeemer and Lord. Here are its words: *Parochus fidelem populum ad eam rationem cohortabitur ut sciat[...] aequum esse nos*

ipsos, non secus ac mancipia Redemptori nostro et Domino in perpetuum addicere et consecrare [The parish priest shall exhort the faithful people in such a way that they may know... that it is just that we give over and consecrate ourselves forever to our Redeemer and Lord, no otherwise than as slaves] (Cat. Conc. Trid., pte I, c. 3)

130. Now, if the councils, the Fathers, and experience itself show us that the best means of remedying the disorders of Christians is to make them remember the obligations of their baptism and to make them renew the vows they made there, is it not reasonable that this be done at present in a perfect manner, by this devotion and consecration to Our Lord through his holy Mother? I say in a perfect manner, because in consecrating oneself to Jesus Christ one makes use of the most perfect of all means, which is the Most Blessed Virgin.

131. It cannot be objected that this devotion is new or a matter of indifference: it is not new, since the councils, the Fathers, and many authors, ancient and modern, speak of this consecration to Our Lord, or renewal of the vows of holy baptism, as of a thing anciently practiced, and one which they counsel to all Christians; it is not a matter of indifference, since the principal source of the disorders, and consequently of the damnation, of Christians comes from forgetfulness of and indifference toward this practice.

132. Some may say that this devotion, by making us give to Our Lord, by the hands of the Most Blessed Virgin, the value of all our good works, prayers and mortifications and alms, renders us powerless to succor the souls of our relatives, friends, and benefactors. I answer them, first, that it is not credible that our friends, relatives, or benefactors should suffer harm because we have devoted and consecrated ourselves without reserve to the service of Our Lord and of his holy Mother. That would be to wrong the power and the goodness of Jesus and of Mary, who will know well how to assist our relatives, friends, and benefactors out of our little spiritual revenue, or by other ways. Secondly, this practice does not at all prevent us from

praying for others, whether dead or living, although the application of our good works depends on the will of the Most Blessed Virgin; on the contrary, it is this that will lead us to pray with more confidence; just as a rich person who had given all his goods to a great prince, in order to honor him the more, would pray that prince with more confidence to give an alms to one of his friends who should ask him for it. It would even be giving pleasure to that prince to afford him occasion to show his gratitude toward a person who has stripped himself to clothe him, who has impoverished himself to honor him. The same must be said of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin: they will never let themselves be outdone in gratitude.

133. Someone will perhaps say: If I give to the Most Blessed Virgin all the value of my actions, for her to apply it to whom she wills, perhaps I shall have to suffer a long time in purgatory. This objection, which comes from self-love and from ignorance of the liberality of God and of his holy Mother, destroys itself. A fervent and generous soul that prizes the interests of God more than its own, that gives to God all that it has, without reserve, so that it can do no more, *non plus ultra* [no further], that breathes only the glory and the reign of Jesus Christ through his holy Mother, and that sacrifices itself entirely to gain it — will this generous and liberal soul, I say, be more punished in the other world for having been more liberal and more disinterested than the others? Far from it: it is to this soul, as we shall see in what follows, that Our Lord and his holy Mother are very liberal in this world and in the other, in the order of nature, of grace, and of glory.

134. We must now see, as briefly as we can, the motives which should make this devotion commendable to us, the marvelous effects it produces in faithful souls, and the practices of this devotion.

2- The motives which should make this devotion commendable to us

This devotion gives us entirely to the service of God

135. First motive, which shows us the excellence of this consecration of oneself to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary. If one can conceive of no employment on earth more exalted than the service of God; if the least servant of God is richer, more powerful, and more noble than all the kings and emperors of the earth, if they are not servants of God, what are the riches, the power, and the dignity of the faithful and perfect servant of God, who will be devoted to his service entirely, without reserve, and as fully as he can be! Such is a faithful and loving slave of Jesus in Mary, who has given himself wholly to the service of this King of kings, by the hands of his holy Mother, and who has reserved nothing for himself: all the gold of the earth and the beauties of the heavens cannot pay him.

136. The other congregations, associations, and confraternities erected in honor of Our Lord and of his holy Mother, which do such great good in Christendom, do not make one give everything without reserve; they prescribe to their members only certain practices and actions to satisfy their obligations; they leave them free for all the other actions and the other times of their life. But this devotion makes a man give to Jesus and Mary, without reserve, all his thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings, and all the times of his life: so that, whether he wakes or sleeps, whether he drinks or eats, whether he does the greatest actions or the smallest, it is always true to say that what he does, though he is not thinking of it, belongs to Jesus and Mary in virtue of his offering, unless he has expressly retracted it. What a consolation!

137. Moreover, as I have already said, there is no other practice than this one by which a man is easily rid of a certain proprietorship, which slips imperceptibly into the best actions; and our good Jesus gives this

great grace in reward for the heroic and disinterested action one has done in making over to him, by the hands of his holy Mother, all the value of one's good works. If he gives a hundredfold, even in this world, to those who for love of him leave exterior, temporal, and perishable goods, what will be the hundredfold he will give to him who sacrifices to him even his interior and spiritual goods!

138. Jesus, our great friend, gave himself to us without reserve, body and soul, virtues, graces, and merits: *Se toto totum me comparavit*, says Saint Bernard: He won me entirely by giving himself entirely to me; is it not a matter of justice and of gratitude that we give him all that we can give him? He was the first to be liberal toward us; let us be the second, and we shall find him, during our life, at our death, and in all eternity, still more liberal: *Cum liberali liberalis erit* [With the liberal he will be liberal]. This devotion makes us imitate the example given by Jesus Christ and by God himself, and practice humility.

139. Second motive, which shows us that it is just in itself and advantageous to the Christian to consecrate himself entirely to the Most Blessed Virgin by this practice, in order to be more perfectly consecrated to Jesus Christ. This good Master did not disdain to enclose himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin as a captive and a loving slave, and to be subject and obedient to her for thirty years. It is here, I repeat, that the human mind loses itself, when it reflects seriously on this conduct of the Incarnate Wisdom, who did not will, though he could have done so, to give himself directly to men, but through the Most Blessed Virgin; who did not will to come into the world at the age of a full-grown man, independent of others, but as a poor little child, dependent on the care and the sustenance of his holy Mother. This infinite Wisdom, who had an immense desire to glorify God his Father and to save men, found no more perfect and no shorter means whatsoever of doing so than to submit himself in all things to the Most Blessed Virgin, not only during the first eight, ten, or fifteen years of his life, like other children, but for thirty years; and

he gave more glory to God his Father during all this time of submission to and dependence on the Most Blessed Virgin than he would have given him by employing those thirty years in working wonders, in preaching throughout all the earth, in converting all men; had it been otherwise, he would have done it. Oh! oh! how highly one glorifies God by submitting oneself to Mary, after the example of Jesus! Having before our eyes an example so visible and so known to all the world, are we senseless enough to believe we can find a more perfect and shorter means of glorifying God than that of submitting ourselves to Mary, after the example of her Son?

140. Let it be recalled here, as proof of the dependence we ought to have on the Most Blessed Virgin, what I said above in relating the examples which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit give us in the dependence we ought to have on the Most Blessed Virgin. The Father has given and gives his Son only through her, makes children for himself only through her, and communicates his graces only through her; God the Son was formed for the whole world in general only through her, is formed daily and begotten only through her in union with the Holy Spirit, and communicates his merits and his virtues only through her; the Holy Spirit formed Jesus Christ only through her, forms the members of his Mystical Body only through her, and dispenses his gifts and favors only through her. After so many and such pressing examples of the Most Holy Trinity, can we, without extreme blindness, do without Mary, and not consecrate ourselves to her and depend on her in order to go to God and to sacrifice ourselves to God?

141. Here are some Latin passages from the Fathers, which I have chosen to prove what I have just said: *Duo filii Mariae sunt, homo Deus et homo purus; unius corporaliter; et alterius spiritualiter mater est Maria* [Mary has two sons, a God-man and a mere man; of the one she is mother corporally, and of the other spiritually] (Saint Bonaventure and Origen). *Haec est voluntas Dei, qui totum nos voluit*

habere per Mariam; ac proinde, si quid spei, si quid gratiae, si quid salutis ab ea noverimus redundare [This is the will of God, who willed that we should have everything through Mary; and therefore, if there is any hope, any grace, any salvation, let us know that it overflows to us from her] (Saint Bernard). *Omnia dona, virtutes et gratiae ipsius Spiritus Sancti, quibus vult, quando vult, quomodo vult et quantum vult per ipsius manus administrantur* [All the gifts, virtues, and graces of the Holy Spirit himself are administered by her hands, to whom he wills, when he wills, how he wills, and as much as he wills] (Saint Bernardine). *Qui indignus eras cui daretur, datum est Mariae, ut per eam acciperes quidquid haberes* [You who were unworthy to receive it, it was given to Mary, so that through her you might receive whatever you were to have] (Saint Bernard).

142. God, seeing that we are unworthy to receive his graces immediately from his hand, says Saint Bernard, gives them to Mary, so that we may have through her all that he wills to give us; and he also finds his glory in receiving through the hands of Mary the gratitude, the respect, and the love that we owe him for his benefits. It is therefore very just that we imitate this conduct of God, so that, says the same Saint Bernard, grace may return to its author by the same channel by which it came: *Ut eodem alveo ad largitorem gratia redeat quo fluxit*. This is what is done by our devotion: we offer and consecrate all that we are and all that we possess to the Most Blessed Virgin, so that Our Lord may receive through her mediation the glory and the gratitude we owe him. We acknowledge ourselves unworthy and incapable of approaching his infinite Majesty by ourselves: that is why we make use of the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin.

143. Moreover, this is a practice of great humility, which God loves above the other virtues. A soul that exalts itself abases God; a soul that humbles itself exalts God. God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble; if you abase yourself, believing yourself unworthy to appear before him and to draw near to him, he descends, he lowers

himself to come to you, to take pleasure in you, and to exalt you in spite of yourself; but quite the contrary, when one boldly approaches God without a mediator, God flees, and one cannot reach him. Oh, how he loves humility of heart! It is to this humility that this practice of devotion binds us, since it teaches us never to approach Our Lord by ourselves, however sweet and merciful he may be, but always to make use of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whether to appear before God, or to speak to him, or to approach him, or to offer him something, or to unite and consecrate ourselves to him.

This devotion obtains for us the good offices of the Blessed Virgin.

144. Third motive. The Most Blessed Virgin, who is a mother of sweetness and mercy, and who never lets herself be outdone in love and liberality, seeing that one gives oneself entirely to her in order to honor and serve her, stripping oneself of what one holds most dear in order to adorn her with it, also gives herself entirely and in an ineffable manner to the one who gives her everything. She causes him to be engulfed in the abyss of her graces; she adorns him with her merits; she supports him with her power; she enlightens him with her light; she inflames him with her love; she communicates to him her virtues: her humility, her faith, her purity, etc.; she makes herself his surety, his supplement, and his all with Jesus. Finally, as this consecrated person is wholly Mary's, Mary is also wholly his; so that one can say of this perfect servant and child of Mary what Saint John the Evangelist says of himself, that he took the Most Blessed Virgin for all his goods: *Accepit eam discipulus in sua.*

145. This is what produces in his soul, if he is faithful, a great distrust, contempt, and hatred of himself, and a great confidence in and a great abandonment to the Blessed Virgin, his good Mistress. He no longer places his reliance, as before, on his dispositions, intentions, merits, virtues, and good works, because, having made an entire sacrifice of them to Jesus Christ through this good Mother, he now

has but one treasure, in which all his goods are, and which is no longer in his own house; and this treasure is Mary. This is what makes him approach Our Lord without servile or scrupulous fear, and pray to him with great confidence; this is what makes him enter into the sentiments of the devout and learned Abbot Rupert, who, alluding to the victory Jacob won over an angel, said to the Most Blessed Virgin these beautiful words: O Mary, my Princess, and immaculate Mother of a God-Man, Jesus Christ, I desire to wrestle with this Man, namely the divine Word, armed not with my own merits but with yours: *O Domina, Dei Genitrix, Maria, et incorrupta Mater Dei et hominis, non meis, sed tuis armatus meritis, cum isto Viro, scilicet Verbo Dei, luctari cupio* (Rup. prolog. in Cantic.). Oh, how powerful and strong one is with Jesus Christ when one is armed with the merits and the intercession of a worthy Mother of God, who, as Saint Augustine says, has lovingly conquered the Almighty!

146. Since, by this practice, one gives to Our Lord, through the hands of his holy Mother, all one's good works, this good Mistress purifies them, embellishes them, and makes them accepted by her Son. 1. She purifies them of all the stain of self-love and of that imperceptible attachment to the creature which slips unnoticed into the best actions. As soon as they are in her most pure and fruitful hands, these same hands, which have never been sterile or idle, and which purify whatever they touch, remove from the present one makes her all that may be spoiled or imperfect in it.

147. 2. She embellishes them, adorning them with her merits and virtues. It is as if a peasant, wishing to gain the friendship and benevolence of the king, went to the queen and presented her with an apple, which was his whole revenue, so that she might present it to the king. The queen, having accepted the poor little present of the peasant, would place the apple in the middle of a great and beautiful dish of gold, and would present it thus to the king on the peasant's behalf; then the apple, although unworthy in itself to be presented to

a king, would become a present worthy of his Majesty, in view of the dish of gold on which it lies and of the person who presents it.

148. 3. She presents these good works to Jesus Christ; for she keeps nothing for herself, as its final end, of what is presented to her; she faithfully refers it all to Jesus. If one gives to her, one necessarily gives to Jesus; if one praises her and glorifies her, at once she praises and glorifies Jesus. Now, as of old when Saint Elizabeth praised her, when she is praised and blessed she sings: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* [My soul magnifies the Lord].

149. 4. She causes these good works to be accepted by Jesus, however small and poor the present may be for this Holy of Holies and this King of kings. When one presents something to Jesus by oneself, relying on one's own industry and disposition, Jesus examines the present, and often he rejects it because of the stain it contracts through self-love; as of old he rejected the sacrifices of the Jews, all full of their self-will. But when one presents something to him through the pure and virginal hands of his beloved, one takes him by his weak side, if I may be permitted to use this term: he does not so much consider the thing that is given him as his good Mother who presents it; he does not so much look at where this present comes from as at her through whom it comes. Thus Mary, who is never rebuffed, and is always well received by her Son, causes everything she presents to him, small or great, to be agreeably received by his Majesty; it is enough that Mary present it for Jesus to receive it and accept it. This is the great counsel Saint Bernard gave to the men and women he was leading to perfection: When you wish to offer something to God, take care to offer it through the most agreeable and most worthy hands of Mary, unless you wish to be rejected: *Modicum quod offerre desideras, manibus Mariae offerendum tradere cura, si non vis sustinere repulsam* (Saint Bernard, Lib. de Aquaed.).

150. Is this not what nature itself inspires in the little toward the great, as we have seen? Why should grace not lead us to do the same

thing with regard to God, who is infinitely exalted above us, and before whom we are less than atoms; having, moreover, an advocate so powerful that she is never refused; so resourceful that she knows all the secrets of winning the heart of God; so good and charitable that she rebuffs no one, however little and wicked he may be. I shall relate hereafter the true figure of the truths I am stating, in the story of Jacob and Rebecca. This devotion is an excellent means of procuring the greatest glory of God.

151. Fourth motive. This devotion, faithfully practiced, is an excellent means of ensuring that the value of all our good works be employed for the greatest glory of God. Almost no one acts for this noble end, although we are obliged to do so, either because men do not know where the greatest glory of God lies, or because they do not will it. But since the Most Blessed Virgin, to whom one cedes the value and the merit of his good works, knows most perfectly where the greatest glory of God lies, and does nothing except for the greatest glory of God, a perfect servant of this good Mistress, who has consecrated himself entirely to her, as we have said, can boldly say that the value of all his actions, thoughts, and words is employed for the greatest glory of God, unless he expressly revokes his offering. Can anything more consoling be found for a soul that loves God with a pure and disinterested love, and that prizes the glory of God and his interests more than its own? This devotion is a road for arriving at union with Our Lord.

152. Fifth motive. This devotion is an easy, short, perfect, and secure road for arriving at union with Our Lord, in which the perfection of the Christian consists.

This devotion is an easy road.

1. It is an easy road; it is a road that Jesus Christ opened in coming to us, and on which there is no obstacle to arriving at him. One can, in truth, arrive at divine union by other roads; but it will be by many more crosses, by strange deaths, and with many more difficulties, which we shall overcome only with difficulty. One will have to pass through dark nights, through strange combats and agonies, over steep mountains, over very sharp thorns and through frightful deserts. But by the road of Mary one passes more sweetly and more tranquilly. One finds there, in truth, great battles to fight and great difficulties to overcome; but this good Mother and Mistress makes herself so near and so present to her faithful servants, to enlighten them in their darkness, to clear up their doubts, to strengthen them in their fears, to sustain them in their combats and their difficulties, that in truth this virginal road for finding Jesus Christ is a road of roses and honey, compared with the other roads. There have been some saints, but few in number, such as a Saint Ephrem, Saint John Damascene, Saint Bernard, Saint Bernardine, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Francis de Sales, etc., who have passed by this sweet road to go to Jesus Christ, because the Holy Spirit, the faithful Spouse of Mary, showed it to them by a singular grace; but the other saints, who are greater in number, though they have all had devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, nevertheless have not entered upon this way, or only very little. That is why they have passed through harsher and more dangerous trials.

153. Whence comes it, then, some faithful servant of Mary will say to me, that the faithful servants of this good Mother have so many occasions to suffer, and more than the others who are not so devout to her? They are contradicted, they are persecuted, they are calumniated, people cannot bear them; or else they walk in interior darkness and in deserts where there is not the least drop of the dew of heaven. If this devotion to the Blessed Virgin makes the road for finding Jesus Christ easier, whence comes it that they are the most crucified?

154. I answer him that it is quite true that the most faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin, being her greatest favorites, receive from her the greatest graces and favors of heaven, which are crosses; but I maintain that it is also these servants of Mary who bear these crosses with more ease, merit, and glory; and that what would stop another a thousand times, or make him fall, does not stop them once, but makes them advance, because this good Mother, all full of grace and of the unction of the Holy Spirit, candies all these crosses she cuts for them in the sugar of her maternal sweetness and in the unction of pure love, so that they swallow them joyfully like candied nuts, though the crosses are in themselves very bitter. And I believe that a person who wishes to be devout and to live piously in Jesus Christ, and consequently to suffer persecution and to carry his cross every day, will never carry great crosses, or will not carry them joyfully or to the end, without a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which is the sweet confection of crosses: just as a person would not be able to eat green nuts that were not candied in sugar, without a great violence that would not last.

This devotion is a short road

155. 2. This devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is a short road for finding Jesus Christ, both because one does not stray from it at all, and because, as I have just said, one walks along it with more joy and ease, and consequently with more promptness. One advances more in a little time of submission to and dependence on Mary than in whole years of self-will and reliance upon oneself; for a man obedient and submissive to the divine Mary will sing of signal victories over all his enemies. They will try to hinder him from advancing, or to make him retreat, or to make him fall, it is true; but with the support, the help, and the guidance of Mary, without falling, without retreating, and even without slowing down, he will advance with giant steps toward Jesus Christ, along the same road by which it is written that Jesus came to us with giant steps and in a little time.

156. Why do you think Jesus Christ lived so short a time on earth, and that, of the few years he lived there, he spent almost all his life in submission and obedience to his Mother? Ah! it is because, having been consummated in a little time, he lived long, and longer than Adam, whose losses he had come to repair, though Adam lived more than nine hundred years; and Jesus Christ lived long, because he lived there wholly submissive to and wholly united with his holy Mother, in order to obey God his Father; for: 1. he who honors his mother is like a man who lays up treasure, says the Holy Spirit; that is to say, he who honors Mary his Mother, to the point of submitting himself to her and obeying her in all things, will soon become very rich, because he amasses treasures every day by the secret of this philosopher's stone: *Qui honorat matrem, quasi qui thesaurizat*; 2. because, according to a spiritual interpretation of this word of the Holy Spirit: *Senectus mea in misericordia uberi*: My old age is found in the mercy of the bosom, it is in the bosom of Mary, which enclosed and engendered a perfect man, and which had the capacity to contain him whom the whole universe neither comprehends nor contains, it is in the bosom of Mary, I say, that the young become old men in light, in holiness, in experience, and in wisdom, and that one arrives in a few years at the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ.

This devotion is a perfect road.

157. 3. This practice of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is a perfect road for going to Jesus Christ and uniting oneself with him, since the divine Mary is the most perfect and the most holy of pure creatures, and since Jesus Christ, who came to us perfectly, took no other route for his great and admirable journey. The Most High, the Incomprehensible, the Inaccessible, He Who Is, willed to come to us, little worms of earth, who are nothing. How did this come about? The Most High descended perfectly and divinely, through the humble Mary, down to us, without losing anything of his divinity and holiness; and it is through Mary that the very little ones must ascend perfectly and divinely to the Most High, without fearing anything. The Incomprehensible let himself be comprehended and contained perfectly by the little Mary, without losing anything of his immensity; it is also through the little Mary that we must let ourselves be contained and led perfectly, without any reserve. The Inaccessible drew near, united himself closely, perfectly, and even personally to our humanity, through Mary, without losing anything of his Majesty; it is also through Mary that we must draw near to God and unite ourselves to his Majesty perfectly and closely, without fear of being rebuffed. Finally, He Who Is willed to come to that which is not, and to make that which is not become God, or He Who Is; he did this perfectly by giving himself and submitting himself entirely to the young Virgin Mary, without ceasing to be, in time, He Who Is from all Eternity; in the same way, it is through Mary that, though we are nothing, we can become like God by grace and glory, by giving ourselves to her so perfectly and so entirely that we are nothing in ourselves and all in her, without fear of deceiving ourselves.

158. Let someone make me a new road for going to Jesus Christ, and let that road be paved with all the merits of the blessed, adorned with all their heroic virtues, lighted and embellished with all the lights and beauties of the angels, and let all the angels and saints be there to

guide, defend, and support those men and women who wish to walk in it; in truth, in truth, I say boldly, and I say the truth, that in preference to this road, which would be so perfect, I would take the immaculate way of Mary: *Posui immaculatam viam meam* [I have made my way immaculate], a way or road without any stain or defilement, without original or actual sin, without shadow or darkness; and if my lovable Jesus, in his glory, comes a second time upon earth (as it is certain) to reign there, he will choose no other way for his journey than the divine Mary, by whom he came so surely and so perfectly the first time. The difference there will be between his first and his last coming is that the first was secret and hidden, the second will be glorious and resplendent; but both perfect, because both will be by Mary. Alas! here is a mystery that is not understood: *Hic taceat omnis lingua* [Here let every tongue be silent].

This devotion is a sure road.

159. 4. This devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin is a sure road for going to Jesus Christ and acquiring perfection by uniting ourselves to him: 1. Because this practice which I teach is not new; it is so ancient that one cannot, as says M. Boudon, who died a short time ago in the odor of sanctity, in a book he wrote on this devotion, mark precisely its beginnings; it is certain, however, that for more than seven hundred years traces of it are found in the Church. Saint Odilo, abbot of Cluny, who lived about the year 1040, was one of the first who practiced it publicly in France, as is noted in his life. Cardinal Peter Damian relates that in the year 1076 Blessed Marinus, his brother, made himself the slave of the Most Blessed Virgin, in the presence of his director, in a most edifying manner: for he put a rope around his neck, took the discipline, and placed upon the altar a sum of money as a mark of his devotedness and consecration to the Blessed Virgin, which he continued so faithfully all his life that at his death he merited to be visited and consoled by his good Mistress, and to receive from her lips the promises of paradise as the reward of his services. Cesarius Bollandus makes mention of an illustrious knight, Vautier de Birbak, a near relative of the dukes of Louvain, who, about the year 1300, made this consecration of himself to the Blessed Virgin. This devotion was practiced by many individuals until the seventeenth century, when it became public.

160. Father Simon de Roias, of the Order of the Trinity, known as the Order of the Redemption of Captives, preacher to King Philip III, brought this devotion into vogue throughout Spain and Germany, and obtained from Gregory XV, at the instance of Philip III, great indulgences for those who would practice it. The Reverend Father de Los Rios, of the Order of Saint Augustine, applied himself, with his intimate friend Father de Roias, to spreading this devotion by his words and his writings in Spain and Germany; he composed a large volume entitled *Hierarchia Mariana*, in which he treats, with as

much piety as erudition, of the antiquity, the excellence, and the solidity of this devotion. The Reverend Theatine Fathers, in the last century, established this devotion in Italy, Sicily, and Savoy.

161. The Reverend Father Stanislaus Phalacius, of the Society of Jesus, advanced this devotion marvelously in Poland. Father de Los Rios, in his book cited above, reports the names of the princes, princesses, bishops, and cardinals of different kingdoms who embraced this devotion. The Reverend Father Cornelius a Lapide, as commendable for his piety as for his profound learning, having received a commission from several bishops and theologians to examine this devotion, after having examined it maturely, gave it praises worthy of his piety, and several other great personages followed his example. The Reverend Jesuit Fathers, always zealous in the service of the Most Blessed Virgin, presented, in the name of the sodalists of Cologne, a little treatise on this devotion to Duke Ferdinand of Bavaria, then Archbishop of Cologne, who gave it his approbation and permission to have it printed, exhorting all the parish priests and religious of his diocese to advance this solid devotion as much as they could.

162. Cardinal de Bérulle, whose memory is in benediction throughout all France, was one of the most zealous in spreading this devotion in France, despite all the calumnies and persecutions that the critics and the libertines raised against him. They accused him of novelty and superstition; they wrote and published a defamatory tract against him, and they made use, or rather the devil through their agency, of a thousand stratagems to prevent him from spreading this devotion in France. But this great and holy man answered their calumny only with his patience, and the objections contained in their libel with a short work in which he refuted them powerfully, showing them that this devotion is founded upon the example of Jesus Christ, upon the obligations we have toward him, and upon the vows we made at holy baptism; and it is particularly by this last reason that he

shuts the mouths of his adversaries, making them see that this consecration to the Most Blessed Virgin, and to Jesus Christ by her hands, is nothing other than a perfect renewal of the vows or promises of baptism. He says many beautiful things about this practice, which may be read in his works.

163. One may read in the book of M. Boudon the different popes who approved this devotion, the theologians who examined it, and the persecutions it has suffered and overcome, and the thousands of persons who have embraced it, without any pope ever having condemned it; and one could not do so without overturning the foundations of Christianity. It remains certain, then, that this devotion is by no means new, and that if it is not common, it is because it is too precious to be relished and practiced by everybody.

164. 2. This devotion is a sure means of going to Jesus Christ, because it is proper to the Blessed Virgin to lead us surely to Jesus Christ, as it is proper to Jesus Christ to lead us surely to the eternal Father. And let not spiritual persons falsely believe that Mary is a hindrance to their attaining divine union. For could it be possible that she who found grace before God for the whole world in general and for each one in particular should be a hindrance to a soul in finding the great grace of union with him? Could it be possible that she who was all full and superabounding with graces, so united with and transformed into God that it was necessary for him to become incarnate in her, should hinder a soul from being perfectly united to God? It is quite true that the sight of other creatures, however holy, might perhaps, at certain times, retard divine union; but not Mary, as I have said and will say always without wearying. One reason why so few souls come to the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ is that Mary, who is, as much as ever, the Mother of Jesus Christ and the fruitful Spouse of the Holy Spirit, is not formed enough in their hearts. He who wishes to have the fruit well ripened and well formed must have the tree that produces it; he who wishes to have the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, must have the tree of

life, which is Mary. He who wishes to have in himself the operation of the Holy Spirit must have his faithful and indissoluble Spouse, the divine Mary, who makes him fertile and fruitful, as we have said elsewhere.

165. Be persuaded, then, that the more you look upon Mary in your prayers, contemplations, actions, and sufferings, if not with a distinct and conscious view, at least with a general and imperceptible one, the more perfectly you will find Jesus Christ, who is always with Mary, great, powerful, working, and incomprehensible, and more than in heaven or in any creature of the universe. Thus, far from the divine Mary, all lost in God, becoming an obstacle to the perfect in attaining union with God, there has never been until now, and there never will be, any creature who helps us more efficaciously in this great work, whether by the graces she will communicate to you for this purpose, no one being filled with the thought of God except through her, says a saint: *Nemo cogitatione Dei repletur nisi per te*, or by the illusions and deceits of the evil spirit from which she will guard you.

166. Where Mary is, there the evil spirit is not; and one of the most infallible marks that one is led by the good spirit is when one is very devout to Mary, thinks of her often, and speaks of her often. This is the thought of a saint, who adds that, as breathing is a certain mark that the body is not dead, so the frequent thought and loving invocation of Mary is a certain mark that the soul is not dead through sin.

167. As it is Mary alone, says the Church and the Holy Spirit who guides her, who alone has made all heresies perish: *Sola cunctas haereses interemisti in universo mundo* [You alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world]; though the critics grumble at it, never will a faithful devotee of Mary fall into heresy or illusion, at least formal; he may indeed err materially, take falsehood for truth and the evil spirit for the good, though with more difficulty than another; but sooner or later he will know his fault and his material error; and when

he knows it, he will in no manner grow obstinate in believing and maintaining what he had thought to be true.

168. Whoever, then, without fear of illusion, which is ordinary among persons of prayer, wishes to advance in the way of perfection and to find Jesus Christ surely and perfectly, let him embrace with great heart, *corde magno et animo volenti* [with a great heart and a willing mind], this devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, which he had perhaps not yet known. Let him enter upon this excellent way, which was unknown to him and which I show him: *Excellentiorem viam vobis demonstro* [I show you a more excellent way]. It is a way opened by Jesus Christ, the Wisdom incarnate, our only head; the member, in passing along it, cannot go astray. It is an easy way, because of the fullness of grace and of the unction of the Holy Spirit which fills it; in walking along it one grows not at all weary, nor does one fall back at all. It is a short way, which in a little time leads us to Jesus Christ. It is a perfect way, where there is no mud, no dust, nor the least filth of sin. It is, finally, a sure way, which leads us to Jesus Christ and to eternal life in a straight and sure manner, without turning aside either to the right or to the left. Let us enter, then, upon this way, and walk along it day and night, to the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ.

This devotion gives great interior liberty.

169. Sixth motive. This practice of devotion gives great interior liberty, which is the liberty of the children of God, to the persons who practice it faithfully. For, as by this devotion one makes oneself a slave of Jesus Christ, consecrating oneself wholly to him in this quality, this good Master, in reward for the loving captivity into which one puts oneself: 1. takes away from the soul every scruple and servile fear, which can only straiten it, hold it captive, and entangle it; 2. he enlarges the heart by a holy confidence in God, making it look upon him as its father; 3. he inspires in it a tender and filial love.

170. Without stopping to prove this truth by reasons, I content myself with relating an incident from history which I read in the Life of Mother Agnes of Jesus, a Dominican nun of the convent of Langeac, in Auvergne, who died in the odor of sanctity in that same place, in the year 1634. Being still only seven years old, and suffering great pains of spirit, she heard a voice which told her that, if she wished to be delivered from all her pains and to be protected against all her enemies, she should make herself as soon as possible the slave of Jesus and of his holy Mother. No sooner had she returned home than she gave herself wholly and entirely to Jesus and to his holy Mother in this quality, though she had not known before what this devotion was; and, having found an iron chain, she put it about her loins and wore it until death. And after this action, all her pains and her scruples ceased, and she found herself in great peace and dilation of heart, which led her to teach this devotion to many others who made great progress in it — among others, to M. Olier, founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and to several priests and ecclesiastics of the same Seminary... One day, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her and put upon her neck a chain of gold, to show her the joy she felt that she had made herself the slave of her Son and her own; and Saint Cecilia, who accompanied the Blessed Virgin, said to her: Happy are they who are the faithful slaves of the Queen of heaven, for they shall enjoy true liberty: *Tibi servire libertas* [To serve you is liberty].

This devotion procures great benefits for our neighbor.

171. Seventh motive. What may further engage us to embrace this practice are the great benefits which our neighbor will receive from it. For by this practice one exercises charity toward him in an eminent manner, since one gives him, through the hands of Mary, all that one holds most dear, which is the satisfactory and impetratory value of all one's good works, without excepting the least good thought or the least little suffering; one consents that all that one has acquired, and all that one will acquire until death, of satisfactions, be employed, according to the will of the Blessed Virgin, either for the conversion of sinners or for the deliverance of the souls in purgatory. Is this not to love one's neighbor perfectly? Is this not to be the true disciple of Jesus Christ, whom one recognizes by charity? Is this not the means of converting sinners, without fear of vanity, and of delivering the souls in purgatory, while doing almost nothing other than what each one is obliged to do in his state of life?

172. To know the excellence of this motive, one would have to know what a good it is to convert a sinner or to deliver a soul from purgatory: an infinite good, which is greater than to create heaven and earth, since one gives to a soul the possession of God. Even if, by this practice, one delivered but one soul from purgatory in one's whole life, or converted but one sinner, would that not be enough to engage every truly charitable man to embrace it? But it must be remarked that our good works, passing through the hands of Mary, receive an increase of purity, and consequently of merit and of satisfactory and impetratory value: this is why they become much more capable of relieving the souls in purgatory and of converting sinners than if they did not pass through the virginal and liberal hands of Mary. The little that one gives through the Blessed Virgin, without self-will and with a very disinterested charity, becomes in truth mighty indeed to appease the wrath of God and to draw down his mercy; and it will perhaps be found at death that a person very faithful to this practice will, by this

means, have delivered many souls from purgatory and converted many sinners, though she did only quite ordinary actions of her state of life. What joy at her judgment! What glory in eternity!

This devotion is an admirable means of perseverance.

173. Eighth motive. Finally, what engages us most powerfully, in a certain manner, to this devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, is that it is an admirable means of persevering in virtue and of being faithful. For whence comes it that most conversions of sinners are not lasting? Whence comes it that one falls back so easily into sin? Whence comes it that most of the just, instead of advancing from virtue to virtue and acquiring new graces, often lose the little virtue and grace that they have? This misfortune comes, as I have shown above, from the fact that man, being so corrupt, so weak, and so inconstant, trusts in himself, leans upon his own strength, and believes himself capable of keeping the treasure of his graces, his virtues, and merits. By this devotion one entrusts to the Blessed Virgin, who is faithful, all that one possesses; one takes her as the universal depositary of all one's goods of nature and of grace. It is in her fidelity that one trusts, it is upon her power that one leans, it is upon her mercy and her charity that one builds, so that she may preserve and increase our virtues and merits, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, who make every effort to snatch them from us. One says to her, as a good child to its mother and a faithful servant to his mistress: *Depositum custodi* [Keep what has been committed to you]: My good Mother and Mistress, I acknowledge that I have hitherto received more graces from God through your intercession than I deserve, and that my sad experience teaches me that I carry this treasure in a very fragile vessel, and that I am too weak and too miserable to keep these things in myself: *adolescentulus sum ego et contemptus* [I am very young and despised]; I beg you, receive in deposit all that I possess, and keep it for me by your fidelity and your power. If you keep me, I shall lose nothing; if you uphold me, I shall not fall at all; if you protect me, I am sheltered from my enemies.

174. This is what Saint Bernard says in express terms, to inspire us to this practice: When she upholds you, you fall not; when she protects

you, you fear not; when she leads you, you weary not; when she is favorable to you, you arrive at the port of salvation: *Ipsa tenente, non corrui, ipsa protegente, non metuis; ipsa duce, non fatigaris; ipsa propitia, pervenis* (Serm. super Missus). Saint Bonaventure seems to say the same thing again in still more express terms: The Blessed Virgin, he says, is not only retained in the fullness of the saints, but she also retains and keeps the saints in their fullness, so that it may not diminish at all; she prevents their virtues from dissipating, their merits from perishing, their graces from being lost, the demons from harming them; finally, she prevents Our Lord from chastising them when they sin: *Virgo non solum in plenitudine sanctorum detinetur, sed etiam in plenitudine sanctos detinet, ne plenitudo minuat; detinet virtutes ne fugiant; detinet merita ne pereant; detinet gratias ne effluent; detinet daemones ne noceant; detinet Filium ne peccatores percutiat* (S. Bon., in Speculo B. V.)

175. The Most Blessed Virgin is the faithful Virgin who, by her fidelity to God, repairs the losses which Eve the unfaithful caused by her infidelity, and who obtains fidelity to God and perseverance for the men and women who attach themselves to her. That is why a saint compares her to a firm anchor, which holds them fast and keeps them from being shipwrecked in the storm-tossed sea of this world, where so many persons perish for want of attaching themselves to this firm anchor: We fasten souls, he says, to your hope as to a firm anchor: *Animas ad spem tuam sicut ad firmam anchoram alligamus*. It is to her that the saints who have been saved were most attached, and to her they attached others, in order to persevere in virtue. Happy, then, and a thousand times happy are the Christians who now attach themselves faithfully and entirely to her as to a firm anchor. The assaults of the storm of this world will not sink them, nor make them lose their heavenly treasures. Happy the men and women who enter into her as into Noah's ark! The waters of the flood of sins, which drown so many people, will do them no harm, for: *Qui operantur in me non peccabunt*: those who are in me to work out their salvation

shall not sin, she says with Wisdom. Happy the unfaithful children of unhappy Eve who attach themselves to the faithful Mother and Virgin, who remains always faithful and never contradicts herself: *Fidelis permanet, se ipsam negare non potest* [She remains faithful; she cannot deny herself], and who always loves those who love her: *Ego diligentes me diligo* [I love those who love me], not only with an affective love, but with an effective and efficacious love, keeping them, by a great abundance of graces, from drawing back in virtue or from falling on the road by losing the grace of her Son.

176. This good Mother always receives, out of pure charity, all that is given to her in trust; and, once she has received it in her capacity as depositary, she is bound in justice, by virtue of the contract of deposit, to keep it for us; just as a person to whom I had entrusted a thousand crowns in deposit would be obliged to keep them for me, so that if, through her negligence, my thousand crowns came to be lost, she would be responsible for them in all justice. But no, never will the faithful Mary allow what has been entrusted to her to be lost through her negligence: heaven and earth would pass away sooner than she should be negligent and unfaithful toward those who trust in her.

177. Poor children of Mary, your weakness is extreme, your inconstancy is great, your inmost nature is thoroughly spoiled. You are drawn, I admit, from the same corrupted mass as the children of Adam and Eve; but do not be discouraged for that; but console yourselves; but rejoice: here is the secret that I teach you, a secret unknown to almost all Christians, even the most devout. Do not leave your gold and your silver in your coffers, which have already been broken into by the evil spirit who robbed you, and which are too small, too weak, and too old to contain a treasure so great and so precious. Do not put the pure and clear water of the fountain into your vessels all spoiled and infected by sin; if sin is no longer there, its odor still is; the water will be spoiled by it. Do not put your exquisite wines into your old casks which have been filled with bad wines: they

would be spoiled by them and in danger of being spilled.

178. Although you understand me, predestined souls, I speak more openly. Do not entrust the gold of your charity, the silver of your purity, the waters of heavenly graces, or the wines of your merits and virtues to a sack with holes, to an old and broken coffer, to a spoiled and corrupted vessel such as you are; otherwise you will be plundered by the thieves, that is, the demons, who seek and watch, night and day, for the right moment to do so; otherwise you will spoil, by your bad odor of love of yourselves, of confidence in yourselves, and of self-will, all that God gives you that is most pure. Put, pour into the bosom and the heart of Mary all your treasures, all your graces and virtues: she is a spiritual vessel, she is a vessel of honor, she is a singular vessel of devotion: *Vas spirituale, vas honorabile, vas insigne devotionis*. Ever since God himself in person enclosed himself with all his perfections in this vessel, it has become wholly spiritual, and the spiritual dwelling of the most spiritual souls; it has become honorable, and the throne of honor of the greatest princes of eternity; it has become singular in devotion, and the abode of those most illustrious in sweetness, in graces, and in virtues; it has become, finally, rich as a house of gold, strong as a tower of David, and pure as a tower of ivory.

179. Oh! how happy is the man who has given everything to Mary, who trusts and loses himself, in everything and for everything, in Mary! He is all Mary's, and Mary is all his. He can boldly say with David: *Haec facta est mihi*: Mary was made for me; or, with the beloved Disciple: *Accepi eam in mea*. I have taken her for all my good; or, with Jesus Christ: *Omnia mea tua sunt, et omnia tua mea sunt*: All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine.

180. If some critic, reading this, imagines that I speak here with exaggeration and out of an extravagant devotion, alas! he does not understand me, either because he is a carnal man, who has no taste at all for the things of the spirit, or because he is of the world, which cannot receive the Holy Spirit, or because he is proud and critical,

condemning or despising all that he does not understand. But the souls who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God and of Mary, understand me and relish me; and it is for them also that I write this.

181. Nevertheless I say for the one and the other, taking up again my interrupted subject, that the divine Mary, being the most honorable and the most liberal of all pure creatures, never lets herself be outdone in love and in liberality; and for an egg, says a holy man, she gives an ox; that is to say, for the little that one gives her, she gives much of what she has received from God; and, consequently, if a soul gives itself to her without reserve, she gives herself to that soul without reserve, if one puts all one's confidence in her without presumption, laboring for one's own part to acquire the virtues and to subdue one's passions.

182. Let the faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin say boldly, then, with Saint John Damascene: "Having confidence in you, O Mother of God, I shall be saved; having your protection, I shall fear nothing; with your help, I shall fight my enemies and put them to flight: for devotion to you is a weapon of salvation which God gives to those whom he wills to save: *Spem tuam habens, o Deipara, servabor; defensionem tuam possidens, non timebo; persequar inimicos meos et in fugam vertam, habens protectionem tuam et auxilium tuum; nam tibi devotum esse est arma quaedam salutis quae Deus his dat quos vult salvos fieri*" (Joan. Damas., ser. de Annuntiat).

3- Biblical figure of this perfect devotion: Rebecca and Jacob

183. Of all the truths I have just described with respect to the Most Blessed Virgin and her children and servants, the Holy Spirit gives us, in Holy Scripture, an admirable figure in the story of Jacob, who received the blessing of his father Isaac through the care and ingenuity of Rebecca his mother. Here it is, as the Holy Spirit relates it. Afterwards I will add its explanation.

Story of Jacob.

184. Esau having sold his birthright to Jacob, Rebecca, the mother of the two brothers, who loved Jacob tenderly, secured this advantage for him, many years later, by a stratagem altogether holy and altogether full of mysteries. For Isaac, feeling himself very old and wishing to bless his children before dying, called his son Esau, whom he loved, and commanded him to go hunting to get something to eat, so that he might bless him afterwards. Rebecca promptly informed Jacob of what was happening and commanded him to go and take two kids from the flock. When he had given them to his mother, she prepared from them for Isaac what she knew he loved; she clothed Jacob in the garments of Esau, which she kept, and covered his hands and his neck with the skin of the kids, so that his father, who could no longer see, might, on hearing Jacob's voice, believe at least, by the hair on his hands, that it was Esau his brother. Isaac, indeed, surprised by his voice, which he believed to be the voice of Jacob, made him come near, and having touched the hair of the skins with which he had covered his hands, he said that the voice, in truth, was the voice of Jacob, but that the hands were the hands of Esau. After he had eaten, and had smelled, in kissing Jacob, the fragrance of his perfumed garments, he blessed him and wished him the dew of heaven and the fruitfulness of the earth; he established him as master over all his brothers, and ended his blessing with these words: "May he who curses you be cursed himself, and may he who blesses you be filled with blessings." Scarcely had Isaac finished these words when Esau came in, bringing to eat what he had taken in the hunt, so that his father might then bless him. This holy patriarch was seized with unbelievable astonishment when he realized what had just taken place; but, far from retracting what he had done, he confirmed it, on the contrary, because he saw all too plainly the finger of God in this course of events. Esau then let out roars, as Holy Scripture notes, and, loudly denouncing his brother's deceit, he asked his father whether he had only one blessing: being in this, as the holy Fathers remark, the

image of those who, well content to ally God with the world, want to enjoy at once the consolations of heaven and those of the earth. Isaac, touched by Esau's cries, finally blessed him, but with a blessing of the earth, and subjecting him to his brother: which made him conceive so envenomed a hatred against Jacob that he waited only for his father's death to kill him; and Jacob could not have escaped death had his dear mother Rebecca not saved him from it by her ingenuity and by the good counsels which she gave him and which he followed.

Interpretation of the story of Jacob.

185. Before explaining this story, which is so beautiful, it must be remarked that, according to all the holy Fathers and the interpreters of Holy Scripture, Jacob is the figure of Jesus Christ and of the predestined, and Esau that of the reprobate. One need only examine the actions and the conduct of the one and the other to judge of it. 1. Esau, the elder, was strong and robust of body, adroit and industrious in drawing the bow and in taking much game in the hunt. 2. He hardly ever stayed at home, and, putting his confidence only in his strength and his skill, he worked only out of doors. 3. He did not take much trouble to please his mother Rebecca, and he did nothing to that end. 4. He was so gluttonous, and so loved his palate, that he sold his birthright for a dish of lentils. 5. He was, like Cain, full of envy against his brother Jacob, and he persecuted him to the utmost.

186. Such is the conduct which the reprobate keep every day. 1. They trust in their own strength and their own industry for temporal affairs; they are very strong, very clever, and very enlightened for the things of earth, but very weak and very ignorant in the things of heaven: *In terrenis fortes, in coelestibus debiles* [strong in earthly things, weak in heavenly things]. That is why:

187. 2. They do not dwell at all, or very little, at home, in their own house — that is to say, in their interior, which is the interior and essential house that God has given to every man to dwell in, after his

own example: for God always dwells at home. The reprobate do not love retirement at all, nor spirituality, nor interior devotion, and they treat as small minds, as bigots and savages, those who are interior and withdrawn from the world, and who work more within than without.

188. 3. The reprobate care little for devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of the predestined; it is true that they do not hate her formally; they sometimes give her praises, they say that they love her, and they even practice some devotion in her honor; but, for the rest, they cannot endure that anyone should love her tenderly, because they have not for her the tendernesses of Jacob; they find fault with the practices of devotion to which her good children and servants remain faithful in order to win her affection, because they do not believe that this devotion is necessary to them for salvation, and because, provided they do not formally hate the Blessed Virgin, or do not openly despise devotion to her, that is enough, and they have won the good graces of the Blessed Virgin, they are her servants, by reciting and mumbling a few prayers in her honor, without tenderness for her or amendment for themselves.

189. 4. The reprobate sell their birthright, that is to say, the pleasures of paradise, for a dish of lentils, that is to say, for the pleasures of earth. They laugh, they drink, they eat, they amuse themselves, they play, they dance, etc., without taking any trouble, like Esau, to make themselves worthy of the blessing of the heavenly Father. In three words, they think only of earth, they love only earth, they speak and act only for earth and its pleasures, selling for a little moment of pleasure, for a vain puff of honor, and for a piece of hard earth, yellow or white, their baptismal grace, their robe of innocence, their heavenly inheritance.

190. 5. Finally, the reprobate hate and persecute the predestined every day, openly or secretly; they are a burden to them, they despise them, they criticize them, they mimic them, they insult them, they rob them, they deceive them, they impoverish them, they drive them out,

they reduce them to the dust; while they themselves make their fortune, take their pleasures, stand in a fine position, enrich themselves, aggrandize themselves, and live at their ease.

191. 1. Jacob, the younger, was of a feeble constitution, gentle and peaceable, and ordinarily stayed at home to win the good graces of his mother Rebecca, whom he loved tenderly; if he went out, it was not by his own will, nor from any confidence he had in his own industry, but to obey his mother.

192. 2. He loved and honored his mother: that is why he kept at home beside her; he was never more content than when he saw her; he avoided everything that could displease her, and he did everything he believed would please her: which increased in Rebecca the love she bore him.

193. 3. He was submissive in all things to his dear mother; he obeyed her entirely in all things, promptly without delay, and lovingly without complaining; at the least sign of her will, little Jacob ran and worked. He believed everything she told him, without reasoning: for example, when she told him to go and fetch two kids and bring them to her, to prepare something for his father Isaac to eat, Jacob did not reply to her that one was enough to prepare a single meal for one man; but, without reasoning, he did what she had told him.

194. 4. He had a great confidence in his dear mother; as he did not rely at all upon his own skill, he relied solely upon the care and protection of his mother; he called upon her in all his needs, and he consulted her in all his doubts: for example, when he asked her whether, instead of the blessing, he would not receive the curse of his father, he believed her and trusted in her when she had told him that she took that curse upon herself.

195. 5. Finally, he imitated according to his capacity the virtues he saw in his mother, and it seems that one of the reasons why he remained sedentary at home was to imitate his dear mother, who was

so virtuous, and to keep away from bad company, which corrupts morals. By this means he made himself worthy to receive the double blessing of his dear father.

196. Such also is the conduct which the predestined keep every day:

1. They are sedentary at home with their mother; that is to say, they love retirement, they are interior, they apply themselves to prayer, but after the example and in the company of their Mother, the Blessed Virgin, whose whole glory is within, and who, during her whole life, so loved retirement and prayer. It is true that they sometimes appear outside in the world; but it is out of obedience to the will of God and to that of their dear Mother, to fulfill the duties of their state. However great in appearance the things they do outside may be, they esteem far more highly those they do within themselves, in their interior, in the company of the Most Blessed Virgin, because there they perform the great work of their perfection, beside which all other works are but child's play. That is why, while at times their brothers and sisters labor for the outside with much strength, industry, and success, amid the praise and approbation of the world, they know, by the light of the Holy Spirit, that there is far more glory, more good, and more pleasure in remaining hidden in retirement with Jesus Christ, their model, in an entire and perfect submission to their Mother, than in doing by themselves marvels of nature and of grace in the world, like so many Esaus and reprobates. *Gloria et divitiae in domo ejus*: glory for God and riches for man are found in the house of Mary. Lord Jesus, how lovable are your tabernacles! The sparrow has found a house to lodge in, and the turtledove a nest in which to put her little ones. Oh! how happy is the man who dwells in the house of Mary, where you were the first to make your dwelling! It is in this house of the predestined that he receives his help from you alone, and that he has disposed in his heart the ascents and the steps of all the virtues, to raise himself to perfection in this valley of tears. *Quam dilecta tabernacula*, etc. [How lovable are the tabernacles, etc.]

197. 2. They tenderly love and truly honor the Most Blessed Virgin as their good Mother and Mistress. They love her not only in word, but in truth; they honor her not only outwardly, but in the depths of the heart; they avoid, like Jacob, everything that can displease her, and practice with fervor everything they believe can win them her benevolence. They bring to her and give her, not two kids, as Jacob did to Rebecca, but their body and their soul, with all that depends on them, prefigured by Jacob's two kids: 1. that she may receive them as a thing that belongs to her; 2. that she may kill them and make them die to sin and to themselves, flaying them and stripping them of their own skin and their self-love, and, by this means, to please Jesus, her Son, who wants for his friends and disciples only those who are dead to themselves; 3. that she may prepare them according to the taste of the heavenly Father, and for his greater glory, which she knows better than any creature; 4. that, by her care and her intercessions, this body and this soul, thoroughly purified from every stain, thoroughly dead, thoroughly stripped, and thoroughly prepared, may be a delicate dish worthy of the mouth and of the blessing of the heavenly Father. Is this not what the predestined persons will do, who will relish and practice the perfect consecration to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary, which we are teaching them, to show Jesus and Mary an effective and courageous love? The reprobate say often enough that they love Jesus, that they love and honor Mary; but not with their substance, not to the point of sacrificing to them their body with its senses and their soul with its passions, as the predestined do.

198. 3. They are submissive and obedient to the Blessed Virgin, as to their good Mother, after the example of Jesus Christ, who, of the thirty-three years he lived on earth, employed thirty in glorifying God his Father by a perfect and entire submission to his holy Mother. They obey her by following her counsels exactly, as little Jacob followed those of Rebecca, who said to him: *Acquiesce consiliis meis*: My son, follow my counsels; or like the guests at the wedding of Cana, to whom the Blessed Virgin said: *Quodcumque dixerit vobis facite*: Do all

that my Son shall tell you. Jacob, for having obeyed his mother, received the blessing as if by miracle, although naturally he ought not to have had it; the guests at the wedding of Cana, for having followed the counsel of the Blessed Virgin, were honored with the first miracle of Jesus Christ, who there changed water into wine at the prayer of his holy Mother. In the same way, all those who, until the end of the ages, shall receive the blessing of the heavenly Father and be honored with the wonders of God, will receive these graces only in consequence of their perfect obedience to Mary. The Esaus, on the contrary, lose their blessing for want of submission to the Blessed Virgin.

199. 4. They have a great confidence in the goodness and the power of the Most Blessed Virgin, their good Mother; they call upon her help without ceasing; they look upon her as their pole star, by which to arrive safely in port; they disclose to her their pains and their needs with great openness of heart; they cling to her breasts of mercy and sweetness, to obtain the pardon of their sins by her intercession, or to taste her maternal sweetesses in their pains and their troubles. They even cast themselves, hide themselves, and lose themselves in an admirable manner in her loving and virginal bosom, to be there inflamed with pure love, to be there purified of the least stains, and to find there fully Jesus, who resides there as on his most glorious throne. Oh! What happiness! Do not believe, says Abbot Gueric, that there is more happiness in dwelling in the bosom of Abraham than in the bosom of Mary, since the Lord has placed his throne there: *Ne credideris majoris esse felicitatis habitare in sinu Abrahae quam in sinu Mariae, cum in eo Dominus posuerit thronum suum.* The reprobate, on the contrary, placing all their confidence in themselves, eating, with the prodigal son, only what the swine eat, feeding, with the toads, on nothing but earth, and loving, with the worldlings, only visible and exterior things, taste not at all the sweetesses of the bosom and breasts of Mary; they do not at all feel that certain support and that certain confidence which the predestined feel toward the Blessed Virgin, their good Mother. They miserably love their hunger outside,

as Saint Gregory says, because they will not taste the sweetness which is all prepared within themselves and within Jesus and Mary.

200. 5. Finally, the predestined keep the ways of the Blessed Virgin, their good Mother — that is to say, they imitate her; and it is in this that they are truly happy and devout, and that they bear the infallible mark of their predestination, as this good Mother says to them: *Beati qui custodiunt vias meas*: that is to say, blessed are those who practice my virtues and who walk in the footsteps of my life, with the help of divine grace. They are happy in this world, during their life, by the abundance of graces and sweetnesses which I communicate to them out of my fullness, and more abundantly than to others who do not imitate me so closely; they are happy in their death, which is sweet and tranquil, and at which I am ordinarily present, to conduct them myself into the joys of eternity; finally, they shall be happy in eternity, because never has any one of my good servants who imitated my virtues during his life been lost. The reprobate, on the contrary, are unhappy during their life, at their death, and in eternity, because they do not imitate the Most Blessed Virgin in her virtues at all, contenting themselves with sometimes joining her confraternities, reciting some prayers in her honor, or practicing some other exterior devotion. O Blessed Virgin, my good Mother, how happy are those — I repeat it with the transports of my heart — how happy are those men and women who, not letting themselves be seduced by a false devotion toward you, faithfully keep your ways, your counsels, and your orders! But how unhappy and accursed are those who, abusing devotion to you, do not keep the commandments of your Son: *Maledicti omnes qui declinant a mandatis tuis* [Cursed are all they who turn aside from your commandments].

Charitable offices which the Blessed Virgin renders to her faithful servants.

201. Here now are the charitable offices which the Blessed Virgin, as the best of all mothers, renders to those faithful servants who have given themselves to her in the manner I have said, and according to the figure of Jacob.

1. *She loves them*

Ego diligentes me diligo: I love those who love me. She loves them: 1. because she is their true Mother: now, a mother always loves her child, the fruit of her womb; 2. she loves them out of gratitude, because they in fact love her as their good Mother; 3. she loves them because, as they are predestined, God loves them: *Jacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui* [Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated]; 4. she loves them because they have consecrated themselves wholly to her and because they are her portion and her inheritance: *In Israel haereditare* [Take your inheritance in Israel].

202. She loves them tenderly, and more tenderly than all mothers together. Put, if you can, all the natural love which the mothers of the whole world have for their children into the single heart of one mother for an only child: certainly, that mother will love that child greatly; yet it is true that Mary loves her children still more tenderly than that mother would love hers. She loves them not only with affection, but with efficacy. Her love for them is active and effective, like, and more than, that of Rebecca for Jacob. Here is what this good Mother, of whom Rebecca was only the figure, does to obtain for her children the blessing of the heavenly Father:

203. 1. She watches, like Rebecca, for favorable occasions to do them good, to aggrandize and enrich them. As she sees clearly in God all goods and evils, good and bad fortunes, the blessings and the curses of God, she disposes things from afar to exempt her servants from all sorts of evils and to heap upon them all sorts of goods; so that, if there

is a good fortune to be made in God by the fidelity of a creature in some high employment, it is certain that Mary will procure this good fortune for some one of her good children and servants, and will give them the grace to carry it through with fidelity. *Ipsa procurat negotia nostra* [She herself takes charge of our affairs], says a saint.

204. 2. She gives them good counsels, as Rebecca did to Jacob: *Fili mi, acquiesce consiliis meis*: My son, follow my counsels. And, among other counsels, she inspires them to bring her two kids, that is to say, their body and their soul, and to consecrate them to her, to make of them a dish agreeable to God, and to do all that Jesus Christ, her Son, has taught by his words and his examples. If it is not by herself that she gives them these counsels, it is by the ministry of the angels, who have no greater honor and pleasure than to obey some one of her commands, so as to descend upon earth and come to the aid of some one of her servants.

205. 3. When one has brought and consecrated to her one's body and one's soul and all that depends on them, without excepting anything, what does this good Mother do? What Rebecca did of old to the two kids which Jacob brought her: 1. she kills them, and makes them die to the life of the old Adam; 2. she flays them and strips them of their natural skin, of their natural inclinations, of their self-love and self-will, and of every attachment to the creature; 3. she purifies them of their stains, their filth, and their sins; 4. she prepares them to the taste of God and for his greater glory. As it is she alone who knows perfectly that divine taste and that greater glory of the Most High, it is she alone who, without erring, can accommodate and prepare our body and our soul to that infinitely exalted taste and that infinitely hidden glory.

206. 4. This good Mother, having received the perfect offering which we have made to her of ourselves and of our own merits and satisfactions, by the devotion of which I have spoken, and when we have been stripped of our old garments, she makes us clean and

renders us worthy to appear before our heavenly Father. 1. She clothes us with the clean, new, precious, and perfumed garments of Esau the elder, that is to say, of Jesus Christ, her Son, which she keeps in her house, that is to say, which she has in her power, being the universal and eternal treasurer and dispenser of the merits and virtues of her Son, Jesus Christ, which she gives and communicates to whom she wills, when she wills, as she wills, and as much as she wills, as we have seen above. 2. She surrounds the neck and the hands of her servants with the skins of the kids that were killed and flayed; that is to say, she adorns them with the merits and the value of their own actions. She kills and mortifies, it is true, all that is impure and imperfect in their persons; but she does not lose or dissipate all the good that grace has wrought there; she keeps it and increases it, to make of it the ornament and the strength of their neck and their hands, that is to say, to fortify them to bear the yoke of the Lord, which is borne upon the neck, and to work great things for the glory of God and the salvation of their poor brethren. 3. She gives a new perfume and a new grace to these garments and ornaments by communicating to them her own garments — her merits and her virtues, which she bequeathed to them at her death by her testament, as said a holy religious of the last century, who died in the odor of sanctity, and who knew it by revelation; so that all her domestics, her faithful servants and slaves, are doubly clothed, with the garments of her Son and with her own: *Omnes domestici ejus vestiti sunt duplicibus* [All her domestics are clothed with double garments]; and therefore they have nothing to fear from the cold of Jesus Christ, white as snow, which the reprobate, all naked and stripped of the merits of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin, will not be able to endure.

207. 5. Finally, she obtains for them the blessing of the heavenly Father, although, being only the younger sons and adopted children, they ought not naturally to have it. With these brand-new garments, very precious and of very good odor, and with their body and soul well prepared and made ready, they approach with confidence the bed

of repose of their heavenly Father. He hears and distinguishes their voice, which is that of the sinner; he touches their hands covered with skins; he smells the good odor of their garments; he eats with joy of what Mary, their Mother, has prepared for him; and recognizing in them the merits and the good odor of his Son and of his holy Mother: 1. he gives them his double blessing: the blessing of the dew of heaven: *De rore coelesti*, that is to say, of divine grace, which is the seed of glory: *Benedixit nos omni benedictione spirituali in Christo Jesu* [He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus]; the blessing of the fatness of the earth: *De pinguedine terrae*, that is to say, this good Father gives them their daily bread and a sufficient abundance of the goods of this world; 2. he makes them the masters of their other brothers, the reprobate: not that this primacy always appears in this world, which passes in an instant, where the reprobate often dominate: *Peccatores effabuntur et gloriabuntur* [Sinners will speak out and will boast]. *Vidi impium superexaltatum et elevatum* [I saw the wicked man highly exalted and lifted up]; but it is nevertheless true, and it will appear manifestly in the other world, for all eternity, where the just, as the Holy Spirit says, will rule over and command the nations: *Dominabuntur populis*. 3. His Majesty, not content with blessing them in their persons and in their goods, blesses also all those who will bless them, and curses all those who will curse and persecute them.

2. She provides for them in everything.

208. The second duty of charity which the Blessed Virgin exercises toward her faithful servants is that she provides for them in everything, for body and for soul. She gives them double garments, as we have just seen; she gives them to eat the most exquisite dishes from the table of God; she gives them to eat the bread of life which she formed: *A generationibus meis implemini*: my dear children, she says to them, under the name of Wisdom, fill yourselves with my generations, that is to say, with Jesus, the fruit of life, whom I brought into the world for you. *Venite, comedite panem meum et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis; comedite, et bibite, et inebriamini, carissimi*: Come, she repeats to them in another place, eat my bread, which is Jesus, and drink the wine of his love, which I have mingled for you with the milk of my breasts. Since it is she who is the treasurer and the dispenser of the gifts and graces of the Most High, she gives a good portion of them, and the best, to nourish and provide for her children and servants. They are fattened on the living bread; they are inebriated with the wine that buds forth virgins. They are carried at the breast: *Ad ubera portabimini*. They have such ease in bearing the yoke of Jesus Christ that they scarcely feel its weight at all, because of the oil of devotion with which she makes it rot away: *Jugum eorum putrescere faciet a facie olei* [He will make their yoke rot away before the face of the oil].

3. She leads and directs them.

209. The third good that the Blessed Virgin does for her faithful servants is that she leads and directs them according to the will of her Son. Rebecca led her little Jacob and gave him good advice from time to time, whether to draw down upon him the blessing of his father, or to help him avoid the hatred and persecution of his brother Esau. Mary, who is the star of the sea, leads all her faithful servants to safe harbor; she shows them the ways of eternal life; she makes them avoid the dangerous steps; she leads them by the hand along the paths of justice; she sustains them when they are about to fall; she raises them up when they have fallen; she reproves them, like a charitable mother, when they fail; and sometimes she even chastises them lovingly. Can a child obedient to Mary, his nursing mother and his enlightened directress, go astray on the roads of eternity? *Ipsam sequens, non devias*: Following her, says Saint Bernard, you do not go astray at all. Do not fear that a true child of Mary will be deceived by the evil one and fall into any formal heresy. Where the guidance of Mary is, there neither the evil spirit with his illusions, nor the heretics with their subtleties, are to be found: *Ipsa tenente, non corruis* [With her holding you up, you do not fall].

4. She defends and protects them.

210. The fourth good office that the Blessed Virgin renders to her children and faithful servants is that she defends and protects them against their enemies. Rebecca, by her care and her ingenious devices, delivered Jacob from all the dangers in which he found himself, and particularly from the death which his brother Esau would apparently have dealt him through the hatred and envy he bore him, as Cain formerly did toward his brother Abel. Mary, the good Mother of the predestined, hides them under the wings of her protection, as a hen hides her chicks; she speaks, she stoops down to them, she condescends to all their weaknesses; to shield them from the hawk and the vulture, she places herself around them and accompanies them like an army set in battle array: *ut castrorum acies ordinata*. Can a man surrounded by a well-ordered army of a hundred thousand men fear his enemies? A faithful servant of Mary, surrounded by her protection and her imperial power, has still less to fear. This good Mother and powerful Princess of the heavens would sooner dispatch battalions of millions of angels to help one of her servants than let it ever be said that a faithful servant of Mary, who trusted in her, had succumbed to the malice, the number, and the strength of his enemies.

5. She intercedes for them.

211. Finally, the fifth and greatest good that the lovable Mary procures for her faithful devotees is that she intercedes for them with her Son, and appeases him by her prayers, and she unites them to him by a very intimate bond, and keeps them in it. Rebecca brought Jacob near to his father's bed; and the good man touched him, embraced him, and even kissed him with joy, being content and satisfied with the well-prepared meats he had brought him; and having smelled with great contentment the exquisite perfumes of his garments, he cried out: *Ecce odor filii mei sicut odor agri pleni, cui benedixit Dominus*: Behold, the odor of my son is like the odor of a full field, which the Lord has blessed. This full field, whose odor charmed the heart of the father, is none other than the odor of the virtues and merits of Mary, who is a full field of grace, where God the Father has sown, like a grain of wheat of the elect, his only Son. Oh! how welcome is a child perfumed with the good odor of Mary to Jesus Christ, who is the Father of the world to come! Oh! how promptly and perfectly he is united to him! We have shown this at greater length above.

212. Moreover, after she has heaped her favors upon her children and faithful servants, and has obtained for them the blessing of the heavenly Father and union with Jesus Christ, she keeps them in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in them; she guards them and watches over them always, for fear that they should lose the grace of God and fall into the snares of their enemies: *In plenitudine sanctos detinet*: She retains the saints in their fullness, and makes them persevere in it to the end, as we have seen. Such is the explanation of this great and ancient figure of predestination and reprobation, so unknown and so full of mysteries.

4- The marvelous effects that this devotion produces in a soul that is faithful to it

213. My dear brother, be persuaded that if you make yourself faithful to the interior and exterior practices of this devotion, which I will point out to you hereafter:

Knowledge and contempt of self.

1. By the light which the Holy Spirit will give you through Mary, his dear Spouse, you will know your own evil depths, your corruption, and your incapacity for any good, if God is not its principle, as author of nature or of grace; and, following upon this knowledge, you will despise yourself; you will think of yourself only with horror. You will regard yourself as a snail that spoils everything with its slime, or as a toad that poisons everything with its venom, or as a malicious serpent that seeks only to deceive. Finally, the humble Mary will share with you her profound humility, which will cause you to despise yourself, to despise no one, and to love contempt.

Participation in the faith of Mary.

214. 2. The Blessed Virgin will give you a share in her faith, which was greater on earth than the faith of all the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and all the saints. Now that she is reigning in the heavens, she no longer has this faith, because she sees all things clearly in God, by the light of glory; and yet, with the consent of the Most High, she did not lose it upon entering into glory; she kept it, in order to keep it in the Church militant for her most faithful servants and handmaids. The more, then, you gain the benevolence of this august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more pure faith you will have in all your conduct: a pure faith, which will make you care hardly at all for the sensible and the extraordinary; a lively faith, animated by charity, which will make you perform your actions only from the motive of pure love; a faith firm and unshakable as a rock, which will make you remain firm and constant in the midst of storms and tempests; an active and piercing faith, which, like a mysterious master key, will give you entrance into all the mysteries of Jesus Christ, into the last ends of man, and into the heart of God himself; a courageous faith, which will make you undertake and carry through great things for God and the salvation of souls, without hesitating; finally, a faith which will be your flaming torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine Wisdom, and your all-powerful weapon, which you will use to enlighten those who are in darkness and the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and who need the burning gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead through sin, to touch and overthrow, by your gentle and powerful words, hearts of marble and the cedars of Lebanon, and finally to resist the devil and all the enemies of salvation.

Grace of pure love

215. 3. This Mother of fair love will take from your heart all scruple and all disordered servile fear; she will open and enlarge it to run in the commandments of her Son with the holy liberty of the children of God, and to bring into it pure love, of which she holds the treasure; so that you will no longer conduct yourself, as you have hitherto done, by fear toward the God of charity, but by pure love. You will look upon him as your good Father, whom you will strive to please unceasingly, and with whom you will converse confidently, as a child with its good father. If by misfortune you come to offend him, you will at once humble yourself before him, you will humbly ask his pardon, you will simply stretch out your hand to him, and you will rise up again lovingly, without trouble or disquiet, and you will continue to walk toward him without discouragement.

Great confidence in God and in Mary.

216. 4. The Blessed Virgin will fill you with great confidence in God and in herself: 1. because you will no longer approach Jesus Christ by yourself, but always through this good Mother; 2. because, having given her all your merits, graces, and satisfactions, to dispose of at her will, she will communicate her virtues to you and will clothe you with her merits, so that you will be able to say to God with confidence: Behold Mary your handmaid: may it be done to me according to your word: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*; 3. because, having given yourself entirely to her, body and soul, she who is liberal with the liberal, and more liberal than even the liberal themselves, will give herself to you in return, in a marvelous but true manner; so that you will be able to say to her boldly: *Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac*: I am yours, Blessed Virgin, save me; or, as I have already said, with the beloved Disciple: *Accepi te in mea*: I have taken you, holy Mother, for all my goods. You will also be able to say, with Saint Bonaventure: *Ecce Domina salvatrix mea, fiducialiter agam, et non timebo, quia fortitudo mea, et laus mea in Domino es tu...*; and in another place: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt, o Virgo gloriosa, super omnia benedicta; ponam te ut signaculum super cor meum, quia fortis est ut mors dilectio tua* (S. Bon. In psal. min. B.V.): My dear Mistress and savior, I will act with confidence and I will not fear, because you are my strength and my praise in the Lord... I am wholly yours, and all that I have belongs to you; O glorious Virgin, blessed above all created things, may I set you as a seal upon my heart, because your love is strong as death! You will be able to say to God in the sentiments of the Prophet: *Domine, non est exaltatum cor meum, neque elati sunt oculi mei; neque ambulavi in magnis, neque in mirabilibus super me; si non humiliter sentiebam, sed exaltavi animam; sicut ablactatus super matre sua, ita retributio in anima mea*: Lord, neither my heart nor my eyes have any cause to lift themselves up and grow proud, nor to seek after great and marvelous things; and, with all that, I am not yet humble, but I have lifted up

and encouraged my soul by confidence; I am like a child weaned from the pleasures of the earth and resting upon its mother's breast; and it is upon that breast that I am filled with good things. 4. What will still further increase your confidence in her is that, having given her in trust all the good that you have, for her to give or to keep, you will have less confidence in yourself and much more in her, who is your treasure. Oh! what confidence and what consolation for a soul that can say that the treasure of God, where he has placed all that is most precious to him, is its own as well! *Ipsa est thesaurus Domini*: She is, says a saint, the treasure of the Lord.

Communication of the soul and spirit of Mary.

217. 5. The soul of the Blessed Virgin will communicate itself to you, to glorify the Lord; her spirit will enter in place of yours, to rejoice in God her Savior, provided that you be faithful to the practices of this devotion. *Sit in singulis anima Mariae ut magnificet Dominum, sit in singulis spiritus Mariae, ut exultet in Deo* (S. Amb.): May the soul of Mary be in each one, to glorify the Lord therein; may the spirit of Mary be in each one, to rejoice therein in God. Ah! when will that happy time come, said a holy man of our own days who was wholly lost in Mary, ah! when will that happy time come, when the divine Mary shall be established Mistress and Sovereign in hearts, to subject them fully to the empire of her great and only Jesus? When will souls breathe Mary as much as bodies breathe the air? Then marvelous things will come to pass in these lowly places, where the Holy Spirit, finding his dear Spouse as it were reproduced in souls, will come upon them abundantly, and will fill them with his gifts, and particularly with the gift of his wisdom, to work marvels of grace. My dear brother, when will that happy time come, that age of Mary, when many chosen souls, obtained from the Most High by Mary, losing themselves in the abyss of her interior, will become living copies of Mary, to love and glorify Jesus Christ? That time will come only when men know and practice the devotion that I teach: *Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariae* [That your kingdom may come, may the kingdom of Mary come].

Transformation of souls in Mary into the image of Jesus Christ.

218. 6. If Mary, who is the tree of life, is well cultivated in your soul by fidelity to the practices of this devotion, she will bear her fruit in her time; and her fruit is none other than Jesus Christ. I see so many devotees, men and women, who seek Jesus Christ, some by one way and one practice, others by another; and often, after they have labored much through the night, they can say: *Per totam noctem laborantes, nihil cepimus*. Though we have labored all through the night, we have taken nothing. And one can say to them: *Laborastis multum, et intulistis parum*: You have labored much, and you have gained little. Jesus Christ is still very feeble in you. But by the immaculate way of Mary and by this divine practice that I teach, one labors during the day, one labors in a holy place, one labors little. There is no night at all in Mary, since there has been in her no sin, nor even the least shadow of one. Mary is a holy place, and the Holy of Holies, where the saints are formed and molded.

219. Note, if you please, that I say the saints are molded in Mary. There is a great difference between making a figure in relief, by blows of hammer and chisel, and making a figure by casting it in a mold: sculptors and statuaries labor much to make figures in the first manner, and they need much time; but to make them in the second manner, they labor little and make them in very little time. Saint Augustine calls the Blessed Virgin *forma Dei*: the mold of God: *Si formam Dei te appellem, digna existis* [If I should call you the mold of God, you are worthy of it]; the mold fit to form and mold gods. He who is cast into this divine mold is soon formed and molded in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in him: at little cost and in little time he will become god, since he is cast into the very mold that formed a God.

220. It seems to me that I may very well compare those directors and devout persons who wish to form Jesus Christ in themselves or in others by practices other than this one, to sculptors who, putting their confidence in their own skill, their ingenuity, and their art, give an

infinity of hammer blows and chisel strokes to a hard stone or an ill-polished piece of wood, to make of it the image of Jesus Christ; and sometimes they do not succeed in rendering Jesus Christ to the life, whether for want of knowledge and experience of the person of Jesus Christ, or because of some ill-struck blow that has spoiled the work. But as for those who embrace this secret of grace which I present to them, I compare them, with good reason, to founders and molders who, having found the beautiful mold of Mary, where Jesus Christ was naturally and divinely formed, without trusting in their own ingenuity, but relying solely on the goodness of the mold, cast themselves and lose themselves in Mary, to become the portrait of Jesus Christ to the life.

221. O the beautiful and true comparison! But who will understand it? I desire that it be you, my dear brother. But remember that one casts in a mold only what is melted and liquid: that is to say, you must destroy and melt down in yourself the old Adam, in order to become the new one in Mary.

The greatest glory of Jesus Christ.

222. 7. By this practice, very faithfully observed, you will give more glory to Jesus Christ in a month's time than by any other, though more difficult, in many years. Here are the reasons for what I advance:

1. Because, performing your actions through the Blessed Virgin, as this practice teaches, you abandon your own intentions and operations, though good and known, to lose yourself, so to speak, in those of the Most Blessed Virgin, though they are unknown to you; and thereby you enter into participation in the sublimity of her intentions, which were so pure that she gave more glory to God by the least of her actions, for example in spinning at her distaff, or in making a stitch with her needle, than a Saint Lawrence on his gridiron by his cruel martyrdom, and even than all the saints by their most heroic actions: which is why, during her sojourn here below, she acquired so ineffable a fullness of graces and merits that one would sooner count the stars of the firmament, the drops of water in the sea, and the sands of the shore, than her merits and her graces, and she gave more glory to God than all the angels and saints have given him or ever will give him. O prodigy of Mary! you are capable only of working prodigies of grace in the souls that are willing to lose themselves in you.

223. 2. Because a soul, by this practice, counting as nothing all that it thinks or does of itself, and placing its support and its complacency only in the dispositions of Mary in order to approach Jesus Christ, and even to speak to him, practices humility far more than the souls who act by themselves, and who have an imperceptible support and complacency in their own dispositions; and, consequently, it glorifies God more highly, who is perfectly glorified only by the humble and the little of heart.

224. 3. Because the Blessed Virgin, being willing, out of great charity, to receive in her virginal hands the present of our actions, gives them an admirable beauty and splendor; she offers them herself to Jesus

Christ, and it is beyond question that Our Lord is more glorified by them than if we offered them by our criminal hands.

225. 4. Finally, because you never think of Mary but that Mary, in your place, thinks of God; you never praise or honor Mary but that Mary with you praises and honors God. Mary is wholly relative to God, and I might very well call her the relation of God, who exists only with reference to God, or the echo of God, who says and repeats only God. If you say Mary, she says God. Saint Elizabeth praised Mary and called her blessed because she had believed; Mary, the faithful echo of God, intoned: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*: My soul glorifies the Lord. What Mary did on that occasion, she does every day; when one praises her, loves her, honors her, or gives to her, God is praised, God is loved, God is honored; one gives to God through Mary and in Mary.

5- Particular practices of this devotion

Exterior practices.

226. Although the essence of this devotion consists in the interior, it does not fail to have several exterior practices which must not be neglected: *Haec oportuit facere et illa non omittere* [These things it was necessary to do, and those not to omit], whether because the exterior practices, well performed, aid the interior ones; or because they remind man, who is always guided by his senses, of what he has done or ought to do; or because they are apt to edify the neighbor who sees them, which those that are purely interior do not do. Let no worldling, then, nor any critic, poke his nose in here to say that true devotion is in the heart, that one must avoid what is exterior, that there may be vanity in it, that one must hide one's devotion, etc. I answer them with my Master: Let men see your good works, that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven; not, as Saint Gregory says, that one ought to perform one's exterior actions and devotions to please men and draw some praise from them — that would be vanity; but one does them sometimes before men with a view to pleasing God and causing him to be glorified thereby, without caring about the contempt or the praises of men. I shall relate only in brief some exterior practices, which I call exterior not because they are done without the interior, but because they have something exterior about them, to distinguish them from those which are purely interior.

Consecration after preparatory exercises.

227. First practice. Those men and women who wish to enter into this particular devotion, which is by no means erected into a confraternity, although that were to be wished, after having, as I have said in the first part of this preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ, spent twelve days at least in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, contrary to that of Jesus Christ, shall spend three weeks in filling themselves with Jesus Christ through the Most Blessed Virgin. Here is the order they may keep:

228. During the first week, they shall employ all their prayers and acts of piety in asking for knowledge of themselves and contrition for their sins, and they shall do everything in a spirit of humility. For this, they may, if they wish, meditate on what I have said of our evil depths, and regard themselves, during the six days of this week, only as snails, slugs, toads, swine, serpents, and goats; or else on these three sayings of Saint Bernard: *Cogita quid fueris, semen putridum; quid sis vas stercorum; quid futurus sis, esca verminum* [Consider what you were — putrid seed; what you are — a vessel of dung; what you will be — the food of worms]. They shall pray to Our Lord and his Holy Spirit to enlighten them, in these words: *Domine, ut videam* [Lord, that I may see]; or *Noverim me* [May I know myself]; or *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* [Come, Holy Spirit]; and they shall say every day the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the prayer that follows it, given in the first part of this work. They shall have recourse to the Most Blessed Virgin and shall ask her for this great grace, which must be the foundation of the others; and for this they shall say every day the *Ave maris Stella* and her litany.

229. During the second week, they shall apply themselves, in all their prayers and works of each day, to knowing the Most Blessed Virgin. They shall ask this knowledge of the Holy Spirit. They may read and meditate on what we have said about her. They shall recite, as in the first week, the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the *Ave maris Stella*, and,

in addition, a rosary every day, or at least a chaplet, for this intention.

230. They shall spend the third week in knowing Jesus Christ. They may read and meditate on what we have said of him, and say the prayer of Saint Augustine, which is placed toward the beginning of this second part. They may, with the same saint, say and repeat a hundred and a hundred times a day: *Noverim te*: Lord, that I may know you! or else, *Domine, ut videam*: Lord, that I may see who you are! They shall recite, as in the preceding weeks, the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the *Ave maris Stella*, and shall add every day the Litany of Jesus.

231. At the end of these three weeks, they shall go to confession and to Holy Communion with the intention of giving themselves to Jesus Christ as slaves of love, by the hands of Mary. And, after Communion, which they shall try to make according to the method given hereafter, they shall recite the formula of their consecration, which they will also find hereafter; they must write it out, or have it written, if it is not printed, and sign it the same day they have made it.

232. It will be well that, on that day, they pay some tribute to Jesus Christ and to his holy Mother, whether as penance for their past unfaithfulness to the vows of their baptism, or to profess their dependence on the dominion of Jesus and Mary. Now, this tribute shall be according to the devotion and capacity of each one: such as a fast, a mortification, an alms, a candle; even if they gave but a pin in homage, with a good heart, it is enough for Jesus, who looks only at the good will.

233. Every year at least, on the same day, they shall renew the same consecration, observing the same practices for three weeks. They may even, every month and every day, renew all that they have done, in these few words: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*: I am all yours, and all that I have belongs to you, O my lovable Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother.

Recitation of the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin.

234. Second practice. They shall recite every day of their life, without, however, any constraint, the Little Crown of the Most Blessed Virgin, composed of three Paters and twelve Aves, in honor of the twelve privileges and grandeurs of the Most Blessed Virgin. This practice is very ancient, and it has its foundation in Holy Scripture. Saint John saw a woman crowned with twelve stars, clothed with the sun, and holding the moon under her feet, which woman, according to the interpreters, is the Most Blessed Virgin.

235. There are several ways of saying it well, which it would take too long to relate; the Holy Spirit will teach them to those men and women who are most faithful to this devotion. However, to say it quite simply, one must first say: *Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata; da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos* [Vouchsafe that I may praise you, O holy Virgin; give me strength against your enemies]; then one says the Credo, then a Pater, then four Ave Marias and a Gloria Patri; again a Pater, four Aves, a Gloria Patri; and so on for the rest. At the end, one says the *Sub tuum praesidium* [We fly to your protection].

Wearing of little iron chains.

236. Third practice. It is very praiseworthy, and very glorious and very useful to those men and women who have thus made themselves the slaves of Jesus in Mary, that they wear, as a mark of their loving slavery, little iron chains blessed with the proper blessing which is given hereafter. These exterior marks, in truth, are not essential, and a person may very well do without them, even though he has embraced this devotion; nevertheless, I cannot help greatly praising those men and women who, after having shaken off the shameful chains of the slavery of the devil, in which original sin and perhaps actual sins had bound them, have voluntarily placed themselves in the glorious slavery of Jesus Christ, and glory, with Saint Paul, in being in chains for Jesus Christ — chains a thousand times more glorious and precious, though of iron and without luster, than all the golden collars of emperors.

237. Although in former times there was nothing more infamous than the cross, at present this wood is nonetheless the most glorious thing in Christianity. Let us say the same of the irons of slavery. There was nothing more ignominious among the ancients, and even still at present among the pagans; but among Christians there is nothing more illustrious than these chains of Jesus Christ, because they deliver us and preserve us from the infamous bonds of sin and of the devil; because they set us at liberty, and bind us to Jesus and to Mary, not by constraint and by force, like galley slaves, but by charity and love, like children: *Traham eos in vinculis charitatis* (Hosea, 4, 11): I will draw them to me, says God by the mouth of a prophet, by chains of charity, which, consequently, are strong as death, and in some manner stronger, in those who will be faithful to wear these glorious marks even to death. For although death destroys their bodies by reducing them to rottenness, it will not at all destroy the bonds of their slavery, which, being of iron, will not easily corrupt; and perhaps on the day of the resurrection of the body, at the great last judgment, these

chains, which will still bind their bones, will form a part of their glory, and will be changed into chains of light and of glory. A thousand times happy, then, the illustrious slaves of Jesus in Mary, who will wear their chains even to the grave!

238. Here are the reasons why these little chains are worn: First, it is to remind the Christian of the vows and engagements of his baptism, of the perfect renewal of them which he has made by this devotion, and of the strict obligation he is under to remain faithful to them. Since man, who is often led more by the senses than by pure faith, easily forgets his obligations toward God if he has not something exterior to bring them back to his memory, these little chains serve the Christian wonderfully, to remind him of the chains of sin and of the slavery of the devil, from which holy baptism has delivered him, and of the dependence on Jesus Christ which he vowed to him in holy baptism, and of the ratification he has made of it by the renewal of his vows; and one of the reasons why so few Christians think of their vows of holy baptism, and live with as much licentiousness as if they had promised nothing to God, like the pagans, is that they wear no exterior mark which would remind them of these vows.

239. Second, it is to show that one does not at all blush at the slavery and servitude of Jesus Christ, and that one renounces the baneful slavery of the world, of sin, and of the devil. Third, it is to guard and preserve oneself from the chains of sin and of the devil. For we must wear either chains of iniquity, or chains of charity and of salvation: *Vincula peccatorum; in vinculis charitatis.*

240. Ah! my dear brother, let us break the chains of sins and of sinners, of the world and of worldlings, of the devil and of his minions, and let us cast far from us their baneful yoke: *Dirumpamus vincula eorum et projiciamus a nobis jugum ipsorum.* Let us put our feet, to make use of the terms of the Holy Spirit, into his glorious fetters, and our neck into his collars: *Injice pedem tuum in compedes illius, et in torques illius collum tuum* (Eccli, 27 2). Let us bow our

shoulders, and carry Wisdom, who is Jesus Christ, and let us not at all grow weary of his chains: *Subjice humerum tuum et porta illam, et ne accedieris vinculis ejus* (Eccli 6, 25). You will note that the Holy Spirit, before saying these words, prepares the soul for them, so that it may not reject his important counsel. Here are his words: *Audi, fili, et accipe consilium intellectus, et ne abjicias consilium meum* (Eccli 6): Hear, my son, and receive a counsel of understanding, and reject not my counsel.

241. You will gladly allow, my very dear friend, that I unite myself with the Holy Spirit, to give you the same counsel: *Vincula illius alligatura salutis* (Eccli, 6): his chains are chains of salvation. As Jesus Christ on the cross must draw all things to himself, willingly or unwillingly, he will draw the reprobate by the chains of their sins, to chain them, like galley slaves and devils, to his eternal wrath and his avenging justice; but he will draw in particular, in these latter times, the predestined by chains of charity: *Omnia traham ad meipsum. Traham eos in vinculis charitatis* (Hosea, 4) [I will draw all things to myself. I will draw them with chains of charity].

242. These loving slaves of Jesus Christ, or chained ones of Jesus Christ, *vincti Christi*, may wear their chains either around their neck, or on their arms, or around their loins, or on their feet. Father Vincent Caraffa, seventh general of the Society of Jesus, who died in the odor of sanctity in the year 1643, wore, as the mark of his servitude, an iron ring on his feet, and used to say that his sorrow was that he could not drag its chain publicly. Mother Agnes of Jesus, of whom we have spoken, wore an iron chain around her loins. Some others have worn it around the neck, in penance for the pearl necklaces they had worn in the world. Some have worn it on their arms, to remind themselves, in the labors of their hands, that they are slaves of Jesus Christ.

Special devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation.

243. Fourth practice. They will have a singular devotion to the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, on the 25th of March, which is the proper mystery of this devotion, because this devotion was inspired by the Holy Spirit: 1. to honor and imitate the ineffable dependence which God the Son willed to have on Mary, for the glory of God his Father and for our salvation, which dependence appears particularly in this mystery, where Jesus Christ is captive and slave in the womb of the divine Mary, and where he depends on her for all things; 2. to thank God for the incomparable graces he has given to Mary, and particularly for having chosen her to be his most worthy Mother, which choice was made in this mystery: these are the two principal ends of the slavery of Jesus Christ in Mary.

244. Note, if you please, that I ordinarily say: the slave of Jesus in Mary, the slavery of Jesus in Mary. One may in truth, as many have done up to now, say the slave of Mary, the slavery of the Blessed Virgin; but I believe it is better to call oneself the slave of Jesus in Mary, as Monsieur Tronson, superior general of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, renowned for his rare prudence and his consummate piety, counseled an ecclesiastic who consulted him on this subject. Here are the reasons:

245. 1. Since we are in a proud age, in which there is a great number of puffed-up scholars, of freethinkers and critics, who find fault with the best established and most solid practices of piety, it is better, so as not to give them an occasion of criticism without necessity, to say the slavery of Jesus Christ in Mary, and to call oneself the slave of Jesus Christ rather than the slave of Mary; taking the name of this devotion rather from its last end, which is Jesus Christ, than from the road and the means of arriving at that end, which is Mary; although one may, in truth, do both without scruple, as I do. For example, a man who goes from Orléans to Tours, by the road through Amboise, may very well say that he is going to Amboise and that he is going to Tours; that he

is a traveler to Amboise and a traveler to Tours; with this difference, however, that Amboise is only his direct road to Tours, and that Tours alone is his last end and the term of his journey.

246. 2. Since the principal mystery celebrated and honored in this devotion is the mystery of the Incarnation, in which one can see Jesus Christ only in Mary, and incarnate in her womb, it is more fitting to say the slavery of Jesus in Mary, of Jesus residing and reigning in Mary, according to that beautiful prayer of so many great men: O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in us, in your spirit of holiness, etc.

247. 3. This manner of speaking better shows the intimate union between Jesus and Mary. They are so intimately united that the one is wholly in the other: Jesus is all in Mary, and Mary all in Jesus; or rather, she is no more, but Jesus alone in her; and one would sooner separate the light from the sun than Mary from Jesus. So that one may call Our Lord Jesus of Mary, and the Blessed Virgin Mary of Jesus.

248. Time not permitting me to pause here to explain the excellences and the grandeurs of the mystery of Jesus living and reigning in Mary, or of the Incarnation of the Word, I will content myself with saying in three words that this is the first mystery of Jesus Christ, the most hidden, the most exalted, and the least known; that it is in this mystery that Jesus, in concert with Mary, in her womb, which for that reason is called by the saints *aula sacramentorum*, the hall of the secrets of God, chose all the elect; that it is in this mystery that he wrought all the mysteries of his life which followed, by the acceptance he made of them: *Jesus ingrediens mundum dicit: Ecce venio ut faciam, voluntatem tuam etc.* [Jesus, coming into the world, says: Behold, I come to do your will, etc.]; and, consequently, that this mystery is an abridgment of all the mysteries, which contains the will and the grace of them all; finally, that this mystery is the throne of the mercy, of the liberality, and of the glory of God. The throne of his mercy for us, because, as one cannot approach Jesus nor speak to him except

through Mary, one cannot see Jesus nor speak to him except by the mediation of Mary. Jesus, who always grants the prayers of his dear Mother, always grants there his grace and his mercy to poor sinners: *Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae* [Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace]. It is the throne of his liberality for Mary, because, while this new Adam dwelt in this true earthly paradise, he wrought there so many marvels in secret that neither the angels nor men comprehend them; this is why the saints call Mary the magnificence of God: *Magnificentia Dei*, as if God were magnificent only in Mary: *Solummodo ibi magnificus (est) Dominus*. It is the throne of his glory for his Father, because it is in Mary that Jesus Christ perfectly appeased his Father, who was angry with men; that he perfectly repaired the glory of which sin had robbed him, and that by the sacrifice he made there of his will and of himself, he gave him more glory than all the sacrifices of the old law had ever given him, and finally that he gave him an infinite glory, which he had never yet received from man.

Great devotion to the Ave Maria and the chaplet.

249. Fifth practice. They will have a great devotion to saying the Ave Maria, or the Angelic Salutation, of which few Christians, though enlightened, know the price, the merit, the excellence, and the necessity. It was necessary for the Blessed Virgin to appear several times to great and very enlightened saints to show them its merit, as to Saint Dominic, to Saint John Capistran, to Blessed Alan de la Roche. They composed entire books on the wonders and the efficacy of this prayer for converting souls; they proclaimed aloud, they preached publicly, that the salvation of the world having begun with the Ave Maria, the salvation of each one in particular was bound to this prayer; that it is this prayer that made the dry and barren earth bear the fruit of life, and that it is this same prayer, well said, that must make the word of God germinate in our souls and bear the fruit of life, Jesus Christ; that the Ave Maria is a heavenly dew that waters the earth, that is to say the soul, to make it bear its fruit in its season; and that a soul that is not watered by this prayer or heavenly dew bears no fruit whatsoever and gives only brambles and thorns, and is near to being cursed.

250. Here is what the Most Blessed Virgin revealed to Blessed Alan de la Roche, as it is recorded in his book *De dignitate Rosarii*, and afterwards by Cartagena: Know, my son, and make it known to all, that a probable and proximate sign of eternal damnation is to have aversion, lukewarmness, and negligence in saying the Angelic Salutation, which has repaired the whole world: *Scias enim et secure intelligas et inde late omnibus patefacias, quod videlicet signum probabile est et propinquum aeternae damnationis horrere et attediari ac negligere Salutationem angelicam, totius mundi reparativam.* (Lib. de Dignit. cap. II). These are words most consoling and most terrible, which one would find it hard to believe if we did not have as guarantors this holy man, and Saint Dominic before him, and since then many great personages, with the experience of several centuries.

For it has always been observed that those who bear the mark of reprobation, like all the heretics and the impious, the proud and the worldlings, hate or despise the Ave Maria and the chaplet. The heretics still learn and recite the Pater, but not the Ave Maria, nor the chaplet; it is their horror: they would sooner carry a serpent on them than a chaplet. The proud also, though Catholics, having the same inclinations as their father Lucifer, despise the Ave Maria or have only indifference for it, and regard the chaplet as a devotion for weak little women, good only for the ignorant and those who do not know how to read. On the contrary, it has been seen by experience that those men and women who otherwise bear great marks of predestination love, relish, and recite with pleasure the Ave Maria; and that the more they are God's, the more they love this prayer. This is what the Blessed Virgin also said to Blessed Alan, following the words I have just quoted.

251. I do not know how it happens, nor why, but it is nevertheless true; and I have no better secret for knowing whether a person is of God than to examine whether he loves to say the Ave Maria and the chaplet. I say: he loves it; for it can happen that a person is naturally or even supernaturally incapable of saying it, but he still always loves it and inspires it in others.

252. PREDESTINED SOULS, SLAVES OF JESUS IN MARY, learn that the Ave Maria is the most beautiful of all prayers after the Pater; it is the most perfect compliment you can pay to Mary, since it is the compliment which the Most High sent an archangel to pay her in order to win her heart; and it was so powerful over her heart, by the secret charms with which it is full, that Mary gave her consent to the Incarnation of the Word, despite her profound humility. It is by this compliment also that you will infallibly win her heart, if you say it as it ought to be said.

253. The Ave Maria well said, that is, with attention, devotion, and modesty, is, according to the saints, the enemy of the devil, which

puts him to flight, and the hammer that crushes him, the sanctification of the soul, the joy of the angels, the melody of the predestined, the canticle of the New Testament, the pleasure of Mary, and the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. The Ave Maria is a heavenly dew that makes the soul fruitful; it is a chaste and loving kiss given to Mary; it is a crimson rose presented to her; it is a precious pearl offered to her; it is a draught of ambrosia and divine nectar given to her. All these comparisons are from the saints.

254. I beg you urgently, then, by the love I bear you in Jesus and in Mary, not to content yourselves with reciting the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, but to recite also your chaplet, and even, if you have the time for it, your rosary, every day; and you will bless, at the hour of your death, the day and the hour when you believed me; and, after having sown in the blessings of Jesus and Mary, you will reap eternal blessings in heaven: *Qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet* [He who sows in blessings shall also reap of blessings].

Recitation of the Magnificat.

255. Sixth practice. To thank God for the graces he has given to the Most Blessed Virgin, they will often say the Magnificat, after the example of Blessed Mary of Oignies and of several other saints. It is the only prayer and the only work that the Blessed Virgin composed, or rather that Jesus made in her, for he spoke by her mouth. It is the greatest sacrifice of praise that God has received in the law of grace. It is, on the one hand, the most humble and the most grateful, and, on the other, the most sublime and the most exalted of all the canticles: there are in this canticle mysteries so great and so hidden that the angels do not know them. Gerson, who was so pious and so learned a doctor, after having spent a great part of his life composing treatises so full of erudition and piety on the most difficult subjects, undertook only with trembling, toward the end of his life, to explain the Magnificat, so as to crown all his works with it. He relates to us, in a folio volume that he composed on it, many admirable things about this beautiful and divine canticle. Among other things, he says that the Most Blessed Virgin often recited it herself, and particularly after Holy Communion, in thanksgiving. The learned Benzoni, in explaining the same Magnificat, relates several miracles wrought by its virtue, and he says that the devils tremble and flee when they hear these words of the Magnificat: *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui* [He has shown might in his arm; he has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart].

Contempt for the world.

256. Seventh practice. The faithful servants of Mary must greatly despise, hate, and flee the corrupted world, and make use of the practices of contempt for the world which we have given in the first part. Particular and interior practices for those who wish to become perfect.

257. Besides the exterior practices of the devotion which have just been related, which must not be omitted through negligence or contempt, so far as the state and condition of each one permit, here are some most sanctifying interior practices for those whom the Holy Spirit calls to a high perfection. It is, in four words, to do all one's actions THROUGH MARY, WITH MARY, IN MARY, and FOR MARY, in order to do them more perfectly through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus, and for Jesus.

To do all one's actions through Mary.

258. 1. One must do one's actions through Mary, that is to say, they must obey the Most Blessed Virgin in all things and conduct themselves in all things by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God: *Qui spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei*. Those who are led by the spirit of Mary are children of Mary, and consequently children of God, as we have shown; and among so many devotees of the Blessed Virgin, there are no true and faithful devotees but those who conduct themselves by her spirit. I have said that the spirit of Mary was the spirit of God, because she never conducted herself by her own spirit, but always by the Spirit of God, who made himself so fully its master that he became her own spirit. That is why Saint Ambrose says: *Sit in singulis, etc.*: May the soul of Mary be in each one to glorify the Lord; may the spirit of Mary be in each one to rejoice in God. How happy is a soul when, after the example of a good Jesuit brother named Rodriguez, who died in the odor of sanctity, it is wholly possessed and governed by the spirit of Mary, which is a spirit gentle and strong, zealous and prudent, humble and courageous, pure and fruitful!

259. In order that the soul may let itself be led by this spirit of Mary, one must: 1. Renounce one's own spirit, one's own lights and wills, before doing anything: for example, before making mental prayer, saying or hearing holy Mass, receiving Communion, etc.; because the darkness of our own spirit and the malice of our own will and

operation, if we follow them, though they seem good to us, would put an obstacle in the way of the holy spirit of Mary. 2. One must give oneself up to the spirit of Mary, to be moved and led by it in the manner she wills. One must place oneself and leave oneself in her virginal hands, like an instrument in the hands of a workman, like a lute in the hands of a good player. One must lose oneself and abandon oneself in her, like a stone that is thrown into the sea: which is done simply and in an instant, by a single glance of the mind, a little movement of the will, or verbally, by saying, for example: I renounce myself, I give myself to you, my dear Mother. And although one may feel no sensible sweetness in this act of union, it does not cease to be real: just as if one were to say — which God forbid — I give myself to the devil, with as much sincerity, even though one said it without any sensible change, one would be no less truly the devil's. 3. One must, from time to time, during one's action and after the action, renew the same act of offering and of union; and the more one does so, the sooner one will be sanctified, and the sooner one will arrive at union with Jesus Christ, which always necessarily follows union with Mary, since the spirit of Mary is the spirit of Jesus.

To do all one's actions with Mary.

260. 2. One must do one's actions with Mary: that is to say, in one's actions one must look upon Mary as an accomplished model of every virtue and perfection which the Holy Spirit has formed in a pure creature, for us to imitate according to our little capacity. We must therefore, in each action, consider how Mary did it or would do it, if she were in our place. For this we must examine and meditate on the great virtues she practiced during her life, particularly: 1. her lively faith, by which she believed the word of the angel without hesitating; she believed faithfully and constantly even to the foot of the cross on Calvary; 2. her profound humility, which made her hide herself, keep silent, submit to everything, and put herself last; 3. her altogether divine purity, which has never had and will never have its equal under heaven; and finally all her other virtues. Let it be remembered, I repeat it a second time, that Mary is the great and unique mold of God, fit to make living images of God, at little cost and in little time; and that a soul which has found this mold, and which loses itself in it, is soon changed into Jesus Christ, whom this mold represents to the life.

To do all one's actions in Mary.

261. 3. One must do one's actions in Mary. To understand this practice well, one must know: 1. That the Most Blessed Virgin is the true earthly paradise of the new Adam, and that the ancient earthly paradise was only its figure. There are, then, in this earthly paradise, riches, beauties, rarities, and inexplicable sweetnesses, which the new Adam, Jesus Christ, has left there. It is in this paradise that he took his delight for nine months, that he wrought his marvels, and that he displayed his riches with the magnificence of a God. This most holy place is composed only of a virgin and immaculate earth, from which the new Adam was formed and nourished, without any spot or stain, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who dwells there. It is in this earthly paradise that there truly stands the tree of life, which bore Jesus Christ, the fruit of life; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which gave light to the world. There are, in this divine place, trees planted by the hand of God and watered by his divine unction, which have borne and bear every day fruits of a divine taste; there are flowerbeds studded with beautiful and varied flowers of the virtues, which give forth a fragrance that perfumes even the angels. There are in this place green meadows of hope, impregnable towers of fortitude, charming houses of confidence, etc. Only the Holy Spirit can make known the truth hidden under these figures of material things. There is in this place a pure air, without infection, of purity; a beautiful day, without night, of the holy humanity; a beautiful sun, without shadows, of the Divinity; a burning and continual furnace of charity, where all the iron that is put into it is set aflame and changed into gold; there is a river of humility which springs from the earth and which, dividing into four branches, waters all this enchanted place; these are the four cardinal virtues.

262. 2. The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the holy Fathers, also calls the Blessed Virgin: 1. the eastern gate, through which the high priest Jesus Christ enters and goes out into the world; he entered it the first

time through her, and he will come there the second time; 2. the sanctuary of the Divinity, the repose of the Most Holy Trinity, the throne of God, the city of God, the altar of God, the temple of God, the world of God. All these different epithets and praises are very true, with respect to the different marvels and graces which the Most High has wrought in Mary. Oh! what riches! Oh! what glory! Oh! what pleasure! Oh! what happiness, to be able to enter and dwell in Mary, where the Most High has set the throne of his supreme glory!

263. But how difficult it is for sinners such as we are to have the permission and the capacity and the light to enter into a place so high and so holy, which is guarded not by a cherub, like the ancient earthly paradise, but by the Holy Spirit himself, who has made himself its absolute master, and of her he says: *Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus* [A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up]. Mary is enclosed; Mary is sealed; the wretched children of Adam and Eve, driven out of the earthly paradise, can enter this one only by a particular grace of the Holy Spirit, which they must merit.

264. After one has obtained this signal grace by one's fidelity, one must dwell in the beautiful interior of Mary with delight, rest there in peace, lean there with confidence, hide there in assurance, and lose oneself there without reserve, so that in this virginal bosom: 1. the soul may be nourished with the milk of her grace and of her maternal mercy; 2. may be delivered there from its troubles, fears, and scruples; 3. may be there in safety against all its enemies, the devil, the world, and sin, which have never had entrance there: which is why she says that those who work in her shall not sin: *Qui operantur in me, non peccabunt*, that is to say, those who dwell in the Blessed Virgin in spirit will commit no considerable sin; 4. so that the soul may be formed in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ formed in her: because her bosom is, as the Fathers say, the hall of the divine sacraments, where Jesus Christ and all the elect have been formed: *Homo et homo natus est in ea* [A

man and a man is born in her].

To do all one's actions for Mary.

265. 4. Finally, one must do all one's actions for Mary. For, since we have given ourselves wholly to her service, it is just that we do everything for her, as a valet, a servant, and a slave; not that we take her for the last end of our services, which is Jesus Christ alone, but for their proximate end, their mysterious medium, and their easy means of going to him. Like a good servant and slave, we must not remain idle; but, supported by her protection, we must undertake and do great things for this august Sovereign. We must defend her privileges when they are disputed; we must uphold her glory when it is attacked; we must draw all the world, if we can, to her service and to this true and solid devotion; we must speak and cry out against those who abuse her devotion to outrage her Son, and at the same time establish this true devotion; we must claim from her, as reward for these little services, nothing but the honor of belonging to so lovable a Princess, and the happiness of being united by her to Jesus, her Son, by an indissoluble bond in time and in eternity.

GLORY TO JESUS IN MARY!

GLORY TO MARY IN JESUS!

GLORY TO GOD ALONE!

[SUPPLEMENT]

MANNER OF PRACTICING THIS DEVOTION IN HOLY COMMUNION

BEFORE COMMUNION

266. 1. You will humble yourself profoundly before God. 2. You will renounce your wholly corrupt inmost self, and your dispositions, however good your self-love makes them appear to you. 3. You will renew your consecration by saying: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*: I am all yours, my dear Mistress, with all that I have. 4. You will beseech this good Mother to lend you her heart, in order to receive her Son there in her own dispositions. You will represent to her that her Son's glory is at stake in his not being placed in a heart as sullied as yours, and as inconstant, which would not fail to take away from his glory or to lose him; but that if she will come and dwell with you to receive her Son, she can do so by the dominion she has over hearts; and that her Son will be well received by her, without stain and without danger of being outraged or lost: *Deus in medio ejus non commovebitur* [God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved]. You will tell her with confidence that all you have given her of your goods is a small thing to honor her, but that, by Holy Communion, you wish to make her the same present that the eternal Father gave her, and that she will be more honored by it than if you gave her all the goods of the world; and finally, that Jesus, who loves her uniquely, still desires to take his delight and his repose in her, even in your soul, filthier and poorer than the stable, where Jesus made no difficulty about coming because she was there. You will ask her for her heart with these tender words: *Accipio te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor tuum, o Maria!* [I take you for my all. Give me your heart, O Mary!]

DURING COMMUNION

267. 2. Ready to receive Jesus Christ, after the Pater, you will say to him three times: *Domine, non sum dignus*, etc., as if you were saying, the first time, to the eternal Father, that you are not worthy, because of your evil thoughts and ingritudes toward so good a Father, to receive his only Son, but that here is Mary, his handmaid: *Ecce ancilla Domini*, who acts for you, and who gives you a singular confidence and hope before his Majesty: *Quoniam singulariter in spe constituisti me* [For you have established me singularly in hope].

268. You will say to the Son: *Domine, non sum dignus*, etc., that you are not worthy to receive him because of your useless and evil words and your infidelity in his service; but that nevertheless you beg him to have pity on you, because you will bring him into the house of his own Mother and of yours, and that you will not let him go until he has come to lodge with her: *Tenui eum, nec dimittam, donec introducarn illum in domum matris meae, et in cubiculum genitricis meae* (Cant., 3. 4). You will beg him to rise and come into the place of his repose and into the ark of his sanctification: *Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu et arca sanctificationis tuae*. You will tell him that you place no confidence whatsoever in your own merits, your strength, and your preparations, like Esau, but in those of Mary, your dear Mother, as little Jacob did in the care of Rebecca; that, sinner and Esau though you are, you dare to draw near to his holiness, supported by and adorned with the merits and virtues of his holy Mother.

269. You will say to the Holy Spirit: *Domine, non sum dignus*, that you are not worthy to receive the masterpiece of his charity, because of the lukewarmness and iniquity of your actions and of your resistances to his inspirations, but that all your confidence is Mary, his faithful Spouse; and you will say with Saint Bernard: *Haec maxima mea fiducia; haec tota ratio spei meae* [This is my greatest confidence; this is the whole ground of my hope]. You may even beg him to come once more upon Mary, his indissoluble Spouse; that her womb is as

pure and her heart as inflamed as ever; and that without his descent into your soul, neither Jesus nor Mary will be formed there, nor worthily lodged.

AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

270. After Holy Communion, being interiorly recollected, and with your eyes closed, you will bring Jesus Christ into the heart of Mary. You will give him to his Mother, who will receive him lovingly, place him honorably, adore him profoundly, love him perfectly, embrace him closely, and render to him, in spirit and in truth, many duties which are unknown to us in our thick darkness.

271. Or else you will keep yourself profoundly humbled in your heart, in the presence of Jesus residing in Mary. Or you will keep yourself like a slave at the gate of the King's palace, where he is speaking with the Queen; and while they speak to one another, without needing you, you will go in spirit into heaven and over all the earth, to beg the creatures to thank, adore, and love Jesus and Mary in your place: *Venite, adoremus, venite*, etc. [Come, let us adore; come, etc.].

272. Or else, you will yourself ask Jesus, in union with Mary, for the coming of his reign upon earth through his holy Mother, or for divine wisdom, or for divine love, or for the pardon of your sins, or for some other grace, but always through Mary and in Mary; saying, while looking askance at yourself: *Ne respicias, Domine, peccata mea*. Lord, do not look upon my sins; *sed oculi tui videant aequitates Mariae*: but let your eyes see in me only the virtues and merits of Mary. And, remembering your sins, you will add: *Inimicus homo hoc fecit*: It is I, who am the greatest enemy I have on my hands, who have committed these sins; or else: *Ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me* [Deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man]; or else: *Te oportet crescere, me autem minui*: My Jesus, you must increase in my soul, and I must decrease. Mary, you must increase within me, and I must be less than I

have been. *Crescite et multiplicamini*: O Jesus and Mary, increase in me, and multiply yourselves outside, in others.

273. There is an infinity of other thoughts which the Holy Spirit furnishes, and will furnish you, if you are thoroughly interior, mortified, and faithful to this grand and sublime devotion which I have just taught you. But remember that the more you let Mary act in your Communion, the more Jesus will be glorified; and you will let Mary act for Jesus, and Jesus act in Mary, all the more as you humble yourself more profoundly; and you will listen to them in peace and silence, without troubling yourself to see, taste, or feel: for the just man lives everywhere by faith, and particularly in Holy Communion, which is an action of faith: *justus meus ex fide vivit* [My just man lives by faith].

Colophon: On This Edition

This is a fresh English translation of the *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge* of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673–1716), made directly and entirely from the French.

Source. The base text is the French edition published online by the Montfort Missionaries (montfort.org), carrying the standard paragraph numeration 1–273, including the supplemental method for Holy Communion (§266–273). Readings were checked against the first printed edition (Gaume Frères, Paris, 1843) and the 1896 microform of the original edition held by the Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. The French work is in the public domain; its author died in 1716. Montfort’s autograph lacks its opening leaves and its ending; the title, section headings, and paragraph numbers are the editorial apparatus standard in modern editions and are retained as the universal citation scheme. A handful of printing defects in the source edition were corrected against the earlier witnesses; a full account of every correction is kept in the edition’s source records.

Method. The translation was made directly from the French and received source-facing and editorial review: every paragraph was compared against the French for completeness and fidelity, technical theological vocabulary was held consistent throughout, and the English was revised for clarity without paraphrasing away the author’s voice. No existing English translation was consulted or used at any stage. Scripture is rendered as it comes through the author’s French and Latin; no modern copyrighted Bible translation is quoted. Latin quotations stand as the author gives them, with his French renderings translated and, where he leaves Latin untranslated, a plain English rendering supplied in square brackets.

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Ad maiorem Dei gloriam et in honorem Beatae Mariae Virginis.