

Union With Our Lady

*Mahan Writings of
Ven, Marie Petyt of St, Zértsa.*

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Rev.Oiomas E, McGinnis, QCarm, S€C
the Scapular Press, N.Y.C,*

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MARIAN WRITINGS

of

THE VENERABLE MARY PETYT OF ST. TERESA,

T. O. CARM.

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED

by

REV. THOMAS E. McGINNIS, O.CARM., S.T.L.

THE SCAPULAR PRESS

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PREFACE

At the beginning of the Marian Year, we published a work which was intended to make available to sincere souls the rich treasures of Carmelite Marian devotion through the writings of Venerable Michael of St. Augustine, Belgian Carmelite of the seventeenth century. The present work, published as the Marian Year draws to a close, has much the same purpose. But here we present in translation the writings of Venerable Mary Petyt of St. Teresa, a lay Third Order Carmelite, who was a spiritual daughter of Father Michael. We do not feel that this is mere repetition, for Father Michael and Mary Petyt approach the subject of Marian devotion from different points of view: Father Michael presents a theory of Marian devotion; Mary Petyt presents a description of Marian devotion in actual practice within the depths of her own soul. Time and time again spiritual writers discussing the subject of Our Lady's position in the life of the soul refer both to Father Michael and to Mary Petyt, also known as Sister Mary of St. Teresa, her name in the Secular Third Order. Hence it seemed to us most desirable that English-speaking lovers of Our Lady should have the Marian classics of each of these Carmelites available for their prayerful study.

The main part of the present work is, of course, the translation of Mary Petyt's Marian writings. These writings are selections from her letters to Father Michael, who was the first to publish them. Instead of following the numbering of the letters as given by him, however, we have thought it best to refer to the reflections as simply "Selection One, Two, etc." By way of preparation, we have prefixed a short examination of the spiritual life and its development, laying particular emphasis on the place of Our Blessed Lady and the need for mental prayer. We have returned to these two points at the con-

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elusion of the work, by adding several Marian meditations, based on the texts of Mary Petyt, and suitable for use at mental prayer. Immediately after the translation and before the meditations, we have given the Marian doctrine of Mary Petyt and her spiritual director in schematic form, hoping that this may aid study and understanding.

In one of her letters, Mary Petyt prays that Our Blessed Lady may raise up many souls to know and love her, souls who will join in singing the praises of their heavenly Queen and Mother. That same desire has motivated our efforts. The Marian Year, it is true, draws to a close. But is not the Marian Era at hand? Every sincere Christian must learn to be led to the fulfillment of his spiritual destiny by the hand of his Lady. God wills it. We feel that Mary Petyt, through her Marian writings, can help to teach souls that lesson.

May this little work in some way repay Our Blessed Lady for many graces received, and may it be to Her a token of our filial love, reverence, and obedience.

Thomas E. McGinnis, O.Carm.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ideal of Perfection

It is a sobering thought to remember that Our Blessed Lord epitomized the entire doctrinal content of his famous Sermon on the Mount by saying: *You, therefore, are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matt. 5:48) He addressed those words to all his listeners, not simply to a select group of initiated souls. And they are words which set before sincere Christians of all times the very highest spiritual ideal imaginable. The Christian is to take for his model of spiritual perfection not another human, no matter how perfect, but the infinitely holy God Himself.

But how is it possible to attain so lofty an ideal? We can rest assured, first of all, that Our Blessed Lord would not have established such an ideal without placing its achievement within our grasp, for, as St. Augustine loved to insist: "God does not command the impossible." And a little reflection will reveal to us the marvelous means which Our Lord has placed at our disposal to realize the *perfection of life* which He demands of us. In the first place, He has given us a share in the very nature of God, He has given us the source or principle from which Godlike actions can flow, by giving us the wonderful gift of sanctifying grace. This grace raises us above our natural condition. It makes us capable of knowing and loving God as He knows and loves Himself. It places us in the position of God's adopted children. This is not flight of fancy—it is the teaching of Scripture itself. St. Peter, for example, has written: "*He has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.*" (2 Pet. 1:4) And St. Paul added: "*But when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father."*" (Gal. 4:5-6) Hence it is that the cultivation of a life of perfection after the model of our heavenly Father lies in the cultivation of our life of grace.

Our Blessed Lord has not been negligent in providing means for this cultivation, for to this end He has instituted the entire sacramental system. Thus in the sacrament of Baptism, the new and supernatural life of grace is imparted to us for the first time, and we begin to reflect the perfection of God Himself. The sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the dominion of the forces of grace over the direction of our life. Should we have the misfortune to lose the life of grace, as we can in this vale of tears, the sacrament of Penance restores it

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to us. The Blessed Sacrament is our spiritual food, constantly nourishing the life of grace within us and preparing it to flower into the light of eternal glory. Distinctive graces for the various states in life are ours through the sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders. And finally, as we prepare to meet the Judge of the living and the dead, the sacrament of Extreme Unction comes to remove the battle-scars left on our soul by years of warfare against the powers of evil, thus making the spiritual beauty of our soul appear in the fullness of its splendor.

Personal Relationship With Jesus

Another element is necessary, however, if we are to fulfill Our Lord's injunction to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. Our life of grace, in addition to its growth through the sacraments, must also develop through our personal contact with Jesus, Our Savior. In fact, this personal contact with Jesus is what disposes us so that the sacraments and the sacrifice of the Mass may have a greater effect for good upon the life of our soul. Now by this personal contact with Our Lord is meant the constant effort to realize our complete dependence upon Him, who has merited every grace for us and through whom every grace is given to us. By this personal contact with Our Lord is meant the constant effort to realize that Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us; that as the Scriptures say, *no one has at any time seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him.* (cf. John 1:18) By this personal contact with Our Lord is meant the constant effort to study the message of His life and to imitate His virtues, remembering that God became man in order to teach us how He wishes men to live. By this personal contact with Our Lord, finally and most importantly, is meant the constant effort to assimilate the mind of Christ, to use St. Paul's expression: the effort to view our own particular life-situation through the eyes of Christ. Why is this so vitally important and necessary? Because, if our life of grace is to develop according to God's designs, then it must develop through every phase of our activity. Its development must not be limited to our formal expressions of religion. The whole of our life must be a kind of "sacrament" nourishing grace within us. The whole of our life actually is such a "sacrament" in God's plan. But we need the eyes of Christ in order to see that plan clearly and allow it to have its "sacramental" effect upon our life of grace. We need the mind of Christ in order to realize that our life is really all "of a piece" from God's point of view and that every part of that life—our joys and our sorrows, our work and our

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relaxation, our loves and our losses—is meant to contribute, ultimately, to our spiritual development.

How are we to go about establishing this personal contact with Our Lord? How are we to accomplish the task of making the mind of Christ our own, the task of adopting the attitude of Christ in the face of our own life-circumstances? The answer is prayer, particularly that kind of prayer which is called mental prayer or meditation.

Mental Prayer

Perhaps that sounds frightening—mental prayer. Somewhere in the back of our mind, perhaps, is the concept that mental prayer is a spiritual exercise which requires the skill of a Trappist monk or a Carmelite nun. Still, if we stop to consider just what is meant by mental prayer, we shall discover that we have been practicing it, even without realizing it, since childhood. Mental prayer, obviously, is distinguished from vocal prayer—but not because in the one we use words and in the other we do not. On the contrary, we can use as many words as we like in mental prayer. The difference is this: in vocal prayer we recite some prayer composed by another person, like the Our Father, the Memorare, the Prayer for the Marian Year, and our effort is to bring our mind and our will into harmony with the ideas and sentiments expressed in the prayer. When we say, for example, “Thy will be done,” we try to realize what God’s will is for us and we devote ourselves once more to the accomplishment of that will. In mental prayer, on the other hand, we do not use a prayer-formula prepared by someone else; we simply express to God in our own words whatever sentiments fill our hearts at the moment. Thus, for example, when we went to the altar-rail and poured out our hearts to God about the necessity of our passing an examination, about the awful consequences if we failed—we were already practicing mental prayer. When we asked the Blessed Virgin to cure a sick parent, explaining to Her the heartbreak we would feel at the death of someone so dear to us, we were already practicing mental prayer. And now when we beg Our Lord after Holy Communion to rid us of our deeply-rooted faults—our pride, our impatience, our disobedience—we are practicing mental prayer.

To cultivate that personal contact with Our Lord which is so essential for our life as Christians, we must make such mental prayer, such simple and loving conversation with Jesus, a habit. What shall we talk about? His life and our life. We shall discuss with Our Lord the spiritual and eternal message which lies hidden in each event of

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His earthly life and which is meant to direct us in our life. We shall listen to each word which fell from His lips and learn from Him how that word applies to us. We shall observe His virtues and ask His help to imitate them. We will talk with Him, for instance, of His birth at Bethlehem, and we will realize that the cold and darkness of the cave, the roughness of the straw, the inhospitality of the townspeople represent the suffering which must come to every man from the circumstances of life in a fallen world and from the bad will and ignorance of men. But we will understand that such suffering can cause us no real evil, because it cannot harm our soul. On the contrary, it can be a source of great spiritual good to us, if only we try to accept suffering as Our Lord did at Bethlehem—with resignation and love, and in a spirit of sacrifice. We will talk with Jesus about His hidden life at Nazareth, and with Him we will learn to appreciate the dignity and beauty of the common, ordinary, routine work and labor which fill our days as they once filled His. We will learn that we can achieve true human greatness, true holiness and union with God, if we try to perform our work as Our Lord did His at Nazareth, out of a deep love for God. We will hear Our Lord say, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart," and we will understand that humility is the fundamental virtue which determines the "character" of Our Lord's spirituality. He will teach us that humility is simply the constant acknowledgment in practical life of our true position of utter dependence upon God: "I am He who is, you are she who is not," as God said once to St. Catherine of Siena.

Of course, if our practice of mental prayer is to be successful, then we shall have to become familiar with the life of Our Lord through reading. We can never read the New Testament enough, as we will readily admit. And in order to derive full benefit from this inspired book, we might add to our reading list such works as *In the Likeness of Christ* and *Progress through Mental Prayer*, both by Father Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. The present writer feels that, at the very least, the sincere Christian should divide one half-hour a day between the work of mental prayer and spiritual reading, if he hopes to reap the spiritual benefits of sanctifying personal contact with Jesus. Finally, we must always remember that, when we reflect upon the life of Our Lord and converse with Him about it, we are not coming into contact with someone who is merely a model for our imitation. We are coming into contact with someone who is a real, concrete source of the supernatural grace we need to put His teaching into practice. He is far more eager than we can imagine to enable us to come close to Him, to assimilate His mental attitude, and to form our life on the pattern of His own.

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Our Lady's Place in the Spiritual Life

When we make a prayerful effort to study the life of Our Lord in order to model our own life upon it, we cannot help but notice the role filled in His life by Mary, His Mother. And, instructed by the voice of Catholic doctrine and tradition, we realize that Mary must have a corresponding role in the development of our spiritual life. Just as Mary is the Mother of Our Lord in the physical order, so is She Our Mother in the spiritual order. Just as God willed to come to us through Mary, so we are to return to God through Mary. Just as Christ is our great Mediator, our great link with God the Father, so Mary is our Mediatrix, our great link with Christ Himself. Mary, in constant subordination to Her Son, shared in every phase of the work of redemption. She merited saving grace for us by Her participation in the sacrifice of Calvary, and even now She constantly communicates grace to us, still in subordination to Christ. Thus the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee, worked at Mary's intercession, was simply the first in a long series of benefits which have come to mankind from God through Mary. Our spiritual life, our life of grace is, in a word, dependent upon Mary for its existence and for its progress, whether we are conscious of this fact or not. However, if our life of grace is to develop along the lines traced out in God's plan, then we must make an effort to be conscious of Mary's position and to show Her, in our concrete activities and attitudes, that we acknowledge this position. We must, in other words, come into personal contact with Our Blessed Lady just as we must come into personal contact with Our Lord. And we do that, once again, principally through mental prayer: by making the life and the words and the virtues of Our Lady the subject of our prayerful thought, by making them the subject of our simple and loving conversation with Her.

Saints and holy souls down through the ages have been eloquent in their praise of devotion to Our Lady. They have referred to this devotion as a *short road* to holiness. They have pointed out how Mary helps us to make progress: She lightens our spiritual and temporal trials by Her presence and She obtains for us a greater degree of charity, which renders our simplest actions more meritorious and more pleasing to God. She leads the sincere and generous soul from love of Our Lord's humanity to the contemplation of His divinity and thence to union with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Elsewhere we have presented the teaching of the Carmelite, Venerable Michael of St. Augustine, a clear and inspiring analysis of Marian devotion in the development of the spiritual life. (cf. *Life with Mary*, New York, 1953) A spiritual disciple of Father Michael was one Mary Petyt, a

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woman who, under his wise direction, attained to the heights of the spiritual life in union with Our Blessed Lady. In the form of letters written to Father Michael, Mary Petyt, or Sister Mary of St. Teresa (her name as a Carmelite tertiary) has left us an account of her spiritual experiences. Selections from her letters which discuss her perception of Our Lady's role in the spiritual life, we here present in translation. Father Reypens, Professor of Spiritual Theology in the Theological College of the Society of Jesus at Louvain, has referred to the work of Mary Petyt as "the most developed and the most precise testimony that we know of at this moment concerning a conscious intervention of Mary" in the higher stages of the spiritual life. What we must remember is that Our Blessed Lady plays Her intimate role in our spiritual life, too, even though we remain most often unconscious of it. She raises up a soul like Mary Petyt from time to time in order to remind us of this reality and in order to let us see to what a high degree of union with God she can lead us if we place ourselves under Her guidance. A careful study of the writings of Mary Petyt will make us realize that, hand in hand with Our Blessed Lady, we can fulfill the injunction of our Lord to *be perfect*, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

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THE LIFE AND THE MARIAN WRITINGS

of

VENERABLE MARY PETYT OF ST. TERESA

Mary Petyt was born at Hazebrouch in the Southern-Netherlands on the first of January, 1623, a girl of very pliant personality. She experienced periods of sincere religious fervor: for example, at the age of ten she made a vow of chastity. And yet at other times she was entranced with the attractions of the world: beautiful clothes, dances, romantic novels. When she was sixteen she undertook a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lisle with the questionable motive "that Our Lady might make her more pretty and graceful." But Our Lady had other designs for her, and at Lisle grace touched the generous soul of Mary Petyt. She then understood the vanity of the world and she conceived the desire of becoming a religious.

Two years later, in 1641, she was admitted to the convent of the Regular Canonesses of Saint Augustine at Ghent. But her goal had not yet been attained. After spending eight months there as a postulant and five months as a novice, Mary was forced to leave because of an eye ailment which prevented her from reading the Divine Office. Instead of returning to her home, however, she took up residence in Ghent at a house of the so-called *Beguines*, a group of pious laywomen living in community but without the vows of religion. Desiring still more solitude and silence than this house could afford, Mary Petyt persuaded a certain Carmelite priest to act as her spiritual director, and, together with a companion, she took the vows of the Third Order Secular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, receiving the name of Mary of St. Teresa.

Within a few years, however, their Carmelite confessor was transferred to another city; and in 1646 they chose as their spiritual director another Carmelite, Father Michael of St. Augustine, author of several works on the spiritual life and one of the guiding lights of the Reform of Touraine in the Belgian Province of the Order. It was under the wise and stable direction of Father Michael that Mary Petyt of St. Teresa reached the highest peaks of the spiritual life. Father Michael seems to have understood immediately the possibilities as well as the dangers for this generous, affective soul. He told her that "until now, you have built in the heights; you must build into the depths." And so he instructed her accordingly, in the basic virtues and fundamental attitudes of the spiritual life.

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Finally, in 1657, Mary moved to a small house attached to the Carmelite Church in Malines, Belgium—a house that was called "The Hermitage," not because Mary Petyt became a hermit or lived the life of a hermit, but because some hermits had once lived in it. Here, according to a manner of life proposed by Michael of St. Augustine and approved by the General of the Order, Mary lived as a recluse until her death, observing in its entirety the primitive Rule of the Carmelite Order.

In obedience to Father Michael's directions, Mary began writing, in 1668, her autobiography, which we may consider as a kind of spiritual diary. Herein can be found the development of her spiritual life. These notes are of exceeding interest and even of importance to the knowledge of the higher stages of the spiritual life; for they are the reflections of the mystic herself, each written only a short time after the mystical experience to which it refers, and recounting that experience with remarkable clarity and exactitude.

All the writings of Mary Petyt of St. Teresa point to the practical consequence that the soul should be free not only from all sensible images and activities, which are an impediment to the union of the spirit with God, but even from the love and thoughts of any creature, if not in direct relation with God. Only in this way will that condition be reached under which God can freely work His wonders in the soul.

It was especially in 1668 that Mary wrote her reflections concerning union with Our Blessed Lady. These notes are probably the best of all that has been written on this point, and they were certainly used by Father Michael of St. Augustine in his famous treatise on the Marian life which we have presented elsewhere. For Mary of St. Teresa, the Marian life begins with the constant consideration of the virtues of Our Lady. Contemplating those virtues, she becomes conscious of their source: namely, Our Lady's union with God himself. And from that moment Our Lady becomes for her the great contemplative, the mistress of the entire life of prayer, and the means by which she is prepared for the so-called mystical marriage with Jesus. But Our Lady is more than a mere bond linking the soul with God; She is the mirror in which God Himself is revealed and discovered.

Mary Petyt underwent much suffering during her lifetime. She had her share of physical suffering. But her keenest suffering was mental and spiritual: she was misjudged by her fellow-humans and vicious rumors were spread abroad concerning her manner of life. She bore those sufferings for the love of God and her dear Mother Mary, and at the end she was amply consoled and rewarded by them. She

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died in peace and in the odor of sanctity on the feast of All Saints in the year 1677.

* * *

1. *The Blessed Virgin appears to her, teaches her a more spotless way of life, and comforts her.*

One night, during my sleep, our lovable Mother came close to me. She was carrying the Infant Jesus in Her left arm. Child and Mother looked at me lovingly, and with smiling faces. They spoke very comforting and friendly words to me; yet I no longer remember clearly exactly what They said. I do know, however, that our lovable Mother gave me some advice regarding a more perfect purity, a more complete detachment, and also regarding the renunciation of every creature. Other of Her words helped to console me and to strengthen me.

I then said to myself: "It is not possible that this is an illusion; I am not now dreaming. Therefore I must make note of this in order to answer the demands of obedience." Afterwards, however, I did not wish to concern myself with this experience; I wanted to consider it as an altogether ordinary dream. Still the memory of it remained much more vivid than the memory of such a dream. In fact, I have sometimes dreamed of such beautiful things without feeling impelled to record them, as I am doing now.

2. *The Blessed Virgin appears to her during the Divine Office.*

On the morning of the Vigil of Pentecost, during the recitation of the Office, I thought I saw, in the depth of my soul, our lovable Mother. She was present among us and seemed to listen to our chant with a special joy, with delight and pleasure. So it seemed to me, for the look which She fixed upon us was one full of friendship; and She was smiling, above all when we came to the antiphons, versicules, and orations which are especially designed to sing Her praises and Her perfections.

This presence caused in me a sentiment of reverence towards Her Majesty, together with sentiments of very tender and respectful love. At seeing Her thus, my spirit leapt with an almost excessive joy and happiness. And I said: Sweet Mother, since Your Majesty seems pleased at this praise which we offer here to You, why do You not raise up a greater number of souls who would serve You in this very same manner and who would sing Your praises in all purity of heart? And I seemed to feel a certain hope that some such souls would come in the future. Yet I was not entirely certain that this would happen.

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3. *She is shown how to conform herself to the example of Jesus and Mary in the things in which nature finds a certain pleasure.*

The soul perceives sometimes that its innermost part begins to establish itself in a certain higher region and sets out to live in God, detached from all created things. At other times, however, the faithful soul is shown how it must behave in situations which delight nature or which please the sensible faculties. (It is to be understood, of course, that this advice concerns occasions when necessity, propriety, or discretion demands the acceptance of these particular situations.) In such situations one must use great prudence and take particular care to raise the delights of sense to the level of the spirit. Only by detaching itself immediately from all attachment of affection will the soul be able to enjoy these things in God.

This applies to everything which in any way delights the sense of taste, sight, hearing, smell. Would that the soul who seeks God in all purity might here learn how our lovable Mother and the Child Jesus acted in these circumstances! As was fitting, they ate ordinary food. They were present at the nuptials in Cana of Galilee without in any way disturbing the calm in the depth of their souls. Our lovable Mother displayed a tender, maternal love for Her Son. She fondled Him; She kissed Him; She held Him in Her arms. And the Infant Jesus acted in like manner, conforming Himself to the nature of every other baby: sucking His Mother's milk, allowing Himself to be carried and caressed in Her arms. He was in every way like any tiny, innocent babe, although He was the Wisdom of the Father. May it be granted us ever to use creatures after the example of Jesus and Mary: in a spiritual way and for God.

4. *The Blessed Virgin invites her to receive Holy Communion, saying that Jesus wishes it.*

Once when our lovable Mother showed Herself to me, smiling at me in Her affectionate way, I asked Her what was Her pleasure in my regard: Should I continue to write some more lines out of obedience, or should I rather betake myself to Church, as was my custom? She deigned to answer me thus: "Go; hasten to receive my Son." I fell at Her feet, my face to the ground, and I begged Her to give me Her maternal blessing. Then, filled as I was with respect, reverence, and love, I heard Her add: "My Son desires to come to you and to take His repose in your heart."

During my preparation for Holy Communion, this dear Mother remained present in the depth of my soul. She was carrying Her Child in Her left arm. But after a time She set the Child upright on Her

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knees, His face turned towards me. And He smiled at me, stretching out His arms towards me in a gesture of tender affection.

When I had received Holy Communion, I no longer felt within me the presence of this dear Mother. Only the sweet Infant Jesus was present in the secret recesses of my heart, and there I made Him welcome, caressing Him and protesting my love for Him.

5. *How she honors and prays to the Blessed Virgin, in God.*

As for my love, my knowledge of divine things, the lights which I receive concerning revealed truths, my supernatural attractions—all this, it seems to me, is drawn from its source, which is the Unity of the Divine Being, although it sometimes flows superabundantly into my soul. Yet such a superabundant flood does not distract the soul from this Unity, for in all things the soul sees, recognizes, and tastes the one Divine Unity, in a mysterious and wonderful manner. The strength and the light of God alone aid the soul and raise it up to this level.

In like manner, it is in the Divine Being as in a mirror that I behold, honor, and love our all-lovable Mother, and that I pray to Her. I behold Her as making but one with this Divine Mirror, with this ineffable Being. And so when I kneel before one of Her statues and implore Her help for some intention towards which I feel an inner attraction—for the welfare of souls, the needs of my country, or something similar—soon Her image becomes present in this interior mirror, where She is contained together with all other creatures. At other times I seem able, in some manner, to penetrate beneath the exterior image, noticing nothing corporal, and I behold her totally contained in the hidden depth of my spirit.

6. *A tender love impels her towards Jesus and Mary. Mary appears to adopt her as her child and teaches her the way of perfection. All one's powers should be occupied with deiform objects; the lover powers being subject to the higher, and the higher to God.*

It is an extremely tender love which I feel for Jesus and for His dear Mother, who is my Mother also. And this kind of love gives me great familiarity with Jesus, great ease in His company. With Him I am like a spouse, full of tenderness and affection. And the feeling He evidences for me in return also appears to be full of affection. The same is true of my dear Mother. She seems to have adopted me as Her child; She instructs me in perfection and in purity of spirit, so that I may become more pleasing to Jesus. And She leads me to the love of Jesus and to loving commerce with Him.

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My interior faculties seem to have no power of operation, despite their object, except that power which the action at hand demands; and in exercising this power I am directed by the indication of the Divine Will or by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such a condition results from the great, or rather from the total submission of the inferior part to the superior, and of the superior to God. As I have experienced it, God has taken possession of the whole man: He moves him, guides him, dominates him. He guards me from all the corruption of nature as long as I remain faithful in answering His interior lights and attractions. And it is as easy for me to do this as it is to open and shut my eyes.

7. *During the Office, the Blessed Virgin appears to her and acts with her in a very motherly manner. She chooses the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of her Religious Family.*

On the fourth of February, 1659, if I remember correctly, during the Office I enjoyed in the depth of my soul a very pleasant and consoling visit from our lovable Mother. It was exactly like the affectionate greeting of a dear, kind mother, full of tender caresses.

Since then I have experienced, as for a mother, a love both tender and sweet, yet full of respect. This gentle inclination tends towards Mary in a way which is both very real and very spiritual. And it appears to be rather infused and passively received than elaborated by my own personal industry. I feel urged to enthrone Mary as the Mother General of this house. All the daughters who shall come here and be confided to my care, I shall place in Her bosom, so that they may be nourished there with that divine spirit of humility, solitude, mortification, purity and detachment, which She possesses in all its plenitude.

I also feel impelled to consecrate to Her this place in which our new manner of life is beginning, and to place it under Her direction. What is more, it appears to me that this is pleasing to Her and that She willingly accepts the office of Mother and Governess of this blessed family. Sweet and most lovable Mother, how great an attraction for you and confidence in your power has your love succeeded in implanting within me!

You see, the activity of the Holy Spirit now seems to be such that my soul can ask nothing effectively of its Beloved, can hope for nothing from Him, except through the mediation and the intercession of its most dear Mother. This is what I perceived during prayer, while I felt urged to intercede for a young monk who, tempted by the Enemy, had left the convent with the intention of abandoning the re-

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ligious life. I thought I saw him in spirit, and it was our lovable Mother who was leading him back to the convent.

8. *The Blessed Virgin appears with the Infant Jesus. She reveals herself again, full of majesty and love, and assures her that her presence is real.*

After Holy Communion on Candlemas Day, 1666, when I was greatly uplifted in spirit and recollected in detachment from my own self and from all creatures, I again experienced a manifestation of our lovable Mother, carrying the Child Jesus. She seemed to entrust Him to me, so that I might hold Him and so that He might take His repose in my arms. Very tenderly I kissed Him; and He, in turn, smiled at me; He carressed me and played with me as innocent little babes are wont to do in the arms of their mother.

For some time also, I rested my head upon the knees of this very dear Mother, who was appearing to me in an indescribable majesty and great beauty. I turned towards Her and contemplated Her with a deep, respectful love, mixed with nothing of the sentimental. For all this took place in a very abstract manner, in the depth of the soul. Yet it is true that, while resting on Her knees, I felt some sentiments of childlike and innocent playfulness, as a small child feels towards its mother.

Some time after Holy Communion on the thirteenth of February, while I was absorbed in great interior silence, our lovable Mother appeared quite suddenly—I know not how. She showed Herself present to the secret depth of the soul. And I had a most certain and most vivid perception of presence. This manifestation and contemplation were produced suddenly, without my having thought about them previously, or imagined anything of the kind. Without knowing or doing anything, the depth of the soul feels drawn from its profundity, from its silence and simplicity, and finds itself set upon a height which is no less silent, no less simple. The first state is an intimate repose in God; the second, a lofty contemplation, after the manner of rapture or absorbed attention. Time then passes without one's being aware of it. I forget even to return home; I have no more remembrance of time or of place; and when I return somewhat to myself, I suffer at having to leave. For then I have but one desire; to be able to remain in this state.

At the same moment, I saw clearly that this was not the work of the imagination—no more than that which happened on Candlemas Day was the work of the imagination. How ugly now appear all the the statues and paintings which depict our lovable Mother! Rather

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than devotion, they inspire nausea, especially now that the recollection is still fresh of the magnificent beauty and majesty whose image remains in my memory.

9. *She receives lights on the subject of Christ's Incarnation. The Blessed Virgin visits her and adopts her as her daughter.*

On the vigil of the Annunciation in 1668, there was impressed upon the depth of my soul a light concerning the subject of the marvelous excellence of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in the most holy flesh of a Virgin. I saw how our lovable Mother was bathed in an ineffable divine brightness, and in light, glory, joy and happiness. She communicated to me something of the ardor of Her love and the joy which filled Her soul to overflowing when the Eternal Word was conceived within her.

The excellence and the wonder of this mystery were, therefore, shown to me, although it was not possible for me to express anything of it. The depth of my soul felt as if drawn up to a certain height. And the contemplation of this mystery was carried on with an unbelievable feeling of admiration, respect, and adoration, for it was centered entirely on the Unity of God. Never before had I penetrated or understood this mystery so thoroughly. There resulted within me a new ardor of love, admiration, and respect for my lovable Mother, since I saw how God had esteemed her and raised her up. The Divine Majesty had loved Her to the point of deigning to repose within Her flesh and to take His human nature from Her.

Yet the sight of Her excellence, Her exaltation, and Her majesty does not affright me or restrain me. I dare to turn to Her with the tenderness and simplicity of a child. I love her as a child loves the most loving Mother; I speak childlike words to Her and rest on Her knees. She allows me to do so, and She strengthens my confidence by making me realize that She has deigned to adopt me as Her child. Happiness and joy! What evil could befall me now?

During the course of this prayer, our dear Mother seemed to reveal herself in the depth of my soul, carrying the Child Jesus in Her arms. She was of incomparable beauty, delicate and lovable. She appeared to be asking Her Child to bless me—me, His unworthy spouse. And He gave me His blessing, smiling at me gently. From this moment, my heart has been filled with a more tender love for this dear Mother and Her dear Child. Constantly I feel drawn to rest innocently in Her arms and, like a tired child, there to sleep. How sweet is Her name: Mary!

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10. *She sees the Blessed Virgin carrying the Infant Jesus. Good affections and other effects of this vision.*

On April 22, 1668, our lovable Mother appeared to me during the course of my prayer. She was carrying the Infant Jesus in Her arms. And I noticed in this vision that, in an instant, my entire being was changed: it was raised up to God and became on fire with love for God and for this dear Mother. I was totally bathed with light and with a new brightness.

When this vision came to an end, I remained completely disposed for the love of union and fusion in the Divine Being, in great simplicity and solitude of spirit—although before this vision I had been rather in aridity and somewhat distracted in my feelings. In an instant, I had felt my soul surrounded, as it were, and filled by its Beloved. It was a tender love which had wounded me, and I felt gently drawn towards the practice of all the virtues.

As long as the presence of my lovable Mother lasts, I perceive within myself an exceptional and childlike candor. My loving attentions, my sighs, the movements of my filial affection are then full of sweetness, of innocent tenderness, and of love; but they are also full of profound respect and of a boundless confidence in Her for all that I desire and petition, both for myself and for others. Also, She seems to be agreeable to all that I recommend to Her and ask of Her. She manifests this to me by some sign or interior communication.

Simply by contemplating Her I feel instructed and stimulated to pursue a purity constantly more perfect and a more complete simplicity of spirit; likewise, I receive a clearer knowledge of what I must do or omit in various circumstances in order the better to fulfill Her will and that of my Beloved. And from this I also acquire a complete certitude concerning many things, which I cannot specify exactly today. What is certain is that I then perceive in an experimental way that I am being attracted by a good spirit, and this knowledge gives to my soul a truly great and profound peace.

This revelation of my lovable Mother lasted, perhaps, a quarter of an hour. When it had passed, it left no longing, no impatience to receive these graces more often or to enjoy them for longer intervals of time. My soul is soothed and completely satisfied in its sleep of love in the supreme Good.

11. *The most tender remembrance of Jesus and Mary. She rests on the knees of the Blessed Virgin and in the arms of Jesus. Her love for St. Joseph. In all things, she preserves her humility.*

I experience a real sweetness, a satisfaction of soul and nature

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when I pronounce, with my lips or in my heart, the holy names: Jesus and Mary. Often I repeat them: "Jesus, Jesus, my Beloved, my only Beloved; Jesus, Jesus, my Life and my All. Mary, gentle Mary, my very dear Mother." It seems to me that these sweet names are almost constantly within me, in my heart. I cannot cease being occupied with them, clinging to them, speaking these names in a very gentle feeling of tender love, full of respect.

However, this experience is not always accompanied by such clearly defined words. At times I say only half of them before my spirit enjoys a sleep of love, as it were, in the arms of Jesus or upon Mary's knees. This comes to pass in the solitary depths of the spirit, usually with suspension of the senses.

My dearest Mother seems not to be satisfied with simply drawing me to the perpetual love of Herself and to a very pure, tender, and faithful love of Jesus. It is not enough for her to adopt me as her child. She seems to desire, in addition, that I also love Her dear spouse, Saint Joseph. She effectively implants this love in my heart, so that my love and the inclination of my soul have these three Persons as object, although by a simple regard and in unity of spirit. They are, all three, constantly united in my heart and in my love.

Despite all these favors, I feel interiorly drawn to a profound humility, to the annihilation of all things within myself. I must rely on nothing, imagine nothing, take complacency in no gift, grace, or favor from the Beloved, my dear Mother, or my loving Father. I must leave all that to God, as if nothing were given to me, so that I may remain completely hidden in my nothingness.

12. *She experiences an interior attraction towards the delightful devotion to the names of Jesus and Mary. She is shown how to love Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and how to converse in spirit with them.*

The most holy names of Jesus and Mary are sweeter to my taste than honey: so sweet, gentle, and delightful that I seem able to taste their flavor on my lips. The simple remembrance of them, reflection upon them, or their mental repetition are like small, subtle flames which penetrate and pierce the heart, gently wounding it with love. I do not arrive at this devotion by my own efforts or by any fanciful flight of spirit. No, it is the Divine Spirit who leads and directs me, gently and simply, in the most secret depths of my heart.

I am learning more and more how to collect all these experiences in the depth of my soul, almost without any intervention of the senses. It is the same with this tendency, this outpouring of love towards Jesus,

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Mary, and Joseph. This, too, is now much more completely held within the spirit alone; it is purer, more detached, more elevated; there is in it less of emotion and of natural pleasure. Yet I must suppress these latter things even more completely. I contemplate Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and enjoy their presence in the depth of my soul, seeing them as united for all eternity to the Divine Being with whom they are totally permeated.

At present, these Three show themselves to me all together, without there being introduced the least intermediary in my contemplation of the Divine Being. For he, as it were, overshadows them and fills them. They seem, in some way, to be absorbed in him, and it is thus they present themselves. So true is this, that it is impossible for me to lose the presence of God, even for an instant, when I consider them or raise up my love to them. In them, I see and love nothing except God alone and that which is divine. The remembrance of them in no way prevents me from remaining in God. It in no way detracts from my simplicity of spirit.

Thus I have come to understand how the blessed in heaven can see and love each other in God without impeding their beatific vision, their joy and their love. I have learned by experience that it is the same here.

13. *The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph teach her of a most exalted purity. Her love and her experience of the presence of the Virgin and St. Joseph are diminished as the result of certain imperfections. How she fails in obedience to them by seizing her own liberty.*

The interior purity which they teach me is so exceptionally exalted that it is impossible for me to express it. But when I conform myself exactly to what they show me, then my entire inner nature becomes like a pure mirror, like a crystal which, from moment to moment, receives divine impressions, movements of love, and wonderful lights on the knowledge of God and of the divine truths. My inner nature seems to be truly a throne upon which God rests and takes His pleasure. But when I am less exact, and when I forget this punctual submission and obedience to my lovable Mother and Father, straightway the gentle, tender love I bear them diminishes, as does my filial respect. Their presence is thus obscured, until I confess my fault in profound humility and with a contrite heart.

For instance, I allowed myself to speak to Sister T. concerning myself and the graces and interior instructions I was receiving. And immediately my lovable Mother rebuked me, because such behavior

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was contrary to the teaching She had given me: namely, never to speak of myself or of the graces I received. It was not that there was matter or substance for a sin against humility; yet such a manner of acting was not good. Besides, my lovable Mother desires that my humility be perfect, that there be nothing lacking to it, and that it not be darkened by even a shadow of what is opposed to it. Moreover, since she showed me that I must remain entirely detached from my own self, it follows that I must lose the memory of all that comes to pass or has already come to pass within me: I must not reflect upon it and I must be on my guard in future to say nothing whatsoever about it.

But your Reverence must not think that this rigorous obedience, this submission to my dear Mother and Father, this constant attention to their good pleasure and to their directions—that all of this, I say, deprives me in any way of my free will or my holy liberty of spirit. It in no way restricts my spirit, or hems it in. Rather should you know that, in all this, I enjoy an exalted liberty and sweetness of spirit. For holy liberty consists precisely in no longer disposing freely of oneself and in no longer desiring to do so. I consider it a true slavery to have to return to my own liberty; I fear it more than death.

It has been shown to me, moreover, that I am guilty of a certain kind of injustice when I follow my own liberty, and that I must accuse myself of this in confession: for I no longer have ownership, so to speak, of my own self, having given myself entirely to my Beloved, and to my dear Mother and Father, in order to live henceforth in accordance with their good pleasure. I even bound myself to this by vow. And, although this promise was not made to bind under pain of sin—since this was not asked of me—yet it obliges me very strictly, for its sanction is nothing else than love which, for me, "is stern as death, relentless as the nether-world."

In this sense, I no longer have any right over myself; I no longer belong to myself. And I can say in truth with the holy prophet David: "My tongue is the pen of a ready scribe." In very truth, my tongue, all my members, my senses, and all the powers of my soul are, or ought to be, but so many pens with which my Beloved and my dear Mother and Father write: so many pens which they direct as they will, just as the teacher guides the hand and the pen of the child who is learning to write.

14. *She tries to explain more clearly the mode of this presence of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph.*

I feel compelled to describe somewhat more clearly, in as far as I

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am able, the manner in which I have been favored in these recent days by the presence of my dear Mother and Father, and to explain how I have perceived their movements, their admonitions, and their gentle influence.

The glance of my soul was constantly focused upon Them, and the remembrance and image of Them were, so to speak, imprinted in my intellect and consciousness, in a habitual and necessary manner, without the least activity on my part. I had done nothing in thought or in deed to attain this effect; the whole thing seemed to occur in a natural, necessary manner, just as water might flow from a spring. If I understand it rightly, they became present to the superior part of my soul, before I could think of Them, and without any expectation. But there the impression was so powerful that even had I made efforts to distract myself or to lose this contemplation, this experience, it seems that I could not have succeeded. (Unless, of course, I had done something which would displease Them for, when that happens, Their presence begins to fade, and then disappears—and with it the gentle tenderness, and the innocent, respectful love.)

What I saw was a form, an image, at once distinct and indistinct. At one and the same time, the contemplation was clear and obscure. I know not how to make this understood. It would seem to bear some likeness to a revelation of this lovable Mother and Father received and described by St. Teresa. The Saint took no special notice of any particular feature of Their persons, but considered in one simple glance, to the full satisfaction of her soul, the person of her dear Mother.

My contemplation was so simple that it would have been impossible for me to consider the one apart from the other. The two were as one; yet this unity was twofold. Besides, this simple gaze was contained within the unity of the Divine Being.

15. *She enjoys the presence of Mary and Joseph in a more abstract manner. The reality of this vision is manifested by its fruits.*

It appears to me that they are now withholding from me that manner of presence and motions which can be perceived by the senses. The experience is now more deeply rooted in my soul and takes place in a more abstract manner. They have not withdrawn Their presence, but, as it seems to me, I perceive Them in a more lofty fashion and in a way less familiar to the senses. Doubtless They have led me to the goal towards which the former manifestations were tending. In fact, Their instructions and gentle inspirations seem to have made me capable of, seem to have disposed me for and even to have brought

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me to a more intimate and more lofty union of love with my Divine Friend. And my heart has been deeply wounded by His love. They have made me more intimate with Him; and more than ever have They implanted Their own manner of being in me, their nature and their spirit: for I experience within myself, in my entire being, a divine transformation such as is impossible for me to express. This is proof sufficient for me that what occurred on St. Joseph's Day was not an illusion.

My soul is completely filled with excellent virtues, particularly generosity, kindness, love and mercy. With all my heart I am drawn to pardon my enemies and those who have wronged me, to love them and pray for them, to speak well of them and to excuse them, to take pity on them and to bear them good will and affection, to forget the evil and the injury they have done me and to pray God that these be not imputed to them as sin, etc.

I feel equally impelled to mortification and to a holy hatred of myself; I feel drawn to destroy all self-love and to have no kindness, no attention for myself, to have no care for my own person and not to suffer others to care for me or show concern for me. When this latter happens, I am put to shame and made even more humble. Knowing myself to be unworthy, I assign myself in all things the poorest and the lowest part.

In return, I experience a gentle inclination to please others, to procure them what is useful, commodious, and agreeable. I deprive myself of such things as if they were due to others rather than to me. I feel inclined, out of charity, to perform humble and servile chores, ones which are abject and unclean, so that others may be free of them and have their burden lightened.

In all this I discover and taste a spiritual flavor, a satisfaction of soul, for holy love impels me to bear the burdens of others with them. However, I believe that I do not yet possess these virtues in their most perfect degree and that they should grow within me in proportion to the growth of my intellectual enlightenment.

Such is the transformation which has taken place within me as regards my external dealings with my neighbor. My interior transformation, however, is no less important.

16. *The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph appear to her, revealing to her Their exceptional purity. She receives light on the subject of Their eminence.*

On the vigil of the feast of the Most Holy Trinity in 1668, during night prayers, it seemed to me that our lovable Mother and St. Joseph

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appeared in the depth of my soul. They revealed to me and made me understand the ineffable purity, both interior and exterior, and the ardor of divine love with which God had favored them during their earthly life. I saw how they had cooperated constantly in order to increase these gifts and to allow them to develop to an almost infinite degree. Nevertheless I saw that St. Joseph was constituted in a lesser degree of purity and love than was our dear Mother.

This revelation took place suddenly, and it was brief, hardly lasting for the space of a Hail Mary. Yet concerning the subject of their virtues, their merits, and the loftiness of the graces to which God had raised them, my mind received within this short space of time more light and understanding than it could have acquired during long years in any other manner.

All this has greatly increased my admiration and love for this most pure Virgin full of grace and for St. Joseph, Her dear spouse; it has increased my confidence in Them and my devotion to Them. It strongly urges me to follow Them, although from afar off and according to my feeble powers, along the pathway of Their intense interior purity and Their ardent and constant love of God.

My dear Mother had appeared to me clothed in a robe, brilliant as the snow. She was a young girl, about eighteen or twenty, full of beauty, dignity, and perfection. This reminded me somewhat of the representations of the Immaculate Conception, in which the Virgin is not holding the Infant Jesus.

17. *She experiences the presence of her lovable Mother. Wounded by love, she sees Her in a state of beauty and majesty.*

On the feast of Our Lady of the Snows in 1668, during morning prayers, I had no other occupation nor was I conscious of any other operation of my soul aside from the contemplation of an especially delightful presence of my dear Mother at the highest point of my soul.

During this time, I was filled with a new heavenly light, which poured its rays upon me. I was surrounded by it, just as if I were in the very heart of the sun itself. Yet this did not attract my attention in any exceptional way. My heart seemed to have received a new wound, as from a flame of the love of God and of my very dear Mother. This Mother appeared as indescribably beautiful, and the brilliance of Her majesty could have dimmed the splendor of the sun.

This experience lasted for rather a long time, and yet no word was spoken. I simply contemplated Her, with a calm and affectionate gaze, filled with admiration and tenderness. This contemplation had

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been a *gift* to me. It was not the result of any natural activity or operation. This contemplation, so brilliant yet so simple, was of such a purity that it would not tolerate even the slightest movement of my lower powers. These could only have obscured the vision. I had to abandon myself completely, remaining in a purely receptive state for whatever it might please God to accomplish within me.

My lovable Mother said nothing to me; She did not even caress me. Yet Her gaze was full of affection, friendship, and love. I was fully comforted simply by the sight of Her sweet presence in God. She was enclosed within the All, completely covered by His shadow. I always see Her in such a union.

18. *She is favored with several visits from the Blessed Virgin and is thereby inflamed with love. She sees Mary present in choir during the chanting of the Salve Regina. She asks Her blessing and rejoices in the fact that she belongs to the Order.*

Today I noted the following, so that your Reverence can examine it together with the rest. My lovable Mother heaps Her graces and favors upon me. I could never have thought to hope for such things. At present I am favored by a great number of visits from my dear Mother, who treats me very familiarly. And my love for Her has thereby been wonderfully increased. This love is not simply a gentle tenderness, a childlike and innocent affection—such would be expected—but it is a love which burns and which wounds. It well-nigh maddens me, and I become, as it were, intoxicated when I consider the tender and affectionate way I am received by my dear Mother, and when I consider that she seems to have adopted me as Her beloved child.

But is She not truly my dearest Mother, now that I almost melt with love for Her? Two days ago She let me rest and sleep in Her bosom for at least an hour, perhaps even longer. She consoled me in a very evident manner. She delivered me from a temptation of the devil in a manner both apparent and remarkable.

On the eleventh of August, 1668, while the religious were chanting the Hail, Holy Queen and the Litany, I experienced a particular joy and contentment of heart because I seemed to see our most tender Mother there among Her dear Brothers. She was greatly pleased, and the praise, gratitude, and respectful devotion paid to Her seemed to delight Her immensely.

When I saw this, I prayed to this sweet Mother to the end that, since She found so much satisfaction in all of this, She might deign

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to bestow upon each of the religious, as a reward, Her maternal blessing, that divine grace might grow within each of them, and that each of them might continue in Her service with all purity of heart, with love and devotion. In this fashion She would derive an ever greater pleasure and satisfaction from each one of them.

Full of gratitude, I rejoiced that this lovable Mother had called me to be a part of such an Order. I saw well with what a special love She cherished this Order, because it is so dedicated to Her veneration and Her love, because it celebrates Her feasts with such devotion and respectful familiarity, such as befit Her true children and Brothers. For this reason did I feel so happy at being able, like the others, to take refuge under Her maternal protection; at being a member, no matter how insignificant, of the Order; at being a small shoot of this Vine of Carmel, on which I should love to bring forth fruits in superabundance for the pleasure of my Beloved and His lovable Mother.

19. *She is, as it were, consumed with the love of Jesus and Mary. She takes her rest and sleep in the bosom of her dear Mother, and her soul is satisfied.*

All during Matins on the twelfth of August, 1668, I was lifted up and made a prisoner—I know not how—in the love of my Beloved and His dear Mother. The process of this love was simple, yet it was all-absorbing. This might well be called a manner of loving without manner and measure; for it seemed that my soul passed long hours in it, even days, without feeling any exhaustion and also without being able to say afterwards what it had done during that time, what God had done to it, or even what it had thought. It remembered only that during this time it had rested gently and slept the sleep of love in the bosom of its dearest Mother, like an innocent babe. Yet the soul feels the sweetness of refreshment; it is satisfied and can desire nothing better than to take its repose in this manner. Even the body seems to conform itself to this state of a babe who takes its repose without even being conscious of it.

This state of repose lasted during the entire Office. Since I knew this Office by heart, its recitation in no way interfered with this state I mention. It even seemed to me that someone else was reciting, not I. Still, sometimes at the antiphons and versicles I seemed to wake from this gentle slumber and set about glorifying, praising, and invoking so tender a Mother with an altogether special joy of heart. Then I would fall once again into that gentle slumber.

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20. *From all these operations of Marian love, no images remain in her memory, because she adheres to this love in a deiform manner, without seeking any personal satisfaction. There always remains within her soul a spark of love for her dearly Beloved and for His dearest Mother.*

When these experiences, in which the spirit receives so much sweetness, have passed, this same spirit remains very much detached from them. Just as if nothing had happened, it retains no images. What is more, it is necessary that such be the case; and if it were not, I should have to labor hard to make it so. For I am never allowed to possess within my spirit the least imagination which might be an attachment, or the least natural sentiment of possession, no matter how good and holy might be the object in question. For such conduct would disturb my purity of heart. The representation of good and holy things is merely tolerated, and that exceptionally, so that God might thereby mould the soul through His supernatural grace and inspirations—never further than this.

Aside from such times, the spirit must hold itself aloof from the senses. It must then remain in a profound solitude, so that it may contemplate and adore the All and give Him its complete adherence. This contemplation is achieved by a simple and pure glance of faith and by a loving conformity of will tending to the sole and sovereign Good, our highest goal.

Always after the experiences that I have described above, love is greatly increased. There remains constantly in the depth of my soul a spark of a very tender inclination of love towards my lovable Mother and the Child Jesus. This love becomes habitual and, so to say, essential—in such wise that, at the least occasion, as when I hear Her praises sung or sing them myself, or even when I catch sight of Her statue, my love immediately wells up, tender, childlike, and gentle. The blood seems to rush to my heart, and that heart leaps with joy and contentment. I blush, as if I had been taken with a spiritual drunkenness, just as someone madly in love blushes when his beloved is praised in his presence.

But aside from times like this, all must be peaceful, hidden, interior, completely disposed for recollection in which there is union with God without intermediary, and in which one can live in God alone.

21. *Her zeal for the glory of Mary and her filial confidence. Afraid of being deceived, she sees herself led by the Blessed Virgin into a profound solitude, where she is delivered from Satan and transformed in God.*

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Another result of these experiences is the increase of my zeal and ardor to spread Mary's cult and Her glory. I should like to draw the whole world to Her love, to Her service and devotion; I wish that all in their spiritual or temporal needs, would gently and lovingly have recourse to Her, with all confidence, like a child fleeing to its dearly loved and loving Mother.

This growth of zeal and ardor within me is of such a kind that, in all the situations which present themselves every day, my soul feels instinctively drawn, in an outburst of love and filial confidence, to turn towards Her and to confide all needs to Her, its own needs and the needs of its neighbors.

I have been seized by a great fear of having been deceived, little by little, by the devil, so that I may find myself with empty hands at the end of my life. Greatly depressed, I let my heavy soul take refuge near my dearest Mother. Like a little child, I told Her of my sufferings with great confidence. And suddenly I saw myself as a little child whom this most lovable Mother held by the hand. And I was led into an immense and profound solitude of spirit, where the devil has no access, where he cannot reach out to torment me, to trouble or tempt me.

When I was well settled there, my dear Mother disappeared. But I remained there, greatly consoled and strengthened, in complete certainty that this had been no illusion. I should be prepared to die attesting the truth of this fact. In a single moment I felt so strong, so full of courage, that I could have withstood all the demons of hell. I no longer dreaded their malice, their snares, the violence that they can do a soul; I attached no more importance to them than I should to the bite of a fly.

In a single step I had come to recollection in simplicity and quiet, followed by a firm adherence to God, without intermediary. It was a union achieved with all the powers of my soul, inflamed as they were with divine love. Through this union, my soul was, as it were, inserted and dissolved in God, to the point at which it was no longer conscious of itself, being absorbed, so to say, and transformed in its Beloved.

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22. *The Blessed Virgin commands her to explain in what the "Marian Life" consists. There exists a more perfect degree of the spiritual life than the simple union with God, the Sovereign Good.*

I believe that my dearest Mother is commanding me to explain at some greater length what it has often been freely given me to experience of this life in Mary, or "Marian Life." Today I clearly see that I did wrong when I retracted and modified what I had written to

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your Reverence concerning a higher degree of the spiritual life than the degree of simple union with God: the degree to which my dearest Mother has made me ascend. For it is actually as I wrote to your Reverence: through the grace of God, one can still rise several steps higher in the state of perfection, despite the state of pure and simple union with God or the Supreme Good.

Without a doubt it is true that, according to the usual manner of expressing it, God is our sole and final end. In obtaining this end, in contemplating and enjoying this Supreme Good, there is contained the soul's complete happiness, whether in this life or in the next. In this sense, the soul can neither aspire nor attain to anything higher.

But in another sense the soul can aspire to something more, can tend to something higher, and this in a manner which bears some analogy to the condition of the blessed in heaven. The Saints possess, each of them, one glory, one happiness, one satisfaction which comes to them from the contemplation, love, and fruition of the Divine Face and the Divine Being. The light of glory and of sanctifying love pierces them through and makes them resplendent; and it is in this that their supreme happiness and beatitude consist. Yet certain Saints and Blessed, it is commonly known, receive a glory and happiness over and above that described already, a glory and happiness that is to a certain extent supplementary, each one according to the measure of his merits or according to the providence of God.

A similar situation comes to pass in this life, when certain souls are favored with supplementary gifts, graces, and favors, through which, if I may so speak, they become like the Saints and arrive at a more lofty manner of life in union with God. In this sense, such a situation constitutes a higher degree of spiritual life than the degree of simple mystical union, and hence one may truly speak of a more eminent degree. That which I experience of this life in Mary, or Marian life, seems to me to be a twofold life, just as life in Christ, or the Christiform life, is twofold.

23. *The Marian life consists in repose in Mary, in enjoyment of and union with Mary. It coexists with the divine life, for it considers Mary in Her union with God. It is proper to the children of Mary's special love.*

Here I should like to define more precisely how I understand this life to be doubly divine, and how it constitutes a degree of spiritual life somewhat superior to the life of pure and simple union with God alone. This simple union can be compared to essential glory; the other can better be compared to that superadded or accidental glory with

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which certain of the blessed are favored over and above the essential glory granted to all without distinction.

Sometimes I am shown and given a life of the spirit in Mary, a repose in Mary, an enjoyment of Mary, a union with Mary.

Here is how this comes about. It happens that my soul, turned completely towards God and adhering to Him in contemplation and fruition of His absolutely simple Being, experiences at the same time a like adherence to Mary, a like contemplation and enjoyment of Mary in so far as She is one with God and united to Him. Tasting God, I taste Mary also, as if She were only one with God and not in any way distinct from Him. Thus God and Mary seem to be for the soul but one object, in much the same way as the Holy Humanity of Christ is one sole object of contemplation, viewed as united to the divine nature in the unity of one Person.

It is true that there is no personal union with the deity realized in Mary as there is in Christ; yet union with God, holy and gratuitous as it is, is realized in Mary in an immeasurably more excellent manner than in the most eminent among all other creatures. To the soul which contemplates this mystery, God reveals Mary as being perfectly one with Himself, as being united to Him in such a way that no intermediary can be perceived in the union. I seem able, therefore, to kiss and embrace Mary in a marvelous dissolution of my being in Her and in God, at one and the same time. At times also it seems that I am taken captive and enclosed within Her most pure heart. I become mad with love for Mary and for God at once, and I abandon myself entirely to this union. Thus is realized a divine life, at once twofold and simple, which brings about a pure, lofty, and perfect manner of loving our holy Mother; yet this life is little known by experience. This life for Mary and in Mary and, at the same time, for and in God, is properly reserved for Her true lovers, for Her darling children whom she has chosen.

It in no way astonishes me that our St. Peter Thomas was constantly occupied with this lovable Mother, that he had for Her so singular a love and attraction that he seemed unable to forget Her even for an instant. His heart and all the powers of his soul were completely saturated, as it were, with the knowledge of Mary, with Her memory and Her love. And whatever he did, whether he spoke, or ate, or drank, he did in this love and under Mary's sweet name. Therefore it was with justice that he received this dear name of Mary imprinted upon his heart. For the habit he developed of thus bearing Mary in his heart and of loving Her with a burning love caused him, as it were, to be dissolved in Mary, to be united to Her and, for a

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time, to be transformed in Her. By love this Saint was transformed, was lost in Her and in God at one and the same time, for he never contemplated the one without the other.

24. *The Marian life derives its excellence from Mary's union with God and from Her participation in the divine perfections. The nature of Mary's union with God.*

The Marian life—this life in Mary, with and for Mary—draws all its nobility, its eminence and perfection from the union with God which the Blessed Virgin enjoys, and also from the superabundant share which Mary has of divine grace and the divine perfections. She possesses this grace and perfection in a manner which man can neither express nor conceive, more eminently than any other created being.

Therefore the Marian life derives its nobility and excellence, as from the inexhaustible abyss of God Himself, by contemplating, loving, and embracing Mary in so far as She is seen as being filled, overshadowed, and transluminated by the divinity to which She is united.

Were there not this simultaneity in contemplation, then the Marian life would become less delicate and less perfect. For if one were to contemplate and love Mary, if one were to be drawn towards Mary just as one is attracted towards an ordinary creature, then there would of necessity be produced a species of purely natural love, or love of the senses, and this kind of love would, in turn, interpose an intermediary between the soul and God, thus leading the soul towards a certain multiplicity. For love is determined, so to speak, by the object loved. Only when the object loved is supernatural and purely spiritual is love for it is also a supernatural and purely spiritual love.

There is in my soul a light, as it were, which makes me understand why my dear Mother is more closely united with God, more filled with the Divine Being than any other creature and why, consequently, she shares in the attributes and perfections of God more perfectly than do the greatest Saints and the most eminent among the angelic spirits. The reason is that God has made Her worthy to conceive within Her virginal womb, the Eternal Word of the Father. Since this Word reposed within Her for nine months, Her nature and soul and body were divinized; they became, as it were, divine, wholly absorbed in God. Her body and soul were transformed in Him, by virtue of the powerful bond of love which the Word bore for Mary and which She bore in return for Him—an immeasurable and incomprehensible love.

25. *God reveals to her the incomparable excellence of Mary. He tells her how Mary has been constituted Mediatrix between Himself and mankind.*

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My Beloved has made me see and understand, through eyes enlightened by faith, the excellence of Mary, Her incomprehensible dignity, Her power and Her authority. For God has constituted Her for all eternity as the Mediatrix between His Majesty and mankind, as mankind's advocate and one who will appease the divine justice. It is evident to me that God has made Mary the Dispensatrix of all His graces and favors to men, so that absolutely nothing comes down from heaven to man save through the hands of this holy Mother. God has wished to magnify Mary through these prerogatives, because He has found Her among all women worthy to be His Mother. For this reason He has made Her so like to Himself, He has so clothed Her with the divine attributes, He has so united Her with His Father, that She appears to be, as it were, only one with God.

This explains why our heart burns so ardently with love for Mary, and why one feels, especially on Her festivals, a certain warmth of heart and breast—a warmth so extraordinary and beyond the natural. And so I am not able to lose the memory of Her for a single moment during the day, no more than I can lose the memory of God. And thus it happens that I lose myself in Her through love, I dissolve within Her and am, so to speak, consumed. For this love, at once powerful, ardent, strong and yet completely interior, leads me to forget myself and everything created; and the interior flames of this love raise up both my soul and my body.

My happiness at seeing Her power, majesty, and dignity is so great—my joy at seeing how She is so dearly loved by God is so immense, that I know not what to do or say in order to praise and thank God and the Blessed Virgin in some proportion to the light and knowledge that I receive. But, realizing my incapability, I remain in deep silence and in the repose of love. For the spirit falters in wonder and admiration before the immensity of this mystery which surpasses comprehension; it is conquered and taken captive, and the will is left alone in its task of loving.

26. *The gentle life in Mary, and the sweetness of Her name. The powerful effect upon the demon.*

God in His goodness has granted me also the grace of breathing gently, as it were, in Mary, of living in Her and experiencing a wonderful sweetness when I hear or pronounce Her dear name, and even when I merely think of it. So true is this that my heart and soul seem to dissolve with tenderness and deep pleasure. And so, not being able to leave off repeating this name, either with my lips or in my heart and mind, I discover such a spiritual pleasure, joy, and happiness that it seems as if a new flame springs from my heart at every moment.

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That is why I rejoiced so and praised God for the institution of the glorious feast of Mary's Holy Name, above all for the special favor granted to our Order of being able to celebrate this feast with such solemnity. Yet I felt some sadness at seeing what little devotion and zeal some people show, especially some of my spiritual daughters and sisters who appear so very slightly impressed by the solemn functions of this feast.

On that feast day, I was given to see clearly how Satan was torn with rage, hatred and spite because this glorious name was so honored. And this vision increased my joy and contentment, and it made me renew my thanksgiving to God who had inspired all these things. Mocking Satan, I said to him: O Beast, how you must regret the fact that this young Virgin has crushed your head and taken away your power! You can do nothing further, and, from the moment that this Virgin chooses to invoke Her power and authority, you are like a poor, weak fly. Cursed and damned Beast, you cannot prevent Her from being exalted, honored, and revered. You can do nothing against Her or against those who love Her and place their confidence in Her. I glory in Her power over you. I fear neither your deceit nor your violence, both now and at the hour of my death. For I hope then, as now, to bear Her holy name engraved upon my heart; and when you see my heart covered by this divine zeal, you will not dare approach it.

27. In this life, she is transformed in Mary by the union of love.

I was granted a still more clear understanding of this life in and for Mary. It has now taken on a more general aspect, and the practice of it has become more general than it was previously. Here are the words in which I find the light needed to explain what I understand and experience in all of this. The words are these: "A soul is of more value through the love infused into it than through any activity it can produce by itself." This statement confirms all that I have written until now on the subject of the Marian life, and it is according to this statement that one must understand the joy and union and transformation of which I have spoken. For it belongs to the nature of love to unite the lover with the object of His love. And thus love so unites the lover and his beloved that they seem, in time, to become one single object. It is in this sense that love, tender and violent, burning and unifying, leads the soul who loves Mary to live in Her, to be dissolved in Her—leads the soul to union with Mary and to all the other transforming effects of this Marian life. And all of this happens in its fullest perfection when the Divine Spirit himself directs this love and stimulates it.

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Thus when the Eternal Father sends the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: "Abba, Father," and when this Spirit produces a tender, childlike love for our Father in heaven, then this same Spirit of the Son produces within us a tender and childlike love for our dearest, our most lovable Mother. And, in this sense, the Eternal Father also sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying: "Mary, Mother!" For it is one and the same Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who arouses in our hearts filial love for God and for Mary, in the same manner in which He aroused such love in the heart of Jesus Himself. This entire Marian life is, of course, shrouded in mystery. Yet each one will have practical experience of what I mean, according to the measure of his love.

28. *More precise information on the graces and privileges granted by God to Mary, who has been made as perfect as a creature can possibly be.*

On Wednesday and Thursday, the nineteenth and twentieth of September, 1668, it pleased the goodness of God to make us understand more clearly the grandeur, the eminent dignity, the power and authority of our lovable Mother, and at the same time to see the incomprehensible and ineffable love which God bears Her. From this abyss of love remaining in His heart, God has drawn forth such a superabundance of graces, privileges, and prerogatives that it would scarcely be possible for him, *if one* may so speak, to grant more to any creature than He has granted to Mary, or to make any creature more beautiful, exalted, and noble than He has made Mary. And in this sense the power, wisdom and goodness of God could not produce any more pure, more lovely, more eminent creature than Mary, His Mother and ours.

This is why the angel Gabriel did well in greeting Mary thus: Hail, full of grace. She is, in truth, so filled with grace that the superabundance of it overflows upon us in this vale of tears. Her fullness waters the ground of our souls with an abundance of grace which arouses us, aids us, strengthens us, and enables us to persevere. This grace makes the soil of our soul fertile, makes it able to produce virtuous and meritorious works, both necessary and useful for the salvation of our souls.

29. *All graces come to us through Mary, who never forgets us.*

What a multitude of graces I behold coming to us and being distributed to us by the sweet hand of Mary. I seem to see that God places the salvation of every man in the hands of this lovable Mother. Yet I see at the same time that all the efforts of this Mother have but

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one object, to lead all men to their eternal beatitude. And despite the fact that She lives in the supreme enjoyment and vision of the Divine Being, Mary never forgets our misery and our needs. Her gaze, full of compassion, tenderness, and maternal affection, is constantly turned towards us, to assist and console us in peril, physical as well as spiritual, provided that we implore Her with confidence.

The eagle, though his flight is lofty and his eyes always fixed upon the sun, never forgets his little ones. Constantly he turns towards them to see if they are in any need, to see if, perchance, a bird of prey is near to molest them. The conduct of our Mother is like this, and this conduct urges us to serve Her, to honor and love Her with all the tenderness of a childlike love.

This knowledge has caused my admiration and love for my sweet Mother to increase and to become more firm, more simple and more pure. My heart is, as it were, wounded by a flame of love which elevates the soul, until love be consummated. Each new aspect of the marvels which God accomplished in Her or of the love God bears for Her carries the soul to a new height of wonder, from which it contemplates these things with burning heart, remaining absorbed. The spirit, moreover, finds itself unable to comprehend the marvels which are here revealed.

But this love, not yet having reached its apex, wells up from the secret recesses of the heart, wishing to shout its wondering admiration. It searches for words which could express the greatness and the dignity of this dear Mother, for words which could fittingly praise and magnify Her. And thus love says strange things to praise the dearly beloved, like the earthly lover who knows not what else to invent in order to describe the beauty of his loved one.

A further illumination was granted me in which my Beloved made me see that God is more pleased with Mary than with all the other Saints and that, consequently, He bears a greater love for Her than for all the Saints taken together.

30. *The Marian Life can be practiced with as much simplicity as the life in God alone, by a simple love of God and Mary.*

The grace of God has also granted me to experience that this life in, with, and for Mary and, at the same time, in and with and for God can be practiced with a simplicity, and inner contemplation, and absorption of spirit almost as great as in the life for the pure Deity alone. Thus at these moments there remain in the soul few, *if* any, representations of Mary, since the soul has accustomed itself to consider Mary

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in Her union with God. In perfect peace, simplicity, and intimate tenderness, my faculties of memory, understanding, and will concern themselves with Mary and God at one and the same time, so that my soul can scarcely realize the nature of the thoughts which fill it. Yet in a confused manner the soul does realize that its memory is concerned with a simple recollection of God and of Mary; its understanding, with a fundamental, pure, and simple knowledge or contemplation of the presence of God and of Mary in God; its will, with a tender and spiritual adherence to God and Mary through love.

I should call this love "spiritual," because it seems to be operative in the higher part of the soul, quite detached from the lower powers of the senses, and thus more proportioned to the intimate union with God and with Mary in God.

In truth, the powers of the soul, in an eminent and perfect manner, having no other care than the thought, the knowledge, and the love of God and Mary, direct the soul to such an intimate and firm union with God and Mary that these three seem to become only one: God, Mary and the soul, as if they were all three dissolved into a single being.

Such is the final or supreme goal to which a soul can attain in tire practice of the Marian life. Such is the unique fruit, or better the principal effect, of this exercise of love. Mary becomes a means to unite the soul to God; She becomes, even more so, a strong bond keeping the soul united to God. And thus She nourishes the loving soul, allowing it to attain more surely and more perfectly to the unitive and contemplative life, to the transforming life in God, and She enables it to persevere therein.

31. *The mistake of a great number of persons who feel that the practice of this Marian life is not spiritual enough.*

The life in Mary is not pleasing to the greater number of mystical and contemplative souls. They are of a different opinion than I, as if the Marian life were a hindrance to a more pure union with God, to silent prayer, and the like. As they understand the Marian life and picture it to themselves, it seems a thing too material, too common, because they do not grasp the true and simple manner of practicing it within the depths of the soul.

Despite everything, it is really the spirit which leads the Marian life and directs it, even though this contemplation and love seem to be somewhat mixed with the operations of the sensitive powers. There exists not the slightest barrier between the soul and the pure Being

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of God. What is more, the Marian life affords a special aid to the soul, enabling it to reach God more easily and to be established in Him more firmly—and this for reasons of which I shall speak further on.

These lofty mystics should study the lives of the Saints, even of those who have reached the greatest heights of the mystical and contemplative life, like St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, and many others. They will clearly see that these Saints were also remarkable for their devotion to our lovable Mother and for their Marian lives; they will see that such a tender and child-like love for Mary created no hindrance to their divine life in God. And the reason for this is that the Spirit of God acted within them to perfect their Marian lives, without making their union with God any less immediate, but rather in such a way that this union with God found new nourishment and new help.

32. *How the spirit of Jesus and the spirit of Mary possess the soul and work within it.*

I must speak here once again of one of the wonders I experience concerning this life in Mary and in God. Through the habit of keeping my dearest Mother present in my heart and in my affections, it seems that my spirit is directed, inhabited, and possessed by the spirit of Mary, in all actions and omissions. It seems that Mary accomplishes actions through me, just as, before, the spirit of Jesus seemed to direct my soul and be its life, possessing the soul as His own.

At that time the spirit of Jesus performed all my actions through me, and, under His guidance and direction I was passive. I had an experimental knowledge of the life of Jesus, and that life was manifested in me.

It is in almost the same manner that the spirit of Mary seems to live within me today, directing the powers of my soul, moving them in all acts and omissions, and causing them to live in God in a new way, never before experienced. Mary thus appears as our life, or as a gentle breeze in and through which we inhale the very lifebreath of God Himself, in a more noble manner than ever before.

If I say "in a more noble manner," this is to indicate that the life in God, in and through Mary, is a life more proportionate to our feeble capacity. For, as long as our soul remains united to our mortal body, our spiritual sight remains too weak to contemplate God in all His brightness, such as He is in Himself, and we can contemplate Him only through the light of faith.

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But when we receive the grace of contemplating and loving God in and through Mary who is so closely united to God, then God reveals himself to us in and through Her, as in a mirror. And thus these reflections of the Deity are better proportioned to the limited power and feeble vision of our spiritual understanding. And in this manner it is easier for us to persevere for a longer time in the contemplation and enjoyment of God, and also to understand more clearly and distinctly His divine attributes and perfections.

A man, for example, might be curious to see the sun in greater detail. He dares not fix his gaze upon the full force of the sun's ray, for thus he would risk losing or damaging his sight. His eyesight is too weak to face the full splendor and glare of the sun. Hence he takes a mirror, in which he can distinctly see the image of the sun and its bright rays, without risk of harm. Why? Because the mirror tempers the power of these rays and reflects them in proportion to the man's strength of vision. Yet the man sees the sun as distinctly as if there were no intermediary interposed between it and his eye. He does not see merely the mirror; he sees the sun as well, and his eyes do not distinguish between the mirror and the sun.

This example applies to our vision of God and our dear Mother. These must be considered as one single object of contemplation: God in Mary and Mary in God. No distinction must be drawn. And then we shall realize that Mary is a spotless mirror in which God reveals Himself to us with all His divine perfections and in all His profound mysteries, in a way that the feeble power of our mind can grasp and understand.

33. *Progress in the Marian life. Mary brings about life in God within the soul.*

The supernatural life of the soul in and for Mary, by Mary, and with Mary, continues to grow to an ever greater perfection and stability. That which I taste and experience is especially wonderful, and, for my part, I have never read or heard of anything like it.

If I may so speak, it seems that this lovable Mother is the life of my soul, the soul of my soul. In a manner which is certainly evident to me, She produces and nourishes the life of the soul in God by a perceptible influx of graces which go before the soul, arouse it to action, strengthen and accompany it in action, and allow it to persevere in this life in God with greater constancy and purity.

This influx of grace which gives life to the soul seems to proceed so directly from the loving heart and hands of Mary, seems to be given

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by Her so independently and without God's collaboration (although, in reality, Mary is in constant dependence upon God), that She appears to us as the absolute Mistress of the divine treasures, from which She takes what She pleases in order to adorn our souls and render them beautiful in the sight of God. It is true that God has wished to honor this lovable Mother and has exalted Her to the position where She has been established in absolute power as Mother and Queen of the Treasure of His divine graces. She possesses them forever under Her absolute power and authority.

34. *The direction given the soul by Mary makes itself felt unmistakably. The intellectual realization of the presence of Mary.*

The maternal love and favors of this dear Mother for us now appear with such clarity that there can be no suspicion of an illusion or of any admixture of merely natural feelings. She has taken me under Her maternal guidance and direction, much as the school mistress guides the hand of the child when she teaches him to write. When he is learning, the child moves his hand only as his teacher directs and guides it; he lets himself be moved and led by the hand of his professor.

I am placed, in the same way, entirely under the authority of this dearest Mother, who leads and directs me; and my gaze rests upon Her always, so that I may do in all things that which pleases Her most and that which She desires. And She, in turn, deigns to show me clearly exactly what She does desire in such or such a circumstance, whether it be a question of the performance or the omission of a certain action. It would be almost impossible for me to act otherwise, since She remains constantly before me, leading and instructing me in the path of the spirit and in the perfect practice of the virtues, urging me on by Her sweet, motherly smile. And thus not for a moment do I lose the feeling of Her presence and of the presence of God.

This intellectual realization of Mary's presence and influence is far removed from anything base and introduces into the soul neither multiplicity nor intermediary. The whole experience takes place in tranquil simplicity.

35. *A filial attitude towards Mary, and the promise to obey Her. The soul perceives more clearly the direction of Our Lady, pointing out how to practice the virtues in a more perfect manner.*

Our mind and heart are turned towards Her, and, like the mind and heart of a loving and innocent child, they are drawn to please this

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dear Mother and to obey Her; they are drawn to seek no object, to command no powers of body or soul, except as She ordains, urges, and guides.

Today it seemed that She inspired me and demanded of me that I make Her a complete offering, a total gift, a sacrifice of my whole being—heart, body, and soul, with all its faculties. And this I did. I completely relinquished ownership of myself and gave that self entirely to Her, so that it might be as property no longer belonging to me but to Her. I then made a kind of vow of obedience, promising to be attentive in all things to obey Her will, Her inspirations, and to follow the guidance it might please Her to give me (presupposing, of course, the consent of my Spiritual Director).

Since I made that offering, I can feel Her direction much more sensibly, much more clearly and certainly; She guides me in all that I must do or omit, as *if* She were leading me by the hand towards one or another object. When I must change my occupation or vary my manner of action, my heart turns spontaneously towards this lovable Mother with tenderness, affection, respect, and obedience; this movement of my heart is like the quick glance of a child towards Her, seeking to know if such a thing pleases Her and if, consequently, it pleases Her beloved Son, who is one with Her.

I seem to experience the help of this dear Mother in the same way as St. Teresa experienced the help of St. Joseph, when her interior life had gone slightly awry and this great Saint corrected it. My lovable Mother acts in the same way for me, with affection and motherly solicitude. She gives me infused light, the better to know and practice the virtues. Whenever I do something that is at odds with perfection—be it even the slightest shadow cast upon some virtue, especially humility, purity of heart, and pure love of God—She shows me how to correct myself, giving me abundant light and prudence. Likewise, when my interior purity is somewhat diminished through some admixture of the lower powers or through my having considered creatures as too far removed from the Divine Unity and Simplicity, She shows me how to simplify my considerations, how to purify my soul in God, and how to detach it from all that is not God Himself or is not at least Godlike. It seems that a ray comes forth from Her maternal heart, giving me the light by which to perceive these things and the will to carry them out in practice.

36. *The presence of Mary and the repose of love in Her.*

During prayer, I see Mary closer to me, on my right side. Sometimes I rest in Her arms; sometimes, upon Her knees; but always with

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feelings of a very tender love which burns and wounds. Often I experience a sudden and passionate vehemence of love, with leaping of the heart and other emotional manifestations. Yet all of this is easily tempered, provided one does not afford it too much nourishment.

My Mother also teaches me precisely how I must comport myself in the presence of God and also that, in the possession and enjoyment of God alone, I must introduce no intermediary. In other words, I must allow nothing in my interior life which is not purely concerned with God or with Herself.

Sometimes the vision and the memory of this lovable Mother disappear or weaken, as is the case when a small child, falling asleep in the arms of his mother, loses his consciousness of her presence and his memory of her. But despite this the soul, thanks to its loving and intimate adherence to God alone, and thanks to the peace and recollection of all its powers in profound silence, falls into the sleep of love, in a very pure and simple manner. In this sleep it forgets itself and is occupied in an absorbing manner with the Divine Being, gently and lovingly falling asleep in Him.

37. *Perseverance in the practice of the Marian life results in rendering the soul conformed to Mary.*

By a grace that I received outside the time of prayer, this lovable Mother was shown to me as a model or example, so that, in my life and in all my actions, I might copy Her life and Her virtues. The perfection of Her nature and of Her virtues are clearly shown to me; for, fixing my gaze upon Mary, I see the ensemble of Her excellent virtues such as I have never before known them.

This vision was produced very simply in the spirit, not by any reflection or discourse of reason, but by a simple regard, by a loving intuition of the truth which is shown to me and imprinted in me as in a mirror. When I contemplate this lovable Mother, I see at the same time all that is included within Her, as in a mirror without stain.

If this favor were to continue, it seems that I should breathe the very life-breath of Mary, and drink in Her nature and Her virtues, so that I should become like Her in many ways. (Always according to the human manner of speaking, for no one, of course, can attain to the perfection of Her virtues.) Yet it does seem to me that, if this experience were to continue, my nature would gradually be completely transformed.

I should then be so good, so gentle, so lovable, so humble, so generous and charitable to everyone, without exception. And since my

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poverty would forbid me from expressing this generosity and charity in a material way, I should have to carry these virtues even more deeply rooted within me and develop a desire to help everyone in need, according to my power. I should pray to my Beloved and to His Mother to raise up some soul who could provide this help efficiently. Even though my nature has already been somewhat transformed in these matters, yet it should have to be still more completely transformed if I were to assimilate the nature and the spirit of my Mother like a small child, so that I might resemble Her in as far as She can be imitated.

Perhaps it will still happen that I shall carry out some task carelessly, or forget something in my practice of continual contemplation, or in my practice of reproducing Her life and virtues; I may even be lacking in submission and attention to Her direction, guidance, and inspiration. But the moment I notice myself straying, I will throw myself humbly at the feet of this dear Mother and beg Her pardon. Then I can continue on with just as much peace, love, and confidence as before, without feeling more distant from Her as a result of my failure. For it appears to me that, in this new life, I am like a small child who often falls and stumbles when walking, because His tiny feet are weak. Yet, little by little he gains greater assurance.

38. *Under the inspiration of the Blessed Virgin, she adopts the custom of asking Her blessing before meals. A more intimate presence of Mary in the soul, even outside the times of prayer.*

This lovable Mother seems to desire that, before I take anything to eat or drink, I present these things to Her and humbly ask Her to bless them, to the end that they may provide a holy nourishment for my body, thus purifying it from every inclination to evil and enabling me to arrive once more at the primitive innocence of Adam.

I have begun this practice and have taught it to others. And I practice it with a very lively faith, with great confidence and love, since it seems so evident to me that my lovable Mother wishes and commands it.

Perhaps someone will think that I am here acting in a less spiritual manner than before; but this is of importance. For it is one, same spirit which accomplishes all things with and through me, without any solicitude on my part. And this custom flows quite naturally from the depth of my spirit, just as if I were being compelled by a strong but gentle necessity. Moreover, I preserve always a great liberty of spirit; I am without attachments and I am ready at every moment to

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conform to the directions of my Mother concerning all acts and omissions, without having any preference for one course of action or another.

Today, the fourth of October, 1668, in the intellectual vision that I enjoy of my dearest Mother, there seem to be less imaginative elements present. The whole process seems more spiritual and more simple. Mary is present in my mind and heart by a tender love, by an affectionate adherence of spirit, and in a more peaceful and intimate way, free from every image. Now, in truth, my soul feels drawn to remain in the intimate enjoyment of God present within me, and God manifests Himself to me in a completely new manner. All during the time of prayer, I rest in the joy of this Supreme God, and I burn with love.

And then, outside the time of prayer, my love mounts anew towards my dearest Mother. Whenever I come upon one of Her images, I cannot pass without greeting it affectionately, my heart full of joy. I say: "Hail, Queen, Mother of Mercy; our life, our sweetness, our hope . . ."; or again: "Hail, Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit; Hail, Temple of the Most Blessed Trinity . . ."

All this takes place with a profound understanding of the sense of these words and of the mysteries hidden beneath them; and this understanding causes in me a wonderful satisfaction, a sweet pleasure and enjoyment.

Reflecting on the incomparable goodness and bounty of this dear Mother towards me, I am forced to sink into the deepest humility and confusion. For, all undeserved, I have received such great graces and favors. And this reflection gives rise to a greater admiration, through which my love and affection for Her are redoubled. My heart bursts, so to speak, with thanks and it cries: "My very dear Mother, by Dove, the sweetest and most beautiful of all Women, the most excellent of all creatures! Most kind, more eminent, most powerful after God Himself! How greatly I rejoice in your happiness and in the fact that you are what you are! Would that I could make you loved by all men!"

39. *A new manner of living in God and in Mary, purely spiritual, which might be called "essential life in God and in Mary."*

I have been taught another manner of living in God and in Mary. It is no longer the sweet and experimental manner I have spoken of above, but one based purely on the certitude of faith and on poverty of spirit. This new manner of life produces, by its strength and con-

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stancy, the perfection of the virtues, but it is no longer nourished by a gentle influx of sensible graces, tender love, and so on. It is as if I were told: "Mount higher, my love; rise above sentiment, above experience and above sweetness; forsake images; rise above it all, so that you may attain, without the incitement of sensible graces, to an essential life in God and in Mary, your lovable Mother." I seem to see that the former manner was but a kind of child's play, that my soul should no longer deign to consider. For, taught by this clear light to distinguish what is the better part, my soul has received such wisdom that it has become, as it were, enamoured of this life of poverty, of this life bereft of help and consolation. My soul feels now so strong and courageous that it would willingly ask the Beloved to deprive it of all sweetness and comfort, just as a young child might desire to be weaned from his mother's breast in order to be nourished with more substantial food. On the other hand, my supreme indifference and my submission to the good pleasure of my Beloved and His dearest Mother leave me almost without will and without desires.

I believe that my Beloved has given me this knowledge for two reasons. First, so that I may no longer rely upon anything, no longer attach any importance to anything, even if it should please God to grant me twice as many delightful and sensible graces. Second, so that I might be kept in complete detachment, free from even the most subtle attachment to a particular manner of life; so that, in perfect liberty of spirit, I might always be ready to adopt immediately whatever form of action the Divine Spirit suggests, conforming myself always to the desires of my Beloved and His dear Mother. My inner life must be like wax, ready to receive the impression of various seals, without in any way resisting these impressions, since they are the work of the Spirit.

40. *The continuation of the Marian life in the true daughter of Mary, who is guided by Her in all things.*

My life in Mary and, through Her, in God, continues within me. Just as before, it is a life of humility, submission, and obedience, and I remain like a child under the guidance and authority of my dearest Mother, as I have described above.

Today the disposition of my soul was, above all, one of loving repose in Her maternal arms, on Her breast, on Her knees: a rest most innocent and tender. And my heart was wounded with love. My desire is then so intense to please my dearest Mother in all things, to do always what She likes best. Within my soul there is the most devoted attention, in order that I might perceive the very slightest interior

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indication of her preferences. My heart is ready to seek any object according to the desire of this dear Mother, and I fear neither work, nor trouble, nor difficulty, nor suffering of any kind

How deeply do I feel enamoured of Her when I think of Her great kindness and Her motherly love for us! Today my love was such a burning fire, it was so violent within me, that I nearly cried aloud and acted like someone half-mad or drunk. Had this furnace of love increased its heat even the slightest bit, I should have been forced to cool my breast, since I could not have sustained a fire of love stronger than that which, as I say, was leading me to outward manifestations. What a power this divine love gives to the soul for undertaking even heroic works demanded by the Beloved and His dear Mother and for accomplishing Their wishes in the slightest matters also. This love, I feel, could make one pass through barriers of flame or lines of armor!

I am always conscious of the action of Mary's spirit, inciting me, commanding me, directing me, in almost everything that I do or omit. Towards Her I turn the respectful and innocent gaze of the child, wishing to please Her in everything, no matter how slight. And hence I can say in all truth that this dear Mother is mine and that I am Hers. She is entirely for me, and I am entirely for Her, because I belong to Her and no longer to myself.

41. *A visit of the Blessed Virgin in a still more lovable and familiar manner.*

On the twenty-sixth of October, 1668, I was in a great state of anxiety and disturbance, for I learned that, through the intervention of a certain party, I was gaining the esteem of people. After some hours, this dear Mother revealed Herself to me in the depths of my soul; She drew me to Herself in a loving and motherly manner, inviting me to rest upon Her knees. I did so and was gently fondled and caressed by Her, like a favorite child. I was completely consoled by Her presence, and all my former sufferings soon ceased to cause pain in my heart. What is more, this kind Mother made me see that sorrow and fear over being honored and esteemed by people was pleasing to Her, not displeasing. In fact, one should have such fear and sorrow; the absence of these sentiments would be a fault.

It was so ineffably delightful and consoling for me to rest on the knees of my Mother, that all delight and consolation which can be derived from mankind seemed to be bitter or tasteless. This dear Mother told me that I should keep myself aloof from people so that, in perfect silence and solitude, I might be able to carry on my commerce with Her. She told me that She intended, henceforward, to show

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Herself especially loving and familiar in Her dealings with me, just like a tender Mother with her dearly-beloved child.

42. *Drawn to live in Mary, the soul remains enchanted with this life.*

On the fifth of April, 1669, I again received the inspiration to live in Mary, by Mary, and for Mary, and at the same time in God, by and for God, as I have explained above.

I am united to Her in a very lofty manner, in a purely spiritual manner. And there seems to be no intermediary in my union with God, for Mary appears as forming but one with Him. In a word, my soul and God and Mary are no longer three but one, and hence my soul is absorbed, very simply but very deeply, in God and in Mary. This experience takes place, above all, at the time of prayer, and it is now more than ever accompanied by certain ecstatic effects: now, more than in the past, there are such things as insensibility and paralysis of the body, suspension of the faculties, sleep of these faculties, and the like. My soul seems to be led, as it were, outside of my body, so that I am somewhat confused, particularly when I receive Holy Communion: I find it difficult to regain control over myself, and I hardly have the presence of mind or the strength of body even to open my mouth. Yet this state does not continue very long.

This experience commonly begins with a certain superabundant motion of love for God and for our dear Mother: there follow joyous outbursts of my emotions and a kind of exaltation of heart; and then I am completely overcome by a love as powerful as it is gentle. And by this love I become, as it were, spiritually intoxicated—or at least I become very joyful in spirit, as if all the powers of my soul, lower as well as higher, had been fully fed and had had their thirst completely slaked.

43. *The enjoyment of God and of Mary, as united. Often Jesus, Mary, and Joseph become one single object of contemplation, through their union.*

This enjoyment of and union with God and Mary takes place, as it were, without images, because it takes place in a very lofty manner. It is thus almost completely spiritual, far removed from anything which could be considered within the realm of imagination or emotions. There remains only an intensely spiritual remembrance of God and of Mary, who is united to God. And in keeping with this contemplation, which reveals Mary as one with God, my love also flows entirely towards God and entirely towards Mary, as towards one single and simple object.

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This same thing occurs in my everyday life, as often as I lift a loving glance to God, eager to do His will in all things. For this glance reaches my dearest Mother at the same time, and in great peace, simplicity, and interior conviction. Consequently, this seems to me to be a perpetual contemplation, a perpetual enjoyment of and union with God and Mary in God. For my soul, as it were, can no longer be withheld from this contemplation; and my memory, my will, and my understanding adhere to God and to Mary essentially, just as if the remembrance of them, the love and thought of them were locked within the soul.

It is no longer possible for me to express in words or to explain the manner in which I feel myself to be possessed and inhabited by the spirit of Mary and to be led by it. The manner in which I receive the powerful influence of Her spirit within my soul, must also remain unwritten.

At times my kind father Saint Joseph is included in this experience, but not too often. The things which are coming to pass within me are truly marvelous, things of which I have never heard or read. It would seem difficult even to believe them, if one did not have personal experience of them. And yet they are true. My dearly Beloved knows that I do not lie.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are often so simply and so spiritually before my mind's eye, so simply and spiritually present to my memory and my will, that it would seem that these three are but one. For in Them is realized a marvelous concord of will and of love—and not merely concord, but an ineffable union in the bond of love and in the power of the spirit. And so these three are one and the same spirit, for Mary and Joseph are clothed and filled with the divine and human spirit of Jesus and, consequently, united to Him and one with Him.

And it is thus that They form the object of my interior gaze and the adherence of my love. It seems to me that there is here, so to speak, a second holy trinity: three who are but one, not essentially by their nature, but through the sharing of grace and through a transformation wrought by the Spirit of God Himself.

44. *Lights concerning the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her desire for the proclamation of this dogma.*

On the twelfth of November, 1668, realizing that preparations were already underway for the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, I was filled with a great delight and my heart seemed to overflow with joy. Then my dearly Beloved and His dear Mother

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made me see clearly the truth of this mystery: that Mary, through the grace of the omnipotent God, was conceived without the slightest stain of sin. For God, having chosen Her from all eternity as His Mother, did not permit that She be soiled by sin even for an instant.

My kind Mother made me grasp the truth of this with certainty and without fear of the slightest doubt so that I am ready even now (this revelation took place seventeen days ago) to shed my lifeblood to witness to it and defend it.

Hence it seems astonishing to me that there should still be some who do not accept with all their hearts this truth of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. There came to me a burning desire to pray God that He inspire the Pope to delay no longer and to proclaim this truth as a dogma of our holy faith.

Sometimes God acts in different manners on the powers of my soul. Then I remain passive, resolved to submit to the measureless grandeur of God. Suddenly He fills me with a tender and childlike love for my dearest Mother and He teaches me words of loving admiration. He confirms the lights I received a year ago concerning the lofty mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

I know not why I have so much zeal and attraction and devotion for this particular mystery, more than for any other feast of my dear Mother. During the days before the feast and on the day itself I experience a heavenly joy which fills my entire being and manifests itself even outwardly. My sisters have not failed to notice this, for I am like one bereft of reason through this love for my tender Mother, whom I call "my Dove," in a feeling of the most filial affection.

All of this seems to produce a new spirit within me and to bestow a great increase of grace upon me, impelling me to love Jesus and Mary above all. And this love leads me to please them as perfectly as I can, in things exterior as well as in things interior. Moreover, it inspires me to imitate Their virtues in a perfect manner. From this there results an ardent zeal for all that concerns them: a zeal for souls in general, and a special zeal for the welfare of our holy Order, since it is particularly devoted to this dear Mother and is Her very own Order.

45. *A repetition of Mary's intervention. The soul understands that Mary is always ready to help it.*

On the feast of St. Agatha in 1669, my kind Mother appeared to me again. This apparition began in the morning while I was reciting Office, and it continued during the prayer which followed. It began

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to manifest itself by a sudden and spontaneous invocation, more sweet and tender than I had made for some time; and all the while I felt the innocent attraction of a child for my dearest Mother.

This presence was both new for me and supremely pleasing, for it seems that I had not seen Her near me for at least two months, nor had I felt Her gentle presence or Her kind, maternal goodness. And yet I believe that I enjoyed this grace often before I became betrothed to my dearly Beloved.

Now I understand clearly that, if She had interrupted Her visits and made Her presence less frequently felt, it was not through any diminution of maternal affection. Nor was it any fault of mine that made Her withdraw from me. Without a doubt, I did give Her cause to turn away from me occasionally through my daily imperfections and because, in all my deeds and omissions, I have not always behaved as purely and spiritually as I had been directed by Her several months before. But in spite of this, the extraordinary kindness and motherly love which She appears to have for me would have kept Her from viewing my deficiencies with too much displeasure and severity. For She knows the frailty of human nature, and She knows that, through the grace of God, the intentions of my heart were always pure. And still She kept Herself aloof and visited me no longer; She offered me no succour and, in a word, She seemed to act differently than She had in the past, as if all that She had done in the past were no longer necessary. And hence She left me alone with my divine Betrothed.

Yet as soon as the slightest need arises for Her to show Her motherly affection, to offer Her care and assistance, then I realize that She has not forgotten me, that Her motherly eyes remain fixed upon me. At the slightest peril, at the first assault of the Evil One, She is ready to help me, console me, and instruct me; She is ready to comfort me and to arm me against all the snares and attacks of the Enemy and of my own corrupt nature which, after all, is an enemy as well.

It is for Her praise and glory that I tell you these things which have become so clear to me, so that your Reverence may praise and thank Her with me. But my purpose is also that your Reverence may find in all this a new incitement to devotion and hence have great confidence in this kind Mother, seeking like a small child, very simply and lovingly, a refuge near to Her, bringing to Her all your interior and exterior needs. I have learned that this manner of acting pleases Her very much.

46. *A confirmation and justification of this intervention of Mary.*

Dear Reverend Father, I cannot feel for a single moment that in

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all this there could be hidden some snare of the Enemy or that the whole experience might be a simple outgrowth of my own imagination. The reality seems as far removed from any such evil or deception as heaven is from earth. And for this firm conviction I have several reasons, which I now wish to explain to you.

First of all, it is impossible that this has been produced by my mind or my imagination, for, during all this period, these faculties have been darting forth, so to speak, in sallies: they have seemed to be occupied with other things, unusual things, and to be somewhat distracted. This disposition, naturally, caused me some concern; it was most unpleasant, since I was not able to maintain these faculties in calm and in contemplation. It seemed to me unreasonable and disrespectful that, at the very moment when I was receiving these graces and experiencing the kind and majestic presence of Mary, these powers should be dissipated; it seemed proper that they should, on the contrary, be extremely attentive, contemplative, and silent. And yet it was, without a doubt, pleasing to my Beloved that my mind and imagination should behave in this way, for I was thus able to distinguish more clearly between what was the result of my own proper industry and what was the result of grace. And hence I could explain it all much more clearly and convincingly to your Reverence.

Thenceforward I gave free rein to these faculties and I tried not to concern myself with them any longer. I remained with my affection turned towards my dear little Mother in all simplicity and tenderness. At times I rested on Her knees and at times on Her breast, just as little children do when their mother takes them in her arms. I spoke to Her in sweet and tender love—and yet my words seemed not to be pronounced and to be only half formed.

Among other things I said: "My sweet little Mother, where have you been all this time? You have not been near me for so long a time! How is it that you do not come to me any more as you used to? Am I no longer your child? Are you no longer my dear Mother?" Her replies to me took the form of certain knowledge infused into my heart and soul, assuring me that all was well and that, in case of need, She would still help me as She was doing at this very moment, like the loving Mother that She is.

47. *Supplication to Mary. Light received concerning a more perfect state of interior purity and humility.*

I besought Her urgently that She deign to teach me how to please my Betrothed more perfectly, saying to Her: "Good Mother, you know what pleases my Beloved best; you know what is His will. Place

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within me, dear Mother, your spirit of submission, so that I may not use the divine graces and favors badly and so that I may not waste them. Make me ever pleasing to my dear Beloved.”

I often so spoke to Her in this childlike way, although I commonly did not formulate my ideas so clearly. It did not seem necessary to expose my childlike wishes and desires in full detail, for love knows well how to make itself understood and this kind Mother, who sees into the depth of the heart, well knows those who love Her and what are their desires for God. And thus my soul was entrusted to Her motherly care and love, in complete confidence that She would accomplish everything that had to be done, without it being necessary for me to say many words. What is more, to speak much would not be becoming to the well-educated and obedient child. It is enough for the soul to know that its Mother is full of good will and motherly love and that, when the moment arrives, She will know how to act as a true Mother.

This infused knowledge which I seemed to receive from my dearest Mother helped very much to give me a greater and more perfect humility and to simplify the operation of my interior faculties. It also gave rise to further knowledge which it is difficult for me to put into words. I have been able to retain this knowledge only in substance; but I was allowed to glimpse an interior purity more perfect than that to which we can attain here below, yet a purity which can always be increased, as is the case with the love of God and the knowledge of oneself.

She seemed to teach me to keep secret the graces and favors of God: I should also be careful not to say certain things which might lead to praise. I should never appear proud of anything, even though innocently and inadvertently, for the Evil One would find in such pride the opportunity to tempt and attack me. She made me realize that I had been careless in this regard at times, and that I must correct myself in the future through greater attention and prudence.

This has impelled me to beseech your Reverence not to tell anyone, as long as I shall live, about the graces and favors which God has showered upon me, unless it is necessary to do so in order to obtain the counsel of a wise and experienced man. Discretion must always be used, for otherwise people would come to know and my soul would certainly be damaged. It would be exceedingly painful to me should such a thing happen through any fault of yours. If I seem to insist on this over-much, it is simply because I know that I am not very humble.

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48. *Confirmation of the reality of these Marian instructions through their effects.*

What assures me still more completely that this is not a snare of the Enemy is that my soul has experienced truly divine effects and an eminently virtuous disposition, which have continued to endure. The effects are these: a humble and peaceful love for this dear Mother, a gentle feeling of being reduced to nothingness and borne towards humility and submission, a strict surveillance of myself, an indifference towards myself and a high esteem for others. In a word, I feel instructed and drawn to love God and this sweet Mother with a most pure love and to shut my heart and my feelings against everything that is not God.

There has come to me also a new love, such as never existed within me before, a new life, a new filial attraction and loving respect for this dear Mother. With new reverence and devotion do I glorify Her exceptional greatness and Her power with God, for I seem constantly to receive new graces and a new insight which better enables me to grasp the truth and conform my life to it.

These are effects which the Evil One would not wish to produce within a soul, anymore than the profound peace which I felt and still continue to feel: a peace which has left me with the very pure and very calm conviction that I have no inclination except towards God and towards this dear Mother.

Another result was a loving confusion at the thought that this most exalted Queen of Heaven, this virginal Mother of God, established in such great majesty, has deigned to abase Herself in coming down to me, a miserable worm who have never in any way merited these favors from Her.

49. *During a temptation to vain glory, she takes refuge in Mary, who reveals Her presence to the soul and confirms the certainty of this manifestation.*

One evening my soul was heavy and oppressed because I had experienced, in an unaccustomed way, spontaneous feelings of vain pleasure or vain glory. This frightened me, for I felt that the state of my soul was not good; I felt that I was falling back in the matter of humility and in the realization of my own nothingness. Truthfully, never before that evening could I have spoken of such feelings. Then this thought came to me: "How is it possible that this kind Mother, who has made me so often and on so many different occasions experience Her help, who deigned to cure me of a grave illness—how is

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it possible that She would not show Her Motherly affection for me even more clearly now by delivering me from this malady and torment of soul?" (Six days before, as I shall explain later, She had cured me of a serious illness.)

I then began to pray very humbly and to importune Her with a loving insistence, like an innocent child. I gently complained to Her and explained the afflicted and anxious state of my soul; I told Her how I feared that these vain thoughts might hurt my soul by damaging my humility and my love of God, thus leading me to displease my Beloved. I did not cease bewailing my sorry condition.

During the Office in the morning, I felt her gentle presence in the depth of my soul—for it is only the gaze of my soul that perceives her—and she was very close to me. As I have said, this visit consoled me greatly; it reassured me and instructed me, leaving within my soul very evident fruits which, since that time, have never ceased to grow.

Today, when I was going to prayer, the Evil One appeared to tempt me, whispering to me that, in the revelation which I have just explained, I had been deceived, and so on. I saw well where these thoughts came from. They came from without, although mixed with a certain fear of mind, but they did not come from the depths of my soul. This was an added proof of their origin. Yet I still persisted in asking my Beloved whether all this had been an illusion. And He assured me with such certainty that it would have been impossible for me to desire stronger proof of its reality. He made an inner light burn within me and bathe my soul in so gentle and delightful a manner that I know not with what I could compare it. It seemed this light was like a bond which bound me to God, uniting me to Him in an intimate and sweet peace. At once all doubts and afterthoughts disappeared, and my spirit received solid witness that I was a child of God, according to the words of the Apostle: "The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the children of God."

Besides this, I experienced once again in a clear manner that God was truly present within me. I seemed to be completely filled with God; nothing seemed to exist within me save God alone. And understanding that I possessed the All-Good within myself, I was completely satisfied and consoled, and it was impossible for me to desire anything more. What a sweet spirit of peace and humility within me since this happened! What eminent purity of heart! What scorn of myself and of all creatures that are not God!

How clearly my Beloved has revealed His goodness and His concern to help me, console me, and comfort me. How grateful and

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faithful ought I to be. And what confidence ought I to have in Him and in my gentle Mother!

50. *Fearing that illness will lead her to make her interior life less spiritual, she beseeches the Blessed Virgin to restore her health, and she finds that she is cured.*

On the Feast of St. John Chrysostom, the twenty-seventh of January, 1669, I felt that my spirit was heavy and crushed down, as it were, in the wake of a new illness. I had had this illness for some time, but it was now growing worse from day to day, and it caused me great discomfort because, in the first place, it caused my Sisters great concern and they were most attentive to satisfy all my natural desires, and most eager to relieve my suffering. I feared that all of this would be only feeding fuel to the fire of my corrupt nature and presenting an obstacle to my spiritual advancement. Again, I am still so imperfect that, on such occasions, I am concerned too much with myself and worry too much about myself. Then I realize that, through self-love, I have been drawn to myself inordinately and that I am full of personal worries, much more than the spirit wishes to allow.

Here is what my illness was. From the moment that I took any food at all, I found myself like one whose body was burned by a great fever, while around him the weather is cold. All my strength left me, to the point that it was impossible for me to go from place to place without feeling extreme pain in my chest, and excessive difficulty in breathing, as happens with someone who is at the point of dying.

Then according to my custom, I had recourse in a childlike manner to my kind Mother. I complained gently, and I told her my fear that the Evil One might find great advantage in all this, as I have just explained. I was not sick enough to be under constant care, for my illness lasted only for some hours, after which my condition became normal again. But my Sisters could not understand that. Then I said: "Dear Mother, please instruct me; please make me either completely sick or completely well. It is impossible for me to continue living in this manner, for my soul is being weakened in its love for God and its tendency towards Him on account of the imperfections which are penetrating within it, and which it cannot stop."

After that, I no longer experienced anything like what I have described above, and to this moment, I feel that I have been completely delivered from that illness. Hence I am convinced that my dear, kind Mother cured me. May She be blessed forever. Amen. This is the eighth of February, 1669.

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51. *She is completely left to her own resources and offers herself to God to serve Him without reward. She gently complains to her kind Mother that She no longer visits her.*

Several days before the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1669, I felt myself completely left to my own resources. I often find myself in such torment of soul, in such sadness and bodily suffering that the whole world seems to be rushing in upon me. My spirit was as if caught in a vise or crushed beneath a press. I dreaded the hours of mealtime, because eating brought about acute pain in my mouth. It even happened that I could not control myself and that tears ran down my cheeks as I ate.

I said to my Beloved: "I know, my Loved One, that this is simply an invention of love, that you treat me in this way to test my affection. Now you hide yourself, but only to the end that your return and the sight of your face will be even sweeter to me. I am content. Since it no longer pleases you to receive me as your spouse, I consent to this privation until the end of my life. I am prepared to pass this life like a good and brave soldier, serving your Majesty at my own expense and without receiving the recompense of your loving caresses. Heretofore, you were at my service, if I may so speak. But now it is I who serve you, and purely through love."

Considering the state in which I now find myself, it is surprising that, for so long, I have received nothing from my dear Mother and have not perceived her presence. I ask myself if something could have made her withdraw from me. True, I still felt her within my heart, with calm and affection. But She seemed rather like a mother who is far away, and from whom no news is now received. Nevertheless, I consoled myself saying: "My dear Mother is satisfied that her Son is near me; and if her presence were necessary, I have no doubt that she would come at once and appear to me as She used to do, because She has so promised me."

52. *Transformation in God and in Mary. Life in God through Mary.*

On the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, I felt within myself the kindling of a flame of love for Her and for God, and my heart was wounded by it. While I was preparing myself for Holy Communion, the thought came to me to unite myself with her in God. It seemed that I was transformed in God and, at the same time, in Mary, in a very lofty and spiritual manner which it is impossible for me to explain precisely. I felt that I was completely possessed by God and by Mary; I felt that I received the supernatural life in my soul from God, through Mary, so that I seemed to live, to act,

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and to love through God and through Mary. God, Mary, my soul—these three seemed to be fused together, made into one single being by love.

When I was about to receive Holy Communion, I saw my dear Mother near me, to my right, and also her dear Son, Jesus; he was directly in front of me. I gave my heart to this lovable Mother, so that She might deign to give it to Jesus, my Betrothed. I gently prayed that She would grant me the grace of renewing my mystical marriage with her only Son, my Beloved. And, without knowing how this had been done, I perceived that my right hand had been placed within the right hand of Jesus. And I understood that this was the renewal of a real marriage with Him, as I have described in greater detail elsewhere. When I actually received Holy Communion, this imaginative vision of Jesus and Mary disappeared, and I remained in deep, and passive union with the Eternal Good. The most holy Mother of God, our dear Mother, seemed to be included in this union, in an eminently simple and spiritual manner, in such a way that no imaginative representation of her remained in my soul.

It appears that all this is produced directly by God, without any admixture of my own operations, for it is produced in too pure a manner. I notice that it would be impossible for me now to have or to form even the slightest imaginative representation of this kind Mother. But the enjoyment of her which was given to me by God came by means of abstract thought, by a pure act of the intellect, and by the love of union in God and in herself.

53. *Her love for the Blessed Virgin is renewed at the thought of this grace. In thanksgiving, she offers to God the Person and the merits of the Word Incarnate and of her dear Mother. She prays that the effects of her mystical marriage will perdure, and she foresees the manner of her death.*

On the vigil of the Visitation in 1670, as well as on the Feast itself, I felt a new ardor of love for my dear Mother because I recalled that it was on this day, a year before, that She had obtained for me the signal grace of renewing my solemn nuptials with Jesus, my dearly Beloved.

At the remembrance of this grace, profound gratitude arose from my heart towards this kind Mother and towards Jesus himself, who had deigned to accept me as His spouse, although I am so miserable a creature. Then I exchanged many loving words with Him, although the memory of them is not now clear. And I perceived within my soul a great number of divine communications, which are also now

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blurred in my memory. All that I do know is that I was like a furnace of divine love; my being was consumed in God without being destroyed, for I still exist and have not undergone the death of the flesh, which would be so pleasing to me.

I then sought what I might offer to my Beloved in gratitude for such a favor. And I realized that nothing would be more pleasing to God than to offer Him his own Divine Being, together with the merits of the Word Incarnate and the love and merits of my lovable Mother.

The spirit of love burst forth within me and demanded that my nuptial faith and love be strengthened forever. And this actually seemed to take place. Is it possible that the time of my dissolution is approaching? For the flames of love are springing forth again with great violence and, moreover, today the manner of my death was very vividly depicted to me. It seemed as if I were in the act of dying. Would that it might be given to me, and to all, to depart from life in this manner, out of love for God and for Mary. What a joy it would be to die in this way.

54. *The reason why the Blessed Virgin scarcely visits her any more.*

One day I was presenting our food to this sweet Mother, so that She might bless it. And while I was doing this, as She herself had taught me, the thought occurred to me that this sweet Mother did not come to visit me as often as before. I was surprised that I was not enjoying her presence or her instruction or her affectionate words with any frequency. Yet my love for her was as tender and innocent, as gentle and childlike as ever. Then this answer to my question came to me interiorly: "When this lovable Mother was constantly with you, guiding you in the path of her virtues, that was to prepare you for the mystical marriage with her most dear Son. Now that this marriage has been accomplished, She stands aside and allows the bride to converse alone with the Bridegroom, as is only fitting."

To tell the truth, since this union has really been brought about, my soul is commonly alone with its Beloved. My dear Mother and the Angels seem to remain, as it were, outside.

55. *She enjoys the Being of God more intensely. The possession of God is achieved in the superior part of the soul. She is completely abstracted in this simple vision of God, is more passive than active. Her tender affection for her dear Mother is here suspended.*

The manner of living in God wherein, through His grace, God

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has set me for some time, is an intimate enjoyment of the Divine Being, in a lofty eminence of light and peace. This manner of enjoying God and experiencing divine things cannot even be compared with any of the preceding manners. Here, God reveals Himself in a more lofty light. He allows the soul to understand and to experience wonderful things in himself, things which cannot afterwards be remembered or expressed in words. While this enjoyment lasts, however, the soul would fluently speak to those who would understand, revealing how God is an abyss of wonders.

During this time, the soul realizes that it is filled by God and completely possessed by Him. He invades it so suddenly, and reduces it to such complete submission that it can no longer perceive anything within itself save God alone, and that which God pleases to reveal to it. How great and marvelous is this union with God!

All this takes place in the higher part of the soul, and has nothing in common with the lower powers. The operation of the understanding itself seems to be, for the most part, suspended, and there remains only a simple gaze, which serves for the contemplation of God in great tranquility. It takes place in a manner more passive than active, and the principal work is assigned to the power of love and transformation, since this is more apt for the perception and the possession of God.

I do not think I have ever experienced a manner of enjoying God in the depths of my soul which is so simple, so peaceful, so profound, and which is so free from the activities common to the lower powers. I feel so strange that it appears that there are two distinct persons within me.

The spirit, feeling so detached from the lower powers, wishes to have nothing more to do with these, unless it should please God to indicate another manner of divine life in which these powers would have a part to play.

During all the time of this silent enjoyment of the Divine Being, all filial affection and sensible devotion for the sweet Mother, are suspended, as well as all other activities of the spirit and of love, no matter what their object. Yet all these activities remain, in some manner, hidden within. They are really there, but during this time they do not manifest themselves, for such manifestations would be useless. They serve no purpose and are not pleasing to God during the nuptial feasts, for then God offers Himself as the sole nourishment for the soul. This is why everything which is inferior to God, must disappear at these moments.

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Schema of the Marian Doctrine of Mary Petyt of St. Teresa and Michael of St. Augustine, her Spiritual Director.

1. Basis of the Marian life.

- a. Mary's Divine and Spiritual Maternity;
- b. Mary's Queenship.

2. Principle of this Life.

Supernatural grace, obtained for us and given to us by Mary, the Mediatrix and Dispensatrix of all Grace.

3. Purpose of the Marian Life.

To conform one's self in all things to Mary's will, which is one with the will of God, and thereby to contribute to the honor and glory of God and our Lady.

4. Sources of the Marian Life.

There are two sources: 1) A habit acquired through many and frequent acts of loving attention to Mary, obedience to Her, and consideration of Her prerogatives.

2) A spontaneously infused gift from the Holy Spirit.

5. Practice of the Marian Life.

Loving remembrance of Mary, after the manner of the Practice of the Presence of God, plus effort to do Mary's will, and to reproduce her virtues.

6. Characteristics of the Marian Life.

1) A constant remembrance of Mary and inclination towards Her, as in the Practice of the Presence of God.

2) The soul's affections and thoughts find their term simultaneously in Mary and in God, so that it seems that neither Mary nor God can be forgotten.

(These characteristics are found despite the source from which the Marian life arises)

When the source is an acquired habit, then the relations of the soul to Mary are reserved and rather sober.

When the source is the infused gift of the Holy Spirit, then 1) The main characteristic is spontaneity, and this results in most childlike relationships of the soul with Mary. 2) The soul experiences the rightful place which Mary should hold in its striving for union with God. 3) Interior lights are received as to Mary's excellence and grandeur, and the result is a much greater and more profound love for Her.

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MEDITATIONS FOR MENTAL PRAYER BASED UPON THE WRITINGS OF MARY PETYT OF ST. TERESA

Earlier in this work, we have tried to explain the meaning and the purpose of that form of prayer which is called mental. We saw that it means simply a loving and intimate conversation with God, with our Lord, or with our Blessed Lady. We saw that its purpose is to establish and strengthen the bond of close friendship between our Lord or our Lady and ourselves through a daily and a personal contact. If we wonder, then, how to go about practicing mental prayer, we need only recall this meaning and purpose. For an ordinary conversation, we must in some way be present to the person with whom we are talking. There is this same need for the conversation of mental prayer. Now God, we know, is present everywhere, and He dwells in a special manner in the soul which possesses sanctifying grace. Our Blessed Lord, even in his humanity, is present in the tabernacle. Our Blessed Lady is present because She is constantly, in her position as the Mediatrix and Dispensatrix of grace, communicating supernatural help to us. What is more, as our Spiritual Mother, She has a right to know of all our needs, a right to know every thought or word or sigh, which we direct to Her. And God gives Her this knowledge. All that we need do, therefore, at the beginning of our mental prayer, is to advert to this presence of God, of our Lord, or of our Lady, and realize that, by their superior knowledge and love, they are far closer, far more *present* to us than any earthly companion could ever be.

Then we need a subject for conversation. Often this will suggest itself spontaneously by reason of our present needs or sentiments, by reason of a certain feast day, and the like. At other times, it is well to have a subject which we can prepare by reading and reflection. It is to help answer this need that the following short Marian reflections, based on the writings of Mary Petyt, have been added.

Once we have withdrawn our minds from other occupations in order to realize the presence of God, or our Lady, and have selected some subject for prayerful conversation, then it only remains for us to think, speak, and listen. It is well, in concluding our mental prayer, to summarize the substance of it in some one thought or aspiration which we can recall from time to time during the day. In this way, we will increase the spiritual fruits of our mental prayer, and we will more perfectly establish that personal contact with our Lord and our Lady which is so essential for the progress of our supernatural life of grace.

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First Meditation: Our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary gives great pleasure to Her.

(Selection Two, page 15, should be read)

When our Blessed Lady, bearing God within Her womb, went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, she pronounced her famous *Magnificat*, in which she said: *Henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.* (Luke 1:48) Were an unknown girl, from an unknown village, to speak thus today, we should laugh at her. Yet Mary was an unknown girl from an unknown village. She spoke, however, inspired by God. She had reason for expecting honor from all men at all times, for She had been chosen to be God's own Mother.

Our Lady's prophecy has been fulfilled. In every age since the birth of the Church, Christians have chanted her praises and thereby given her joy. She knows that all praise given to her is referred, ultimately, to God the Father, whose daughter She is, to God the Holy Ghost, whose Spouse She is, and to God the Son, whose Mother She is—to God who *regarded the lowliness of his handmaid.* (Luke 1:48)

It is a great consolation to know that my love and devotion give joy to the heart of our Blessed Lady. I can, therefore, repay her somewhat for all that She has suffered on my account. I must pray, like Mary Petyt of St. Teresa, that God will raise up many sincere servants of his dear Mother. But most of all, I must examine my own devotion to see if it is as sincere and generous as it should be. I must pray to our Lady herself to teach me how to perfect my devotion and thereby please her more.

Today, as I take my meals, I will rejoice that my devotion gives pleasure to our Lady, and I will ask her for an increase of that devotion.

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Second Meditation: The Imitation of our Blessed Lady

(Selection Sixteen, pages 26-27, should be read)

The great St. Augustine pointed out long ago that the test of true devotion is imitation. Devotion without imitation is a false devotion, or rather, it is no devotion at all. How does my devotion to the Blessed Virgin stand up against this test? Is my devotion a somewhat materialistic, mathematical affair: so many prayers said, and so on? Or do I make a sincere effort to model my life upon the life of my dear Mother?

Our Lady seems to speak to us in the words of St. Paul: *Follow my example, I entreat you, as I follow the example of Christ.* (1 Cor. 4:16) I have left an example and a lesson for each one of you to imitate, no matter what your condition of life may be. Are you a virgin? You can learn from me how to preserve your virginal purity unsullied. Are you a married person? I have left you a perfect example of marital love and affection. I have left you an example of submission and obedience to your partner in life. Are you a parent? From me you can learn to bestow more care upon your children than upon yourself. Whether you suffer and are sad, or rejoice and are glad, I am your model. I teach you how to share your lot, whatever it may be, with God. Are you a priest? More than any priest, I possessed the spirit of the priesthood, the spirit of sacrifice, and I shared more intimately and more perfectly in the sacrifice of Christ than any priest could ever hope to share. In all the circumstances of your life, I am a sure guide to follow. You have only to fix your eyes upon me to learn the true way of God and to the holiness which God expects of you.

As I go about my daily work today, I shall make a special effort to keep our Lady in mind, and to share the dispositions which she felt as she performed her own daily tasks.

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Third Meditation: The Imitation of our Blessed Lady (II)

At times, the imitation of our Blessed Lady seems to be an impossible task. Mary was perfectly sinless. From the first moment of her life until the last, she was the friend of God. She lived in unique circumstances: for thirty-three years, she shared the companionship of Jesus Christ himself.

Yet there is always one aspect in which Mary can be an example, an inspiration for each one of us, even for those who are the most humble and mediocre in matters spiritual. We can and must try to imitate Mary in her Christianity, in her religion: in her devotion, that is, to Jesus Christ.

All Mary's religion was summed up in devotion to Jesus Christ. She was a Christian through and through, a Christian in the full sense of the term. She embodied in herself the spirit of christianity, and we are invited by the Church to have Mary's religion, to model our Christianity upon hers.

Like Mary, I am called to love God, and that is why my life should center around Jesus. I recall those pictures of Mary in which She holds the child Jesus loosely in her arms. It is as if she were saying: This child is my whole life. Love and devotion to Him is the explanation of my life. But I am ready to give him to you, so that He can be your life also, so that your life, too, can be a life of constant love and devotion to Him. That will mean that you shall have to be faithful to all His commands, and to the laws of His Church. You shall have to learn to carry the cross with Him as I did, and to offer up your life with Him in the morning Mass. You shall have to learn to enter into His own mind and heart by the graces that He will give you in Holy Communion. You shall have to learn to be faithful in all the duties of your state in life, whatever it may be. You shall have to learn to serve Him without counting the cost—to work for Him, slave for Him, and have only one ambition in life; namely, to promote God's cause and serve His interests. But if you do all this—and He will make you able to do it by His powerful grace—why then you will be imitating me; you will be my faithful and devoted child, living after the example of your Mother.

Dear Mother Mary, help me to love Jesus as you loved Him, and to follow your advice: *Do whatever He tells you.* (John 2:5)

MARIA

Fourth Meditation: Submission to the will of God

(Selection Thirteen, pages 23-24, should be read)

The words which provide the key to the understanding of our Blessed Lady's spiritual beauty, are those which She spoke to the Angel Gabriel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* (Luke 1:38) Our Lady constantly submitted to the will and good pleasure of God. And thereby she achieved true human and spiritual greatness.

Often I make a very fundamental mistake. I draw up my own plans for a "successful" life, for a life which will lead me to holiness and happiness and salvation, and I think of God as some congenial person sitting in the background, ready to help me carry out those plans if I ask Him. In reality, the situation is exactly the contrary. God has *His* plans for my life, for the smallest circumstances of that life. And it is only when I bring myself into accord with God's plan that I can achieve true "success"—true happiness and holiness. How do I bring myself into accord with God's plan? By submitting, in a spirit of love and resignation, to His will and good pleasure as shown to me in the circumstances of my daily life.

The plan of God is often dark and mysterious to me. His plan may include sickness and failure. It may assign a task to which, humanly speaking, I am unequal. It may include poverty, or the constant struggle to survive and to support my dependents. Yet it is by making the effort and sacrifice necessary to accept God's plan that I can be really happy and work out my holiness. God's plan for Mary must have puzzled her, and it included much suffering. She accepted it, however, with love and resignation.

I shall ask my Mother Mary for new insight into the plan of God for my life. As I begin each new task today, I shall try to say, with Mary: *Be it done to me according to thy word.*

MARIA

Fifth Meditation: Pleasure and Spiritual Progress

(Selection Three, page 16, should be read)

From things which we have heard or read, we may have concluded that a spiritual life, a life in which we pursue the goal of holiness and union with God, is a rather dreary and unpleasant life. We may even feel somewhat guilty after we have enjoyed some form of legitimate recreation and relaxation, judging that this has been time lost to the work of spiritual advancement.

If so, we are making a mistake. Jesus and Mary have taught us a different lesson from the example of their lives. They lived as thoroughly normal people. They worked, and prayed, and suffered, it is true. But they also enjoyed friendship and love. They took advantage of the simple pleasures which their humble means could afford. They must have looked forward to the yearly trip to Jerusalem among friends and relations. The marriage feast at Cana was certainly not the only such celebration which they attended with joy.

Jesus and Mary came to teach me how to live. They have shown me that every part of my life—not merely work and suffering and prayer, but relaxation and pleasure as well—is holy and can contribute to my life of union with God. I can take Jesus and Mary for my friends and companions not only when I suffer, but also when I rejoice. All that brings joy into my life is a reflection of the infinite goodness of God, and hence I should be brought closer to God by pleasure.

Today, I shall make a special effort to share my joys and pleasures, as simple as they may be, with Jesus and Mary. I shall try to realize how much more wonderful than these, must be the God who made them.

MARIA

Sixth Meditation: Need for Mortification

Ask any child in elementary school *for* the formula for becoming a saint, and he will promptly answer: *prayer and sacrifice*. We would have said the same, many years ago. And we do pray. But did we ever reach a practical realization of the need for sacrifice in our lives? Do we understand that, if we *can* find God even in our pleasures, we *must* find Him in sacrifice, or, as it is called, mortification. For our Lord has said: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* (Luke 9:23)

Why this need for mortification? Because unless we occasionally say No to ourselves, even in lawful matters, we shall not be able to say No when it is a question of sin. Our will must be *trained* to deny itself and seek God. We train it by the sacrifice of mortification.

But mortification does not mean simply "no sugar in my morning coffee." It is something far deeper than that. It is an attitude of mind and soul. It means seeking what God wants, not what I want, in every phase of life. I want recognition, success, applause, sympathy, ease, and contentment. Failure, misunderstanding, illness, suffering, are often in God's plan. Effort and sacrifice are *always* in His plan: the effort and sacrifice needed to apply myself wholeheartedly to the duties of my state or position in life. That is real mortification.

The best mortifications, the ones most fruitful for my spiritual progress, are those which God sends me through the circumstances of my life. If I accept them well, they enable me truly to *deny self* and to *emphasize God* in my life. Still, as a reminder, I should perform some daily, self-imposed mortification, even something as simple as that "no sugar in my morning coffee."

MARIA

Seventh Meditation: Holy Communion

(Selection Four, pages 16-17, should be read)

To live the life of holiness, grace is necessary. Without the constant help of grace, our lower nature, weakened by original sin, will lead us to abandon our efforts. God is always willing to communicate this necessary grace to us, and He uses the Sacraments as His instruments, in much the same way as we use a pen to write with.

If we wish to live in close friendship with God and Our Lady, therefore, we must keep close to the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

It is not enough simply to receive our Lord often in Holy Communion. I must receive Him with the proper dispositions. I must make a suitable preparation and thanksgiving. For God gives His grace only where He finds vessels empty to receive it. I must bring to Holy Communion a deep faith in the real presence of Jesus, a deep confidence in His desire and power to bless me.

My natural food must be digested if it is to benefit me. So my supernatural food of Holy Communion must be spiritually "digested." How can I so "digest" this spiritual food? By remaining quiet for a few moments after I receive our Lord and trying to assimilate His *mind*: trying to penetrate into His manner of judging things, into His sense of values, by asking His help to live according to His standards.

It is said that King Henry VIII used to receive Holy Communion each day. He would never have reached so sorry a state if he had made a sincere effort to "digest" his spiritual food: to assimilate the mind as well as the body of Christ.

Three times today I shall pause in my work, and in union with our Lady, I will make a spiritual Communion with the same dispositions which should fill my heart when I receive sacramentally.

Eighth Meditation: The Sacrifice of the Mass

The Holy Eucharist is not merely a Sacrament. It is also a sacrifice. And as a sacrifice, it is the central act of our holy religion. The sacrifice of the Mass does not exist simply to provide us with Holy Communion. It is the other way round. Holy Communion exists to enable us to share in the sacrifice of the Mass, by bringing us into an ever closer union with the Divine Victim of the sacrifice.

For the Mass, as a sacrifice, is not simply our Lord's sacrifice. It is our sacrifice, too. Our bodies and souls, our joys and sorrows, our lives are meant to become part of the material of the sacrifice, together with the body and soul, the joys and sorrows, the life of Jesus himself. When we make that offering at Mass, then all our ordinary actions become holy things, worthy to be offered to God the Father together with the actions of his only-begotten Son.

When we consider the sacrifice of the Mass in this light, we can see how the whole of our lives should simply be an effort to live up to what we say to God during the Mass: an effort to make the necessary sacrifice to live in a manner worthy of someone who has been officially dedicated, together with Jesus, to the love and service of God the Father.

Many Christians are failures at Christianity, not because they do not assist at Mass, but because they never make the wholehearted offering of themselves which the Mass demands. And hence they have no ideal to strive after in their daily activities. To use the example of King Henry VIII once more, he assisted at three Masses every day. It is obvious, however, that he did not share the dispositions of sacrifice.

We can imagine, on the other hand, with what perfect dispositions Our Blessed Lady assisted at the daily Mass offered by St. John the Apostle. We should ask Her to teach us how to assist at our next Mass with the proper spirit of sacrifice.

MARIA

Ninth Meditation: Consecration to Mary

(Selection Seven, pages 18-19, should be read)

The entire world has been consecrated to Mary by an official act of Pope Pius XII. It remains, however, for each soul to consecrate itself, and to make every effort to *live* its consecration.

We must realize, first of all, that consecration to Mary means more than the simple recitation of a formula. Consecration to Mary is meant to affect our daily living, and to affect it in a very vital way. Consecration to Mary must make us direct our every word and deed to her honor and glory. It must make us willing to leave all things in her hands: our goods of body and soul, our future of success or failure, of health and happiness or of sickness and sorrow. Consecration to Mary must make us strive at every moment to make our life—even though it is a common, ordinary human life, as Mary's life was—to make that life something worthy to be presented in homage to the Mother of God: therefore, something free from sin, something of faithful loyalty to Christ, something of deep, childlike love.

Dear Mother Mary, I rejoice that I am your child, consecrated to your love and service. I am sorry that my consecration has not, heretofore, exercised a more profound influence upon my life. Forgive me, and obtain for me the grace to live, in future, in a manner worthy of someone who has been consecrated to you.

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Tenth Meditation: Mary's Order

(Selection Eighteen, pages 28-29, should be read)

There is one Religious Order which, above all others, has always been recognized as distinctively Marian in its life and spirit. It is the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel: the Carmelite Order. The Carmelite Order is officially dedicated to Mary. All that it does is done for her honor and glory. What is more, the members of the Order take the life of Mary as their model and guide. Their constant effort is to reproduce her virtues.

Mary herself has designated the Carmelite Order as Her own by Her gift of the Scapular. The Scapular was always a part of the Carmelite religious habit. But Our Lady made it the principal part: She made it the official sign of souls consecrated to Her, the official insignia of the children of Her special love.

Everyone who wears the Brown Scapular is affiliated to the Carmelite Order. He becomes a special child of Our Lady. His life, like the life of every Carmelite, is to be one dedicated to her honor and glory. He also shares in the prayers and good works of all Carmelites and Scapular wearers all over the world.

Thank you, my dear Mother Mary, for making me one of your own through the Brown Scapular. It is a constant sign to me of my dedication to you. It is a constant sign to you of my love and allegiance. Awake or asleep, I am clearly marked as someone who belongs to you.

With Mary Petyt of St. Teresa, I pray for the Carmelite Order, your own Order. May it ever flourish. May it lead countless souls to heaven through the Brown Scapular, through consecration to you and imitation of your virtues.

MARIA

Eleventh Meditation: Mary's Union with God

(Selection Twenty-three, pages 32-34, should be read)

The basis of our Blessed Lady's dignity, and hence the basis of the special veneration which is her due, is Her lofty and intimate union with God. The union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of the Word of God alone surpasses Mary's union with God. For Mary is united to God as his Mother.

Mary's position as the Mother of God is the root of all her other privileges. The fact that Mary was to be the Mother of God was the reason why she was conceived immaculately. Her position as Mother of God won for Her the special grace of being preserved, throughout her life, from all stain of sin and imperfection. Her dignity as Mother of God would not suffer Her body to corrupt in the grave, and hence She was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. And it is because Mary is the Mother of God that She now reigns as Queen of heaven and earth, to whom we owe all our allegiance.

In my devotion to Mary, I must always keep in mind this fundamental dignity which She possesses. If I do, then my devotion to Her will be based on the solid foundation of Catholic dogma, and I need not fear error or mere sentimentality.

This dignity of Mary's also teaches me that the true dignity of every human person rests, ultimately, upon that person's union with God. I must learn to make my judgments accordingly, and not to be misled by appearances. I must also renew my own zeal to deepen my union with God, for this is the whole purpose of my life.

As I say the Hail Mary today, I shall pay special attention to the words: Holy Mary, Mother of God.

MARIA

Twelfth Meditation: Our Lady's Guidance

(Selection Thirty-five, pages 42-43, should be read)

Many problems and difficulties arise when we are trying to live a spiritual life and advance in holiness, particularly if we do not have the safeguards and benefits of the religious life and the priesthood. And this is no matter for wonder or surprise. First of all, the devil is constantly on the alert to prevent souls from reaching the goal of intimate friendship with God. Then, too, our fallen nature almost spontaneously revolts at the efforts required of it in the service and love of God.

Perhaps one of the greatest and also one of the most common problems that generous souls in the world experience, is the problem of reconciling a life of holiness with all the duties and demands which their position in the world places upon them. They feel, at times, that they are being asked by God to unite two things which are contradictory to each other, and so they become discouraged and cease to try. They begin to think that the life of holiness must be restricted to the monastery and the cloister. They begin to think that their lot as lay people places the ideal of sanctity completely beyond their reach.

In the place of the problems of leading a spiritual life, I need advice, guidance and direction. For these, I must go to Mary. The Scriptures present Her as one who does solve intricate problems, as one who brings a solution to dilemmas, and who resolves apparent paradoxes. In Mary, for example, virginity and maternity were united. Although redeemed by the death of her Son, She herself was the Co-Redemptrix of the rest of mankind. At Cana, Jesus said his hour had not yet come. It came with Mary's intercessory prayer. It is through that same intercessory prayer that I will receive guidance and direction—that I will receive the solution of whatever problems confront me in my efforts to strive after real holiness.

