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# WEEK 2

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Knowledge of Self

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## NOTE:

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In the last ten days, St. Louis Marie guided us to free ourselves from the spirit of the world. Now, he invites us to set the resolution of acquiring **self-knowledge**, of our wickedness, weakness, pettiness and miseries, in order to lead us to an authentic **contrition of one's sins and recognize the need for help**. Therefore, we now will present some texts from St. Alphonsus, which will be useful to achieve the virtue of **humility** and dispose us to recognize our own misery.

- 1) **Place yourself in the presence of God.**
- 2) **Ask for the grace** of a deep self-knowledge. "Lord, let me know myself."
- 3) **Read the text below** and then spend a brief period of time reflecting on it.
- 4) **Pray the Litany.** We will ask in these next days the **gifts of the Holy Spirit**, praying His litany. See page 125..

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## Thirteenth Day

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*Treatise: of True Devotion to the Virgin Mary [90-95]*

### **Marks of False and Authentic Devotion to Mary**

In the last few meditations, we examined five truths of devotion (in Day 10, 11, 12). Now, that we have established these five basic truths, it is all the more necessary to make the right choice of the true devotion to our Blessed Lady, for now more than ever there are **false devotions** to her which can easily be mistaken for true ones. St. Louis Marie explains: “The devil leaves other devotions alone and counterfeits mostly those directed to Jesus and Mary.”

Consequently, the saint will explain the false devotions to Mary in order to avoid them, and then, true devotion in order to practice it. Among so many different forms of true devotion to our Blessed Lady, we should choose the one most perfect and the most pleasing to her, the one that gives greater glory to God and is most sanctifying for us.

The saint continues by saying that he has found **seven kinds of false devotion** to Mary. [Today we examine two of them. We will consider the rest of them tomorrow.]

1) **Critical devotees:** These are proud scholars have a vague devotion to Mary, but they criticize all the practices of piety that simple people fulfill in a pious manner to honor their good Mother. They question all the miracles and stories, even those recorded by trustworthy authors, who demonstrate the mercy and power of the Blessed Virgin. When they are shown the honors that the Holy Fathers pay Mary, they respond by saying that they speak rhetorically or alter the interpretation. This kind of false devotees are very dangerous because they commit a grave injustice towards devotion to the Virgin Mary.

2) **Scrupulous devotees:** They are those who fear that, by honoring the Mother, the Son will be dishonored. They greatly regret that, in front of an altar of the Holy Virgin, there are more people kneeling than in front of the Blessed Sacrament, as if the two things were incompatible and as if those who pray to the Virgin Mary do not pray to Jesus Christ through her. There is some truth in what they say, but the inference they draw to prevent devotion to Our Lady is very insidious. It is a subtle snare of the evil one under the pretext of promoting a greater good. For we never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor his Mother, and we honor her simply and solely to honor him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek—Jesus, her Son. The Church, with the Holy Spirit, blesses our Lady first, then Jesus, “Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” Not that Mary is greater than Jesus, or even equal to him, but **in order to bless Jesus more perfectly we should first bless Mary.**

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### Meditation

- 1) **Place yourself in the presence of God.**
- 2) **Ask for the grace** of a deep self-knowledge. “Lord, let me know myself.”
- 3) **Read the text below** and then spend a brief period of time **reflecting** on it.

We have an immortal soul to save

(From St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *Way of Salvation*)

The enterprise of our eternal salvation is the most important undertaking. It brings us bliss or eternal damnation. This enterprise ends in eternity, that is, in **salvation or eternal damnation:** in obtaining an eternity of joy or an eternity of

torment: to live life forever happy or forever unhappy. Oh my God, what will become of me? Will I be saved or condemned? I may be saved or I may be lost. And if it is possible for me to lose myself, why do not I resolve to embrace a life that assures me of eternal life?

‘And then? And after?’ If everyone thinks of death, when everything is left behind; or on judgment, in which we will give an account of everything, a happy or unhappy eternity—according to each one of us. Then what?

I see, my God, that **I have forgotten that my soul is immortal**, neglecting the most important task of my life, exchanging it for futile little things. I regret, O Infinite Goodness, having turned my back. Today I resolve to surrender myself completely to you. And what do I expect? Maybe you will leave me, and death will find me miserable and ungrateful, according to how I’ve lived so far. No, my God, I do not want to give you more displeasure; I want to love you. Help me, Mary, my hope!

*Pray the Litany of the Holy Spirit. cf. page 127*

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## Fourteenth Day

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Treatise of True Devotion to the Virgin Mary [96-104]

3) **Superficial devotees** are people who put their entire devotion to Mary in exterior practices. Only the externals of devotion appeal to them because they have no interior spirit. They pray many rosaries with great haste and participate in many Masses distractedly. All that appeals to them is the *emotional* aspect of this devotion, but the substance of it has no appeal at all. If they do not *feel* warmth in their devotions,

## Exhortation to Trust

*by Saint Bernard*

“Oh! You, whoever you are, who feel far from land, dragged by the waves of this world, in the midst of storms, if you do not want to capsize, do not take your eyes off the light of this Star.

If the wind of temptation rises, if the stumbling block of tribulations gets in your way, look at the Star, invoke Mary.

If you are unbalanced by the agitations of pride, of ambition, of murmuring, of envy, look at the Star, invoke Mary.

If anger, avarice, impure desires shake the fragile vessel of your soul, raise your eyes to Mary.

If, disturbed by the memory of the enormity of your crimes, confused before the awkwardness of your conscience, terrified by the fear of Judgment, you begin to let yourself be swept away by the whirlwind of sadness, to throw yourself into the abyss of despair, think of Mary.

In the dangers, in the anxieties, in the doubts, think of Mary, invoke Mary.

May her name never depart from your lips, never leave your heart; and to reach the relief of her intercession, do not neglect the examples of her life.

Following her, you will not get lost; praying, you will not despair; thinking about her, you will avoid all mistakes.

If she sustains you, you will not fall; if she protects you, you will have nothing to fear; if she leads you, you will not get tired; if she is favorable to you, you will reach the end. And so you will verify, from your own experience, how right it was said: *And the name of the Virgin was Mary.*”

(Saint Bernard, *Super missus*, 2nd homily, 17)

## Litany of the Holy Spirit

Lord have mercy, *Lord have mercy*  
Christ have mercy, *Christ have mercy*  
Lord have mercy, *Lord have mercy*  
Christ hear us, *Christ hear us*  
Christ graciously hear us, *Christ graciously hear us.*

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*  
God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*  
Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us.*

***(Repeat after each invocation: Have mercy on us)***

Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, ***have mercy on us.***  
Spirit of the Lord, who at the beginning of creation, breathed over the waters, made them fertile.  
Spirit under whose inspiration God's saints spoke.  
Spirit whose unction teaches us everything.  
Spirit who gives testimony of Jesus Christ.  
Spirit of truth who inspires everything.  
Spirit who descended upon Mary.  
Spirit of the Lord who fills all the earth.  
Spirit of God who dwells in us.  
Spirit of wisdom and understanding.  
Spirit of counsel and fortitude.  
Spirit of knowledge and piety.  
Spirit of fear of the Lord.  
Spirit of grace and mercy.  
Spirit of virtue, esteem and sobriety.  
Spirit of faith, hope, love and peace.  
Spirit of humility and chastity.  
Spirit of goodness and meekness.  
Spirit of all the forms of grace.  
Spirit who scrutinizes the divine depths.

Spirit who prays for us with inexpressible pleading.  
Spirit who descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove.  
Spirit by whom we receive new birth.  
Spirit who fills hearts with charity.  
Spirit of adoption of the sons of God.  
Spirit who appeared over the Disciples in the form of tongues of fire.  
Spirit with which the Apostles were filled.  
Spirit who gives to each one according to His will.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,  
*spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,  
*graciously hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,  
*have mercy on us.*

## Ave Maris Stella

1. Hail, bright star of ocean,  
God's own Mother blest,  
Ever sinless Virgin,  
Gate of heavenly rest.

2. Taking that sweet Ave  
Which from Gabriel came,  
Peace confirm within us,  
Changing Eva's name.

3. Break the captives' fetters,  
Light on blindness pour,  
All our ills expelling,  
Every bliss implore.

4. Show thyself a Mother;  
May the Word Divine,  
Born for us thy Infant,

Hear our prayers through  
thine.

5. Virgin all excelling,  
Mildest of the mild,  
Freed from guilt, preserve us,  
Pure and undefiled.

6. Keep our life all spotless,  
Make our way secure,  
Till we find in Jesus,  
Joy forevermore.

7. Through the highest heaven  
To the Almighty Three,  
Father, Son and Spirit,  
One same glory be. Amen.