

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,

they think they are doing nothing; they become upset, they give up easily, or they do things only when they feel like it.

4) **Presumptuous devotees** are sinners who give full reign to their *passions* or their love of the world. Under the name of Christian and devotees of the Blessed Virgin, they conceal pride, greed, lust, drunkenness, perjury, slander, injustice, etc. They believe that God will forgive them, that they will not die without confession, and that they will not be condemned because they recite the rosary. But when they are told that a devotion lived in this way is but a diabolical illusion and dangerous presumption, capable of ruining them, they refuse to believe it. They respond that God is kind and merciful; that he has not created us for perdition, that there is no man who does not sin; they will not die without confession. *Blinding themselves still more*, they quote stories they have heard or read—whether they are true or false does not bother them. These stories relate how people who had died in mortal sin were brought back to life again to go to confession, because in their lifetime they said a few prayers or performed a few pious acts, in honor of our Lady. Others are supposed to have obtained from God at the moment of death, through the merciful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, sorrow and pardon for their sins, and so were saved. Accordingly, these people expect the same thing to happen to them.

Nothing in our Christian religion is so deserving of condemnation as this diabolical presumption. How can we truthfully claim to love and honor the Blessed Virgin when, by our sins, we pitilessly wound, pierce, crucify and outrage her Son?

*I admit that to be truly devoted to Our Lady, it is not absolutely necessary to be so holy as to avoid all sin, although this is desirable. But at least it is necessary to be **genuinely determined to avoid at least all mortal sin**. Sin outrages the Mother as well as the Son.*

*One must practice great self-restraint in order to avoid sin, and also say the Rosary or other prayers.*

The saint adds that if he had a hardened sinner in front of him, he would advise him to do as just was said. He should not only place his peace in God, but also to ask God, *through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin Mary*, for the **grace of contrition and the forgiveness of sins**, and to overcome evil habits.

5) **Inconstant devotees** honor the Blessed Virgin at intervals as in fits. Sometimes they are fervent, and sometimes they are lukewarm. They embrace for the moment all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin and they register in all her confraternities, but then they do not fulfill their norms with fidelity. It is better not to burden oneself with so many prayers and devotional practices but to do less *with love and perseverance* in spite of opposition from the world, the devil and the flesh.

6) **Hypocritical devotees** hide their sins and evil habits under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin Mary so as to appear to their fellow-men different from what they are.

7) **Self-interested devotees** are those who only go to Mary to avoid a danger, to cure a disease, or for similar needs. The only time they think of Mary is when they are in need.

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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.

**What is sin?** (Of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *Way of Salvation*)

Sin is an offense against God. Its damage has *infinite gravity*, since it offends God who is infinitely good. Mortal sin breaks the friendship that unites us to our Creator.

Saint Alphonsus teaches: “The sinner, when he is deliberating whether or not to consent to sin, so to speak, takes a balance and sets out to see, which is worth more: the grace of God, or that outburst of anger, that interest, that pleasure. When he then gives his consent to the temptation, what does he do? He says that miserable pleasure is worth more than the grace of God. Here is how he dishonors God, declaring with his consent that miserable pleasure is worth more than *divine friendship*.”

So, my God, so many times have I dishonored you, postponing you for my miserable pleasures.

If the sinner were to exchange God for a treasure of precious stones, or for a kingdom, he would do great evil, because God is worth infinitely more than all the treasures and kingdoms of the earth. But why do so many do this? They exchange God for passing smoke, for a piece of land, for a poisoned pleasure, which, hardly enjoyed, fades.

Oh my God! How many times have I also poured my heart into such vile goods, despising you? How much you have loved me! I do not want to go anymore without your grace. I would rather die than offend you again with another sin.

Mary, Mother of God, receive my plea; intercede for me so that I will always be with God, always my God.”

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

## 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.