

sand, like the light dust of scales. (Is 40:15). In short, all the creatures before the Infinite Greatness are so little things, as if they were nothing.

Oh God, what have I done! You, my Redeemer, have esteemed my soul so much that you have given up your blood so as not to see it lost, and I wanted to lose it for nothing, for a whim, for a burst of rage, for a miserable delight, **thus despising your grace and your love!**

Oh my God, who am I? Whom have I despised? A poor worm that can do nothing; and nothing I have, but what you gave me for your kindness. You have given me the soul, the body, the use of reason and so many goods on this earth; and I have served as an offender for everything, my benefactor. What else? At the same time that you have kept my life, so that I would not fall into the hell that I deserved, I continued to mistreat you. Oh my Savior, and how you have had patience with me! Miserable of me, how many nights I have slept in your misfortune.

Oh Mary, Refuge of Sinners, help this sinner, who is entrusted to you.

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

Sixteenth Day

Treatise of True Devotion to the Virgin Mary [115-119]

Principal Practices of Devotion to Mary

In this chapter, St. Louis presents various forms of devotion to Mary, divided into two main groups:

1) Interior Practices

Honoring her, as the worthy Mother of God, esteeming and honoring her more than all the other saints⁴, insofar as she is the masterpiece of grace. Meditate on her virtues, her privileges and her actions. Contemplating her greatness. Offering to her acts of love, praise and gratitude. Invoking her with a joyful heart. Offering ourselves to her and uniting ourselves to her. Doing everything to please her. Beginning, carrying out and completing our actions through her, in her, with her and for her, to do everything through Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, our ultimate goal.

2) Exterior Practices

There are many external practices. Saint Louis makes a list of some:

“Enrolling in her confraternities and congregations; joining religious orders founded in her honor; proclaiming her praises; giving alms, fasting and spiritual and corporal mortifications; carrying such signs of devotion to her, such as the Holy Rosary, the scapular or a little chain; reciting with attention, devotion and modesty: the Holy Rosary, or the Office of the Blessed Virgin, so universally approved and recited in the Church, or the little Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, which Saint Bonaventure composed in her honor and which inspires devout affections, or other prayers; Hymns and chants of the Church, such as the *Salve Regina*, etc.; singing hymns in her honor; making in her honor a certain number of genuflections or bows, saying, for example: “Hail Mary, Virgin most faithful”; to reach God through her mediation, fidelity to grace throughout the day, and at night: “Hail Mary, Mother of Mercy”; to implore from God, through

⁴ This is called “hyperdulia.” Since she is the Mother of God, Mary deserves the highest esteem. The highest respect is due to her—more than all other saints who receive “dulia.”

her, the forgiveness of sins committed during the day. Decorating your altars, crown and embellish your images. Organizing processions and carrying her images with you, as a powerful weapon against the devil. Having her images or monogram painted or engraved and placed in the churches, houses or lintels of the doors and entrance of the cities; consecrating oneself to her in a special and solemn way.”

There are many other devotions that can be directed to Mary Most Holy. The most important thing is that they serve to sanctify the soul, provided they are fulfilled in the proper manner, that is:

1. With the right intention of pleasing God alone, seeking union with Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate goal, and to edify our neighbor.
2. With attention, without voluntary distractions.
3. With mercy, without haste and not reluctantly.
4. With modesty and composure of respectful bodily posture.

The Perfect Practice

St. Louis describes the characteristics of True Devotion:

“After these considerations, I declare openly that I have not been able to know or learn a practice of devotion to Mary similar to the one I am going to explain to you, that requires more sacrifices for God, frees you more from yourself and from your selfishness, keeps you more easily in the grace of God, that you more perfectly and easily join Jesus Christ and gives more glory to God, is more sanctifying for yourself and more helpful for your neighbor.”



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.

Sin denies obedience to God. (From St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *Way of Salvation*)

When Moses announced to Pharaoh God’s order to release his people, the reckless one answered: Who is the Lord so that I have to obey his voice? I do not know the Lord (Ex 5:2). The same goes for the sinner, when the conscience intimately reminds him of the divine precept and forbids him from committing that sin, and he replies: **Now, in this fact, I do not know God: I know that he is my Lord, but I do not want to obey him.**

The voice of God is made to listen to the sinner when he is tempted, saying: “Son, this does not suit you, do not give yourself this infamous pleasure, leave this; that is not your thing.” But the sinner answers: “Lord, **I do not want to serve you.** You do not want me to realize this sin, and I want to commit it.” Thus I have told you many times, my God, when I have sinned. If you had not died for me, my Redeemer, I would not even have the courage to ask your forgiveness; but you yourself from the Cross offer me this forgiveness, yes, I want it, yes I want it! I regret having despised you. O my God, I would rather die than offend you.

Mary, my refuge, I ask you the grace to be faithful to God until death.

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.