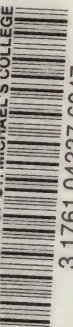


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ORIGINAL,  
SHORT AND PRACTICAL  
CONFERENCES

FOR

MARRIED WOMEN AND YOUNG MAIDENS,

CONTAINING

*THIRTY-SIX CONFERENCES FOR EACH,*

INTENDED

*AS A THREE YEARS' COURSE.*

BY

F. X. WENINGER, D.D.,  
MISSIONARY OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

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XI-8

WITH  
EPISCOPAL APPROBATION.





XXXVI  
CONFERENCES  
FOR  
MARRIED WOMEN.

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REDEMPTORIST LIB.

BLESSED  
ART THOU AMONGST  
WOMEN.

St. Luke 1.



# CONFERENCE I.

---

## EVE

IN PARADISE BEFORE THE FALL.

*“Blessed art thou amongst women.”*

IN these words the Angel saluted Mary, when he brought unto her, from the throne of the Most High, the message that she was chosen to be the Mother of God, Who would become man, according to the decree of the Most Holy Trinity.

Mary deserved this praise from the lips of the Angel and a similar tribute is justly due to every Christian matron who faithfully, zealously and conscientiously fulfills her duties as wife and mother, as a zealous child of the Church, and devout member of the congregation to which she belongs.

In order to discern in every point what are the characteristics for imitation, which shine forth in this admirable model—*Mary*—I will, in this series of Conferences, meditate with you, wives and mothers, upon her glorious virtues, taking to-day those words with which the Angel greeted her :

*“Blessed art thou amongst women.”*

For this purpose I will review, in historical order, the life of those *Women* who are mentioned with praise in the Holy Scripture.

Then from each one I will point to Mary, the mirror of justice, and illustrate how far the bright example of the Mother of God outshines that of those who prefigured her. I will then apply what is spoken of her to you, and prove how important it is for every Catholic matron to live in imitation of the admirable qualities which adorn Mary's life, that she may, like her, deserve to be called "blessed" among the matrons of her parish.

May Mary, "full of grace," grant her maternal blessing to every word I speak to you.

Among those women, of whom the Scripture makes honorable mention, is first of all:

*Eve, the ancestress of the human race; and in what respect Eve may be compared to Mary, we will see at these my first three Conferences.*

---

The place of Eve in Paradise, as the consort of Adam, was by his side. Pure and immaculate she entered into existence, filled with such grace and wisdom as was bestowed upon no other woman excepting Mary, and as will never, in such plenitude, be imparted to any one again.

It was fitting that she, as the ancestress of the human race, should stand forth distinguished above all her children until the end of time. Her heart rejoiced in the sunlight of heavenly peace, for it was before that fatal blight had fallen upon Eden, and the law of concupiscence was not yet awake—that law which, according to St. Paul, now continually opposes the law



of the Spirit. The name which God gave unto her was Eve, which means: "*Mother of all the living.*"

Let us now turn from this earthly Eve, of the Old Testament, to the heavenly Eve, Mary, the ancestress of the children of God in the New Law, and consider how far her prerogatives do, in the mentioned relations, surpass those of the earthly ancestress of mankind.

Eve, in Paradise, stood by the side of the *earthly* Adam, taken from him by God. Mary, the Eve of the New Testament stands by the side of the *heavenly* Adam who came forth from *her*, assumed her flesh and blood, and was formed in her through the power of God.

Eve was replenished with wisdom and grace, but how much more so was Mary? The Holy Scriptures and the Church unite in calling Her the *seat* of Divine Wisdom, and the Angel himself addressed Her "full of grace."

Eve entered into the world pure and without sin, but unhappily soon lost that sanctifying grace which adorned her soul.

Mary was conceived without sin, and not only was never guilty of the slightest fault, but, as the "strong woman," she crushed the head of the serpent at her conception, and increased her store of merits with every breath.

To Eve, the human race, is indebted only for earthly life; while Mary, on the contrary, imparts through Jesus spiritual life to her children, and secures unto them eternal life through the same Jesus, her Son, our Lord and Redeemer.

Do you not perceive, not only how gloriously *Mary*, by comparison, rises above Eve; but, also, what earnest calls and admonitions shine forth from her admirable example, and what are the virtues and qualities by whose exercise the conduct of every Catholic matron should ever be marked?

First, *Mary*, the Eve of the New Testament, came into existence pure and without sin, a privilege reserved to her alone; but unto us, children of the Church, is administered the sacrament of *baptism* by which all sin is taken away from the soul. Christian matrons, you have enjoyed this privilege! Thank God for it from the deepest depths of your heart; but cast also a retrospective glance at the years of your youth, how soon did you, perhaps, part with your baptismal innocence, even, it may be, by committing grievous sins! Have you always confessed with proper dispositions; and, since Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament first entered your hearts, how have you spent your lives? Who can tell of how many *sins* you were guilty in your earlier years; and I ask once more, have you confessed them as they appeared in the sight of God?

Even now, in your married life, does not some grievous sin bear down with crushing weight upon your souls? Oh! repent; cleanse your hearts often and often in the Sacrament of Penance.

Remember that the first condition of a proper fulfillment of your special duties is to be in the "*state of grace*," and preserve your hearts from *sin*.

If I know that a wife and a mother goes to Con-

fession once a month, or even more frequently, I feel sure that, spiritually, it is well with her; and that her children, so far from being able to cast reproach upon her conduct, can not fail to be inspired with the deepest respect.

Mary, as Holy Writ attests, was filled with the *knowledge* of the Spirit. Wives! mothers! are you anxious to fulfill your duty, zealously to listen to the word of God, and to read often books of devotion? Take every care to learn all that a well-instructed child of the Church should know, particularly in America, that, when called upon, you may explain its teachings, and be preserved from being weakened in faith by the efforts of heretics and infidels, or Catholics who have grown careless and cold.

Ground yourselves well, therefore, in the doctrines of the Church, that you may silence the enemies thereof, and, perhaps, lead them to enter her fold, and become fervent members of our Holy Faith.

It is not this alone, however, which demands a thorough religious *instruction*; for the welfare of your own *children* requires it, that, when the time arrives for them to leave your maternal care, you may have them so thoroughly instructed that they will have amassed a rich store of religious knowledge, and be well guarded against losing their faith, through a lamentable ignorance of its truths.

Mary was in the state of sanctifying grace; and remained so—a child of God—and made use of the *actual graces* bestowed upon her to enable her to

fulfill the Holy Will of God, and thus continually amassed new merits. Let it be your constant aim to avoid offending Him, and to grow ever more earnest in the practice of virtue, by the faithful use of *actual* graces, and the close attention to the *inspirations* of the Holy Ghost, walking in the presence of God.

Finally, to Mary was due the title "Mother of all the children of God." Mother! guard well the temporal interests of your children; but watch far more over their *spiritual life*.

Endeavor, from the moment of their conception, to preserve their lives, that they may safely enter the world and receive the grace of *baptism*.

It is the duty of every Catholic mother to avoid any thing whatsoever that might endanger the happy birth of a child—such as hard work, lifting heavy weights, exciting amusements, dancing, long walks, violent anger, and intemperance.

If, as may happen, a careless husband should require his wife to work too hard at a time when undue exertion might be productive of the most fatal consequences, she must refuse, and remind him of the cause.

But to you, mothers, belongs the duty of having your child baptized at the *earliest* possible moment, so that it may be rescued from the power of Satan and become at once a child of God. Reflect upon the dreadful misfortune of the soul of your little one to appear unregenerated before the Lord. It would never be per-

mitted to enter Heaven, the home of all the blessed. Should it happen that the god-father chosen is not present, another may take his place, and the absent name entered on the baptismal record.

Eve was certainly endowed with greater knowledge than any one of her daughters; but you, Catholic mothers, have no reason to envy her, for *her* superior wisdom related more to created things and to the objects in the order of nature and rational science, like that of Solomon in his time.

On the contrary, *your* knowledge through faith relates, in a superior manner, to the creation of grace through Christ our Redeemer, and to the relation in which we stand to God, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer also.

And how immeasurably more glorious, strengthening, and consoling are these relations, than the privileges conferred upon man in the state of original justice!

Eve, certainly, as our first mother, has contributed her share to the human race, which was rendered unhappy through her, tried as far as it was possible for her, that her children, by their obedience before God, might make reparation for the injury her disobedience inflicted on her and us.

Christian mothers, how solicitous should you not be, that, if *your* childhood and youth were not spent in the service of God—that if you neglected to offer Him the morning of life—your own children may, in some way, be enabled to atone for it.

Invoke St. Ann, the mother of Mary, whose very name means *grace*; and that she may obtain for you the grace of entire reconciliation with God, and to live continually in the state of grace, reflecting with sentiments of lively faith upon your eternal destination—that heaven for which you were created. Say daily in her honor, until the next conference, one fervent Ave Maria. Then may she assist you by her prayers, to keep ever in view the great affair of salvation, so vividly, that you, with your husbands and children, may serve God and be forever blessed. Amen!

## CONFERENCE II.

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### EVE

IN PARADISE AFTER THE FALL.

IN the last conference we glanced at Eve, and considered in how far Mary resembled her, although immeasurably exalted above her in all those qualities which distinguished the mother of the human race, as she stood by the side of the earthly Adam.

*But what words can I find to express the many respects in which Eve was unlike to Mary, who was the lovely Aurora which preceded the rising of the sun of grace and salvation!*

---

Eve *deprived* us of *Paradise*, and changed our earthly home into a vale of tears and sorrow, and left us an inheritance of toil and sweat, but which, through Mary, is changed into one of the merits for eternal life.

To Eve we are indebted for many *afflictions* and sufferings, but in them Mary affords us the sweetest *solace*.

Eve brought upon us numberless spiritual *wants*; Mary, the means to *supply* them.

Eve introduced *death* into the world; Mary, the pledge of a glorious *resurrection*. Eve slumbers yet

in the dust of the grave; Mary *arose* from the grave, sitting already in her glorified body in heaven at the side of Jesus Christ. Eve opened for us the gates of *hell*; Mary unbarred for us the portals of *Heaven*.

Oh, what a contrast!

Use well the lessons it contains for you, that you may merit and obtain the eulogy which the Holy Ghost metes out to the *valiant* woman who renders her family happy; for we read in Holy Scripture that "Her praise is from the uttermost bounds of the earth."

But let us consider closer the behavior of Eve:

Eve approaches the tree, and so willfully exposes herself to the danger of transgressing the divine command, and in a spirit of rather idle dissipation, converses with the devil.

Behold here the first lesson which you should learn. Don't expose yourselves to danger, lest you grow tepid in the service of God, and even yield to temptation and fall into mortal sin. A prolific cause of these temptations is *idleness*, useless *visiting*, and frivolous *conversation*. What opens, and keeps open the door, by which sin finds entrance into the heart, is intercourse with men wholly penetrated with the spirit of the world; who care little for religion or piety; who are absorbed in enjoying to the utmost the transitory goods of earth, and gratifying the inordinate desires of their corrupt hearts.

If such association will injure you, it will be equally hurtful to your husband, in whose heart suspicion will



be but too easily excited by the fact that his wife chooses the company of frivolous and worldly-minded people; but woe to you, if, through your influence, he selects similar companions for himself.

Catholic mothers! flee idleness, and look well to your *children* also; care for their salvation; and take heed lest by contracting unprofitable acquaintances, and forming habits of idleness they incur the danger of losing their innocence.

Do not fail in vigilance even if your children are still small; for, as St. Augustine laments, even among little children great sinners are to be found.

Observe the children of the neighborhood, and if they are rude, ill-bred, or, what is still worse, *immoral*, do not permit your own to have any thing to do with them.

And in regard to your grown-up sons and daughters, never weary in your efforts to prevent the former from roaming the streets, especially at night, or spending the evening hours in places of amusement.

Do not permit your daughters to remain alone with young men, even though they disclaim any evil intention, and say that it is only to pass a pleasant hour. Satan will, by degrees, creep in, and mortal sin will result; not, may be a sin of the most scandalous nature, but still one that kills the soul.

Question your own experience, look back upon the days of your youth, and you will acknowledge that I am right.

As to the life you should day after day pursue in

your own homes, avoid, as I said, idleness. Keep yourselves constantly employed, that your example may cause your husband also to dread those "idle hands," which are ever-productive of evil.

Encourage your children to form habits of industry. See that they attend school regularly, and urge them to profit by the instructions they receive, that they may be enabled later on to take part in the battle of life, and maintain themselves in an honorable way.

Assign to your daughters regular tasks in the house, that they may escape the danger of idleness, and be careful to check a too great fondness for amusements.

Never abate your watchful care in regard to the reading of profane books, novels, and romances, by which so much precious time is lost, and the head and heart are filled with many vain, and, perhaps, sinful thoughts.

I do not entertain a very exalted opinion of a mother who herself is fond of reading novels and newspapers, instead of the Lives of the Saints or other edifying works ; or of one who manifests no solicitude as to whether her children, *especially* her daughters, seem to be acquiring a taste for such reading as can only do them harm.

Live in general, so that your example and encouragement, your anxiety and solicitude for your family may be so well ordered that, through you, all will go on properly in the house, and you may merit the eulogy by which the Holy Ghost glorifies the valiant woman : "The husband will praise her every-where, and

openly declare that every *blessing* in the house proceeds from her."

The blessing of *industry* in the house, the blessing of *solace* in affliction; because the wife and mother patiently bears her cross, offering it to the Lord. Through her fortitude in adversity she can comfort her husband, too, in the dark hour of trial. The blessing of *prayer*, both at home and when the pious mother steals an hour from the busy day to visit her Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. A blessing in receiving the Holy *Sacrament*, in practicing the *virtues* of a true child of the Holy Church.

The good example of such a faithful wife and mother will shine brightly, even long after she has been called from earth, and will be a blessed *memory* to her loving family. Thus her blessed memory will one day open for them the celestial gates.

On the other hand, how sad, how terrible, if she, who should bring down the divine blessing upon a family united in holy love, would be the cause of banishing it from her home! and how dreadful, if the family life in this valley of tears, instead of being transformed into a *paradise* should, owing to *her* faults, resemble rather an earthly hell!

Wives and mothers, question, therefore, your own hearts as to whether the failings of your husbands and children may not be attributed to you. Are you not to blame that they leave the family hearth, and spend evenings away from home, remaining out late even till to the midnight hour? And this because you do not want

to conquer yourselves; because, at the least provocation, the sharp word, the harsh retort, are ever on your lips; or, it may be, because you maintain an angry silence for weeks.

Or how is it, O Catholic matron, with your household duties? Do you give no cause for displeasure there? Can you expect him, for whose comfort you should always care, to be satisfied, if, after a day of weary toil, he returns to a home where only disorder reigns, where nothing bright and pleasant greets him?

Be careful, as becomes a true wife, always to provide wholesome and nourishing food, prepare it well, and wage constant war against an untidy and ill-arranged house.

How can you expect your husband to look upon home as a *paradise* if you, instead of calling the family together for a morning prayer, vent at that early hour your irritation in angry and impatient words, or, more dreadful still, in cursing, and perhaps repeat the same at the time for evening prayer?

It may be that you do not open and close the day with prayer *yourself*. If you yourself neglect prayer, your husband and your children will do the same. May be that your children would even not know how to pray at *all*. What answer would be yours before God! If you neglect to assist at divine service on Sundays and Holy-days, if you neglect to approach frequently the Sacraments, what can be expected from your husband and your children? May be you neglect even to prepare them in time to make

their first Communion ; perhaps, they never will make it because of your *idleness, tepidity, and sloth*, and will be lost and damned with you, cursing you through all eternity for having been such a neglectful mother.

It is most certainly the virtues, the example of the *Mother* which so influence the family, that its members live in peace with God and harmony with each other and their neighbor, truly meriting the testimony which the Evangelist gave to the first Christians: "They were all but one heart and one soul."

Wives, mothers, do you live in this way in your families? Then, indeed, most fittingly may I greet you with the words: "Blessed art thou amongst women," especially of this congregation. Invoke St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily in her honor one Ave Maria, that, through her intercession you, with the grace of God, may make of your family home a *paradise*, and that your husband may have reason to exclaim: "Oh! what true happiness I find at home with my wife and children;" and your children, too, may have a right to say: "Oh! how pleasant does our beloved mother make our home, and how we like to be with her! would it could be so for all the time of our life in this world!" Amen!

## CONFERENCE III.

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### EVE

#### BANISHED FROM PARADISE.

WE have contemplated Eve in Paradise, and considered the various points of resemblance and dissimilarity between her and the glorious Mother of God. Let us to-day glance at our first Mother, fallen, and cast out of Paradise, that home of bliss. Let us, her children, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears, imagine how sharp that sword of sorrow was which pierced the heart of Eve expelled from Paradise.

*Our hearts feel any loss all the more deeply in proportion to the value of the treasure of which it has been deprived, and the depth of woe into which the mourner is thereby plunged. Imagine, then, the sorrow which overwhelmed the hapless Eve, for both those circumstances conspired, in an extraordinary degree, to make her feel her loss, and thrust the sword of sorrow more deeply in her heart.*

---

The life of our first mother, before the fall, was full of bliss. Eden afforded all that tended to make life pleasant, and she had not a wish ungratified. Be-

sides, the assurance that after the close of her earthly career, she would pass to heaven without the pain of death, filled her with delight. There she would contemplate God, being united with Him in His infinite bliss eternally. But now she stood outside the gates of Paradise, alas! forever closed upon her, and gazed with sad despair on the sad scene which met her eye. There was the earth—dreary, desolate, with nothing to give save thorns and thistles, unless, indeed, in return for weary labor, which would well bring forth the sweat upon that brow untouched, as yet, by aught less the gentle zephyr's breath. There, too, she saw a train of spectres, gaunt and grim, stalking to meet her;—hunger, heat and cold, sickness and sorrow, and, last of all, *death*, presented themselves to her view.

The portals of heaven were closed,—the infernal gates thrown open, and all through her disobedience, which not only wrought her own misery, but that of Adam she had lured to sin, and of all the millions yet unborn, her descendants to the end of time. Oh! what streams of tears fell from her eyes in that supreme moment, as, too late, alas! she understood her mighty loss, and felt the woe the future held within its depths.

Christian mothers! glance in spirit at the sorrowing Eve, as, with a heart throbbing in vain regret, she vents her bitter grief.

Hers was indeed a sorrow whose dark night would have been uncheered by a single ray of hope, had

she not been assured by God Himself, that a Redeemer would come.

Oh! with what reverence did she already salute that most privileged of her daughters, through whom the saving Messiah would enter the world to transform the curse of sin, which *she* had brought therein, into a blessing, and the loss *she* had caused, into eternal gain.

In her deep dejection she was also sustained by the thought that through a penitential life in the hope of Christ, she could be reconciled to God, and implore from Him, until the end of time, grace and salvation for her children.

Turning from Eve, let us now glance at Mary, while we contemplate the sword of sorrow which pierced her heart, and sank deep therein, at the moment of the venerable Simeon's prophecy. Yes, so deeply did it sink that the wound remained and grew more painful until that agonizing moment when she stood beneath the cross.

Let us contemplate Mary—the lovely Virgin and mother, whose heart was so full of the golden virtue, humility, that she aspired to no greater honor than to be the lowly handmaid of the mother of the coming Messiah, as herself revealing it to St. Bridget,—entering the temple, herself the Mother of the promised Babe. Simeon reverently greets her and the Divine Child, embraces and kisses the infant God, and places it again in its Mother's arms. Over her soul then rushed a tide of joy, such as she felt when she was



saluted as Mother of God by the Angel. But, alas! who can depict the grief which was now to pierce her soul. Simeon, illumined with light from above, pronounced the prophetic words: "This Child is set for the fall,—the ruin,—and the resurrection of many, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thine own soul a sword shall pierce." As the venerable servant of God uttered these words, the veil which hung over the future's mysterious depths was drawn aside, and, as in a clear mirror, Mary beheld the life which henceforth she was to lead. She saw the torments to be heaped on her innocent Babe—His agony and death!

She, the mother of sorrow, beheld the part she would have therein, and, next to Jesus, no human being has ever felt such pain and grief as penetrated her inmost heart.

Mother of sorrows, Queen of martyrs—well do we style thee so!

Listen to what Mary herself revealed to her faithful servant St. Bridget: "My child," said the Mother of God, "the passion and death of my Divine Son was in every phase of our loving intercourse, continually before me."

Thus, when I held Him in my arms, and pressed upon His lips a mother's kiss, I thought of that kiss which the traitor Judas would imprint thereon, and anguish filled my heart.

When I drew the swaddling-clothes around my little Babe, I thought of the cords with which His cruel

foes would bind that tender form, and sorrow's sword sank deep into my heart:

• When I saw Him first attempt to walk, and watched with all a mother's care His wavering steps, oh! how my thoughts wandered to the days to come! the dreadful time when, laden with the heavy Cross, His weary limbs would scarcely guide Him through Jerusalem.

When I took my Divine Child in my arms for a mother's fond embrace, there, before my eyes, I would seem to see the scourge with which they would tear the flesh of His most tender body.

When I gazed on His locks of shining gold, and smoothed them with tender care, I saw in spirit the thorny crown which would be pressed upon His brow, whose sharp points would penetrate his delicate skull. And when He closed His little eyes and slept, I could not but think of the bitter hour when they would be closed by the cruel death on the Cross!

If thus, with every hour, as the Passion of Christ drew near and still more near, the sword of grief sank deeper in Mary's soul, her maternal heart was pierced to its very bottom, as she stood by the Cross and saw Him drain the cup of anguish to its dregs.

Nevertheless, what were the affections of this her heart, almost lacerated by sorrow? I say they were: *Adoration, Gratitude, Resignation* to the divine will—perfect sacrifice!

Wives and mothers! for whom also there is no other way to heaven than the royal road of the Cross, re-

flect that you, as fallen children of Eve, can see all that must support and console you, in that weeping mother in our glorious model Mary, the true Mother of sorrows.

Look upon her, that, like her, you may merit in the suffering that God pleases to send you, by saying with Her: "Thy will be done."

I have said that Mary's first feelings, when the sword sank so deep into her aching heart, were those of deepest *adoration*.

Well she knew that no power of man could torture her only Son in any manner which God did not permit. If He had not so ordained it in heaven for the Redemption of the human race, their work would have failed! She *adored* God, and *thanked* Him for this suffering, for she knew it would be the source of universal forgiveness, of merit, of joy for all eternity; and she was happy to know that, after her beloved Son, God deemed her worthy to suffer more agonizing grief than any one else on earth, and to stand the nearest beneath the Cross on which He died. She united her *will* wholly and entirely with the Divine *Will*, and offered with it her own grief for the salvation of souls, through Christ, to the eternal Father.

Catholic mother! what an example for you thus to sanctify your life, by the exercise of holy patience in afflictions. What an occasion of merit! I remind you thus early in this series of conferences of the great necessity of *patience*; for the fulfillment of your du-

ties as wife and mother is, in a most special manner, united with sacrifice and suffering.

Eve was the first upon this earth to sin, and you wives especially must therefore, bear the consequences of her fall until the end of time.

Yes, many a wife and mother, especially in America, is, indeed, a *martyr*; but listen to my advice: In all your troubles, look upon Mary and imitate her bright example; try to adore the will of God, who has ordained that it should be so. Do not look upon your trouble in the light of a calamity, but rather regard every affliction which may fall to your lot as an opportunity of proving your love for God. Conform your will to His, and offer up your grief with the intention of obtaining the divine mercy for your husband and children, that they may, with you, enjoy once the bliss of heaven.

In the dark hour of adversity, which so often casts a shadow upon the family circle, it has the worst influence upon the children to see their mother full of bitterness, and evincing a total want of resignation.

Oh! how sad it is, if, instead of encouraging the family to view the trouble in the light of faith, and strengthening them to bear the Cross patiently, she increases its weight a hundred-fold by murmurings and complaints.

How terrible to act thus before those to whom she is bound to set a good example! Sometimes even grievous sin may be committed by such a want of resignation, and even curses are pronounced. Remem-

ber, wives and mothers, that you have offended God more frequently and more grievously than Eve; and interrogate your own hearts as to whether you have any reason to complain, especially if you take in consideration that God permits you to suffer in this world that your purgatory may not be so long in the next.

It is most important, therefore, that I direct your attention to this disposition of heart at the very outset; for each one of you has, in a greater or less degree, her household cross. I admonish you all to receive your own as coming from God, and not from man. Bear it in union with the Passion and merits of Jesus and Mary, and show your husband and children that your will is indeed united with the holy will of God.

Implore St. Ann to pray for you. Until the next conference say daily, in her honor, one fervent Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the grace of perfect union with the most holy will of God, when, in the weary trials of life the sword of sorrow sinks deep into your hearts. Then you may truly be styled: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE IV.

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### SARAH,

#### THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM.

TO-DAY we will glance at the second of those holy women of the Old Law, of whom the Scripture makes honorable mention. I allude to *Sarah*, the wife of the patriarch Abraham, who in Holy Writ is styled the “*father of the faithful*,” through whose posterity all generations on earth shall be forever blessed.

*In Sarah, also, the Holy Fathers beheld a prototype, a prefigurement of Mary, and, in fact, Holy Scripture mentions many things in her life which bear a resemblance to certain points in the life of the Mother of God; and should induce you, wives and mothers, to follow the example of her, who was full of grace; above all, in regard to the power of faith, for the sanctification of your lives.*

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First of all, the name *Sarah* itself points to the grandeur and dignity of Mary in the kingdom of God; for its signification is “princess,” a title which indeed, is due to Mary in a far greater degree than to Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

He was in a manner a Prince, being a Patriarch and father of a posterity so numerous that it grew to be an entire nation, among whose sons were David, from whose royal line the Messiah was, in future ages, to come; and to which Solomon belonged, a monarch more famed for royal splendor than was any other king.

Mary, however, the daughter of David, was destined to be the mother of Him who said of Himself: "Here is more than Solomon;" of Him who declared: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth;" by whose entrance into this world the call to all Angels resounded: "All angels shall adore Him as their King." Mary was destined to become the Mother of Him, Whom St. John beheld in the Apocalypse as having His loins girded, with the inscription "King of kings, Lord of lords," and His head adorned with many diadems.

Princess! Yes, such is, indeed, a most fitting title for Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Sarah leaves the house of her father, follows Abraham, and, later on, journeys with him to Egypt.

Mary leaves the paternal dwelling to withdraw, in accordance with the most holy will of God, to the vicinity of the temple there to prepare for the coming of the Redeemer of the world Whom, in after years, she takes with her to Egypt, to save Him from His foe.

Three Angels appear to Sarah, and announce to her that, through the power of God, she is, in her declining years, to become the mother of a son.

The Archangel Gabriel, from the throne of the triune God, brings unto Mary the message that she, a tender Virgin, is to become the Mother of God, according to the flesh.

The Angels spoke thus to Sarah: "Is there any thing impossible with God?" "With God nothing is impossible," reiterated the Angel Gabriel to Mary.

Sarah brings forth a son who, from what the Scripture relates of Abraham's sacrifice, became a prefigurement of Him who, laden with the heavy Cross, ascended Calvary.

"Sacrifice your son to Me," thus spoke God to Abraham; and obediently the Patriarch placed the faggots upon the shoulders of his only son, and bade him carry them to the mountain top. "Because thou hast done this," spoke the Lord, "I will multiply thy seed, even as the stars in the firmament and the grains of sand on the sea-shore." This great promise was fulfilled through Isaac who, as it were, arose from the death of sacrifice when he descended Mount Moriah with his father.

In a far higher sense all mankind was blessed by Jesus, the Son of Mary.

Isaias calls Sarah the mother of the faithful. Far more justly does Mary merit this title, since she became the mother of the Founder of our Holy Faith.

One circumstance plainly shows the degree of virtue which distinguishes Mary from Sarah, and which should induce you all to take Mary as your model and guide. It is this: Sarah laughed when



the Angels told her that she would conceive a son. Mary, filled with the greatest earnest, pronounced the "Fiat:" "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." These words issued from her lips with such power of faith that St. Bernard does not hesitate to compare this "fiat" of the Blessed Virgin Mary, after which the Son of God became man, and called the creation of Grace into existence, with that "fiat" pronounced by God: "*Fiat lux*"—"Let there be light"—by which the creation of Nature was called into existence.

Moreover, the "fiat" of the Lord, at the creation, called forth creatures from nothing; but the "fiat" of the Virgin introduced God Himself apparently in the rank of creatures, through the personal union of the Son of God with that human nature which He took from her.

Hence, the salutation of Elizabeth to Mary: "Blessed art thou who hast *believed*;" and the assurance of Christ for the greater praise of His Blessed Mother: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it."

From thence, also, proceed the great praises bestowed by the Church and the Holy Fathers upon Mary for the sublimity of her *faith*.

Witness Tertullian: "Eve believed the serpent—Mary doubted even an Angel until he proved his word to be the word of God. What Eve perpetrated through credulity, Mary extirpated by a firm faith."

St. Irenaeus, a disciple of him who had been a pupil

of St. John, also says: "What Eve fettered by her want of faith, Mary loosened by her vivid faith."

"More blessed is Mary," exclaims St. Augustine, "that she received Jesus in faith than that she became His mother according to the flesh."

St. Methodius calls her "the light of faith;" St. Cyril, of Alexandria, "the scepter of orthodox faith."

But the words of St. Jerome, which I will cite, are especially remarkable. He says: "What was impossible to nature, reason could not comprehend, nor the mind conceive; what the heaven was amazed at, and the earth afraid of, was announced by the Angels and believed by Mary."

The Church herself salutes Mary as the one who crushed all heresies which ever attacked holy faith, and venerates Mary as its most powerful protectress.

What specially distinguished Mary's faith above that of both men and Angels, was its *depth*, vast extent, wonderful *effect*, and invincible *strength*. The Angel speaks to her; he tells her of that wonderful mystery, the Incarnation of the Son of God. This is a sufficient proof that even the mystery of the most Holy Trinity was revealed to her. As all the decrees of the Triune God, past, present, and to come, were ever before Christ, so were they also unveiled to His Blessed Mother, who is even saluted by the Church as the seat of Divine Wisdom, as Queen of Angels, as Queen of those venerable servants of God, the Patriarchs.

Her faith was, at the same time, in the highest

sense *fruitful*, because the Founder of Faith Himself was the fruit of her, and, by imitating Him, her life became filled with the highest and most abundant and precious fruits of virtues growing from the root of her faith.

The *plenitude* of her faith was finally manifested by the firmness with which, as Queen of Martyrs, she made profession of on Calvary beneath the Cross.

The first lesson which all Christians, but you especially, should derive from this, as a condition for a zealous fulfillment of every duty of your vocation, as wives and mothers, is to cultivate a high *appreciation* of the precious treasure of faith.

How many mothers, alas! do we meet who are indeed children of the Catholic Church, but who, in the daily walk of life, are sadly deficient in the vivid consciousness of what privilege it is to be in the one true fold.

They are often Christians from habit alone; Catholics, because they have been bred in the Church. They know nothing, however, of the utterly helpless condition in which they would have been, if God had not given them Catholic parents, thus saving them from growing up in the darkness of error and unbelief.

Purity of faith too often is wanting. So many, as mere Christians of habit, are prone to superstition. Faith, in its whole extent, is not known by them, because they are not sufficiently instructed, and its influence upon their lives is weak, and often entirely lost, because they do not properly consider the *promises*, the truths, the *threatenings* of faith.

And when God, in His infinite mercy, sees fit to test their fidelity by crosses and sufferings, then their conduct stands forth entirely wanting in that perseverance and strength which should be derived from a faithful observance of the precepts of faith.

O Christian wives and mothers! thank God every day and every hour that you are so happy as to be children of the Holy Catholic Church. Reflect that, had it been otherwise, the hope for your own salvation, and that of your husband and children too, would have been slight indeed; for, groping in the darkness of error and infidelity, no light would have illuminated your soul to a proper knowledge of your duties towards your husband and children, and no strength would have been given to the fulfillment thereof.

But now, how radiant is the light which faith diffuses over your souls, to illumine your pathway through life! How ample the means supplied by the Church in order that, living obedient to her laws, you may do all that is required of you, as wives and mothers, and thus sanctify your state of life!

“Holy Mother St. Ann, obtain for these, thy devout clients, so perfect an appreciation of their holy *faith*, that they also may do their part in obtaining the same disposition of heart for their husbands and children.” Until the next conference, then, say daily one Ave Maria, for this intention, in honor of St. Ann, the mother of Mary. If you really appreciate holy faith more than all the honors and treasures of the world, “blessed art thou among women!” Amen!

## CONFERENCE V.

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SARAH,

THE MOTHER OF ISAAC.

SARAH, the spouse of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, as he is styled by Holy Scripture, afforded me occasion to remind you all of the significance of the salutation with which St. Elizabeth saluted Mary, namely: "Blessed art thou who hast *believed*." But, by what I told you in the last conference, I tried to inspire your heart with the greatest esteem of your vocation to the true Church of God, in which only true faith is found. We considered the perfection of this theological virtue in Mary. This day I will devote to show to you how important it is, not only to appreciate the gift of faith, but to be most assiduous and careful that the truths of faith, with its promises and threats, exert a constant influence upon our whole *life*. They should encourage us continually to give testimony of the strength of our faith by a life in which fervent piety and a strict discharge of every duty will render us a model to all around us.

Merely to say, "I believe all that the Catholic Church proposes to our belief," is not sufficient. You say, "*I believe*;" so does Satan. Says the Apostle St. James: "Prove your faith by your works."

Therefore, the theme of this conference will be the sentence:

*“Even as the root is for the fruit-tree, so is faith to the truly Catholic life.”*

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First, in your quality as a wife, consider how important it is to remember the words of St. Paul: “Let the wife sanctify her husband.” To this, in a perfect manner, faith, in its full power, should animate the heart, not only of the husband, but of the wife also. She must be well instructed in our holy religion, and have a clear appreciation of the sanctity and dignity of her calling as a *wife*.

Faith tells her that matrimony is not an ordinary state *instituted* only for individuals to live together as heathens do. It will remind her that it was not instituted for the propagation of the human race only, but that husband and wife might assist each other to serve God and advance on the way of salvation with virtue and zeal; that, having once shared the ills of earth, they may enjoy, in holy union, the joys of heaven.

The Christian wife should often remember that Christ elevated this state to the dignity of a Sacrament, that the married pair should ever have sufficient grace to fulfill the duties incumbent upon them. Even while yet a maiden before marriage, she should have been guided by the presence of this lively faith in her heart, asking herself: “Shall I enter the state

of matrimony, or not? Is it really the will of God that I should do so? Or does He not prefer that I should serve Him as His chosen spouse in the religious life?" And if, aided by the guidance of her Confessor and spiritual Father, the Vicar of Christ, she should hear His voice calling her to the state of marriage, what motive should influence her choice, especially, if there are several aspirants? She has to ask herself: Is the one, I am inclined to favor most, a person who would lead me to a better life, and assist me to serve God faithfully in union with Him? If we should have children, would he try to rear them for heaven? Or, can I already see, that so far from being an aid—a help—he would rather prevent my efforts for myself and their religious good?

But, alas! how few maidens are there who pause for such considerations as those, but enter the married state with motives far different from those which *faith* would suggest to the mind.

Some approach the nuptial altar influenced by mere sensual inclination, and think more of the worldly wealth of him whom they have chosen as spouse, and whether they can lead with him a life undimmed by sorrow's cloud, than of what should influence their thoughts at such a time, in regard to salvation.

How many are there who hesitate not even to choose one who believes in nothing whatever; who cares not for religion; who, it may be, is even not baptized, and therefore not a child of the only true

Church,—the only one wherein salvation can be found.

What, then? The result can not fail to be, in a spiritual regard, utterly lamentable. Many a wife who is present to-day, knows, by her own sad experience, that I speak the truth. Yes, she knows it more fully than I can express!

Faith should also influence the maiden, after she has plighted her troth, to make fitting preparation to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, which includes a strict abhorrence of all improper freedom, by which, no matter how trifling she may consider it, she would grievously offend God. Therefore, for prudence sake, it has to be her unshakable maxim, never to be alone with her betrothed, for an engagement can not be admitted as a plea for unlawful freedom.

Illuminated by faith, let her reflect that upon the preparation she makes, before approaching the hy-menial altar, depends a great deal the measure of grace she will receive, in the Sacrament of Marriage, to assist her in fulfilling the duties of her state. Throughout her whole life it will be a source of joy to her to reflect, that she entered upon this new state of life with a heart, pure and unstained by sin, and, on the contrary, a cause of torment and remorse if this were not the case.

These remarks, it is true, are more appropriate for young girls who intend to marry than to you who are already wives; but I would earnestly admonish you, that, if conscience reproaches you with any sin com-



mitted during your engagement, and not confessed properly, if confessed at all, to repair the evil now. Live no longer in this state of sin, make a good confession, and feel how sweet it is to be reconciled with God!

Every one, penetrated by faith, and filled with love for the rules of our Holy Church, contracting marriage, should, in accordance with the wishes of this Holy Mother give her hand to her chosen spouse during Mass, and receive not only the nuptial benediction from the priest, but invite Christ himself by a worthy Communion into her heart. Blessed, indeed, are ye, O Catholic wives! if it has been so with you.

But if not, I repeat my advice: Repent from the very depths of your hearts if, during your engagement, you have offended God, and begin from this very day to fulfill all the duties of your state. Let each one here fulfill her duties towards her husband as she views them through holy faith.

I would impress upon you, above all, not to be to him the occasion of sin. Do not anger him by any failure in your duty as careful house-keeper.

Observe cleanliness in every part of the house; arrange your dwellings with taste and order; provide, as much as you can, a good table; and bear with his daily faults and frequent failings in the spirit of self-denial and patience.

That you may do so, a *daily*—and particular—examination of *conscience* will be advisable; especially preserve *peace* with your husband, cost what it may.

Whenever occasion offers, show him some little act of kindness, and thus open his heart to receive your admonitions, and repent if he has wandered from the path of right.

In regard to the *married* life, be careful to live together in a manner befitting the Christian wife and husband, whose only aim is that for which our Lord instituted matrimony; and if you are in doubt as to whether you are doing so, consult your confessor on the subject. Be not content, however, merely with not being an occasion of sin to your husband, but let your example shine forth before him, so that it can not fail to impress him with the beauty of virtue, and lead him to walk by your side in the faithful service of God.

Use well the means given to the children of the Church to lead good and pious lives in their various vocations.

Let the incense of your fervent prayers, which you offer to the throne of grace, with the early dawn and at the close of day, serve to sanctify his soul also.

Set him an example of zeal, not only in assisting at Mass, and reading spiritual books, in the evening with your children, but in frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments. The well-known proverb: "Words move—examples draw," is here especially applicable. If a wife approaches the Holy Table at long intervals only—once a year, for instance—I need not be told that, generally speaking, her husband is not more devout; but if she is truly pious, often seeks

forgiveness of her sins in the sacred Tribunal of Penance, and receives her Lord in Holy Communion with love and fervor, united with a strict fulfillment of the duties of her state of life, her husband, too, will feel induced to display a similar fervor in the practice of a pious life.

If, however, any one who listens to my words to-day, can say that, in spite of all her efforts to set a good example, her husband does not reciprocate her zeal,—do not be discouraged—continue to pray, invoke his guardian angel to pray with you, and recommend his soul to the special patronage of St. Joseph, and the protection of the ever Blessed Virgin.

Then when time shall merge for her into eternal life, she will have the sweet consolation of hearing from him for whose welfare she labored so well, “that had it not been for her, never would he have recognized the truth and importance of our holy faith, and thus been brought to enter the fold of Christ.” Or, if he was already a Catholic, but an indifferent one, his gratitude would thus find vent: “Ah, my dearest wife, had it not been for you, I would have lost my faith, and, living like the children of the world, I would have been lost—forever lost. Heaven I owe to you.”

Both the Lives of the Saints and the history of the Church go to prove the beneficial effect and influence of saintly women in regard to their husbands.

And not only that, but they have even been instrumental in converting entire nations to Christianity. So did Hedwig, Clotilda, and other holy wives of

kings and princes. It is the duty of the faithful Catholic wife, and has ever been so, to be the guardian angel of her husband, as St. Monica was in regard to her husband in old times. It is *doubly* so to-day when apostasy from Christianity is stalking over the land with such gigantic strides, and a new paganism is preparing which is of a special danger to your husbands, on account of the intercourse with unbelievers and infidels which, arising from business relations, they can not always avoid. Invoke the intercession of St. Ann, by saying daily, in her honor, until the next conference, one fervent Ave Maria, that she may obtain for your families the great spiritual advantage of beholding in you a true model of a soul living in the light of an active and brightly shining faith. You, by living through *faith*, would merit indeed the eulogy: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE VI.

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REBECCA,

THE WIFE OF ISAAC.

AMONG the devout female sex, of whom Holy Scripture makes honorable mention, Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, holds the third place. In this maiden, who was, with such great solicitude, chosen from among all others for the Patriarch Isaac, we also behold a prefigurement—a proto-type of Mary,—and the Church herself salutes the ever Blessed Virgin in the Litany with the title: “Mother most amiable.”

*Let this remind you all of one particular trait which should beautify the character of every wife and mother.*

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I speak to-day of the virtue of *kindness*, of the desire of a wife and mother to promote the *happiness* of her husband and children, and, indeed, of all with whom she has any intercourse, as far as she can, so that a beautiful little halo of amiability will surround her every act. I will address you to-day on this virtue of amiability, so essential to all in your state of life.

First, in regard to the signification of the name, "Rebecca." It means "she received much." Now, let me ask you to whom may this name be applied more fittingly than to Mary? In presence of Elizabeth, upon Judea's lofty mount, in a transport of joy and gratitude, this ever-blessed Virgin intoned that sublime canticle, The Magnificat: "For He Who is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His Name."

Christian wife and mother, you who have had the happiness of being called to the true faith, to you also is it given to rejoice. Reflect upon it! From among millions and nations, to whom that happiness was never given, the Lord selected you.

Think of the four thousand years before Christ! How many, during that time, arose on the face of the earth, and passed away! How many lived in the married state! How many, during so many thousand years, lived as mothers, who, unlike you, had not the light of faith to recognize, with unerring certainty, the way of salvation and to walk therein!

But you are still more favored. By the light of faith and the means of grace with which God, in His munificence has provided you, being a member of His Divine Church, you can lead husband and children also to the love and service of the Lord,—leading them by doing so, to heaven.

Dwell, also, upon the vast number who, since the coming of Christ, for nearly two thousand years, have lived on earth, groping in the darkness of heathenism

and error, and remaining thus in the shadow of spiritual death.

My friends! as no one ever lived, nor will live, who can form a proper appreciation of the graces bestowed upon Mary, through Jesus Christ, so none of you can ever compute, or be sufficiently thankful, for the many graces which God has already bestowed, and will yet bestow, upon you, as Christian wives and mothers.

Only in heaven, where you will be face to face with God, will be drawn aside the veil which now conceals them; and then, with Mary, you will give vent to your boundless gratitude to Him, "Who has done great things to you," always supposing that you have made good use of those gifts, imitating the example of Mary, whose type was Rebecca.

Rebecca appeared at the well as Eliezer approached to seek a spouse for Isaac, the son of Abraham. The qualities by which he recognized that she was the one destined by God for Isaac were that *amiability* and exceeding *kindness*, which prompted her not only to give him the refreshing drink of cool water he requested, but also to remember the thirsty camels.

Then Eliezer prayed thus: "All praise and glory unto the Lord, the God of Abraham, my Lord. Mercy hath been vouchsafed to me, and I have been conducted the right way."

And as a sign that he recognized Rebecca to be the spouse selected for Isaac by the Lord, he presented her with the rich gifts he had brought with him—"ear-rings" and "bracelets" of glittering gold,

*vessels* richly wrought in gold and silver, and *raiment* wherewith to adorn herself on the wedding day.

Not content with this, he presented rare gifts to the mother and relatives of the gentle maiden, who, when asked whether she would consent to receive as her spouse his lord and master Isaac, replied in the affirmative, and withdrew. Her friends congratulated her, and wished that her children and descendants might increase and multiply, and her seed possess the gates of her enemies. Let us consider the symbolical meaning of these mentioned bridal gifts as reflected in the life of Mary.

With regard to her, these *ear-rings* signify the readiness with which she ever listened to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, whose chosen spouse she was—in the divine decree. It was the angel Gabriel who brought unto her the message she *heard* from his lips, and which filled the world with joy and man with hope.

The *bracelets* signify the *resoluteness* and *fidelity* with which she made use of this grace in life to fulfill the will of God in the most perfect manner.

These ear-rings and bracelets contain a most important lesson for you, O Christian wives and mothers!—a lesson replete with the deepest meaning, which, I trust, you considered well, when about to enter the married state.

Did you then *listen* to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost—those promptings which the Spirit of Truth whispered to you? Did you, O Catholic matron! en-



deavor to *select* a husband who would help you to fulfill the will of God, not only in relation to himself, but in regard to yourself and the children with whom you might be blessed?

Oh! how necessary for a wife, who fain would merit the eulogy pronounced upon the valiant woman, are these emblematic ear-rings and bracelets to enable her to hear the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and to perform all her actions in a manner befitting the Christian wife and mother.

Happy the wife who heeds neither the promptings of flesh and blood, nor the advice of the worldling, but who listens to the inspirations of the Spirit of Light and Truth.

Rebecca stood by the *well*, a lovely personification of kindness. Her appearance and manner are emblematic of that quality of Mary's heart which gained for her the title "Mother of Grace and Refuge of Sinners," and refer to that attribute of the Blessed Virgin through which she is distinguished as Mother of the children of God—namely, her great *kindness*.

This is a virtue I would earnestly recommend each one of you. Ah! yes, the well-spring of grace is a fountain which never fails, and Mary remains ever near it, a lovely and gracious image of heavenly kindness, giving to all who come thither, thirsting after God and heaven through Christ our Lord, refreshing draughts of living water.

Jesus, when speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, in Sechem, also makes use of this

comparison in regard to Himself. He is, indeed, the author of all grace ; but to Mary He has given its *distribution*, according to the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquin.

Kindness of heart, and a disposition to do us a favor, or to assist us in any necessity, will more readily than aught else attract us to another, and therefore also to Mary, as she manifests this disposition in an extraordinary degree in our regard.

As the Holy Fathers remark, she is compared with the Scriptures to an "*olive tree standing in an open field.*" *Oil* is the figure of goodness ; and it is fitting, indeed, that this blessed tree should be so situated that every one, the weak and the strong, the young and the old, might approach it with the greatest ease.

It is fitting, indeed, as Cardinal Hugh remarks, that this blessed tree should stand in the *open field*, that all may easily perceive it, and direct their steps thereto.

This quality—kindness, amiability, goodness—should, in an especial manner, distinguish the Christian wife and mother, in whose every act should also shine forth the virtues of *meekness* and *mildness*.

Oh ! what an incentive to perfect confidence, on the part of a husband, is the knowledge that the heart of his wife is disposed in this way. How cheerfully will he listen to admonitions which come with sweetness from her lips, while he would turn a deaf ear to counsels the most admirable, but given in a harsh and

bitter manner, serving rather to wound the feelings than to convince him, that she has only his good in view.

I need not tell you that if you would wish to enter by a door, yet fail to apply the proper key in the proper manner, no matter what efforts you make to open that door, they would be all in vain.

The *key* by which a wife can always obtain entrance to her husband's heart is kindness; unvarying kindness, which does not shrink from the severest tests, is an evident proof of devoted love.

What I have said in regard to your husbands, applies equally as well to your children, whose little hearts, always susceptible to the loving word and tender cares, will never refuse to obey the admonitions administered by a tender mother. What if one would scatter corn to the barn-yard fowls, as they throng around, with one hand, and with a broom in the other to strike them! Surely they would drop the food and run away. Even so would it be with a mother, who, while she indeed provides food for her children, *spiritual as well as temporal*, corrects them with angry words; it may be with severe blows, and often too, alas! with oaths and curses.

To say nothing of the great necessity which exists for a wife and mother to cultivate the spirit of meekness, mildness, and amiability, since there is not a moment of her life which does not call for the exercise of these virtues. There are two vices, in particular, into which the children are easily seduced by the evil

example of an angry mother. I allude to *cursing* and *quarreling*, which, later on, will degenerate into a spirit of *enmity* with all.

Even when children deserve to be punished, it should be done with perfect calmness, and in such a manner as to impress the culprit child with the persuasion that the mother is only doing her duty, in the hope of correcting its faults, and bringing it up in the love and service of God. You may rest assured that the example and influence of the mother, whose whole bearing towards her children is marked with gentleness, sympathy, and constant kindness, will be most effectual in inducing them to follow her advice and accept her commands.

The *bracelets* are emblematic of the faithful *use* of the graces bestowed by God for the zealous fulfillment of the duties belonging to your state of life, even at the cost of a self-conquest most painful to human nature.

Christian wives! forget not that Eve was given to Adam as a "help-mate," a truth which possesses far greater significance *now*, since, after the fall of these two frail and erring creatures, Adam received, through the wrath of an offended God, the sentence that thenceforth his bread was only to be obtained by weary toil: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread."

Fail not, then, to assist your husband to the best of your ability and according to your strength. Lighten his toil by a diligent care for household af-

fairs. Avoid idleness; do not give way to *vanity*, or an excessive love of *amusements*, and conquer that passion for *dress* through which you might become an intolerable burden to your husband. All this may be applied to the care which, in general, you are bound to exercise over your children and household, particularly if God has blessed you with a large family, for whom the father finds it difficult to provide. It is, however, of far greater importance yet that you attend to the spiritual wants of your husband and children. Use every effort to aid them in working out their salvation; never weary of trying to lead them to God, and show that your greatest desire is to see them advance in the way of perfection.

O wife! mother! what responsive echo does thy life return to this? Happy, thrice happy art thou if, replenished with the spirit of kindness and love, thou dost dwell in the midst of thy family. Thy deeds of faithful solicitude for the temporal and eternal welfare of thy husband and children will, like so many precious stones, adorn the heavenly *garment* in which the Lord, at the marriage-feast of the Lamb, will conduct thy beatified soul into the communion of the blessed. Invoke the assistance of St. Ann, and say daily in her honor until the next conference one fervent Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you that beautiful disposition of goodness, kindness, meekness, and amiability. Adorned with these virtues, you indeed merit the eulogy: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE VII.

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REBECCA,

THE MOTHER OF JACOB.

I N the last conference we dwelt upon the value and importance of *amiability* in the character of the Christian wife and mother, and considered how it conduces to win the confidence of her husband and children. As I then told you, the course of conduct which can not fail to arise from its cultivation and exercise, is of special import in obtaining that influence which a good wife and mother would wish to exert over her husband and children.

As you are well aware one of the titles by which the Church salutes Mary in her litany, is that of most "amiable" Mother. Another title given to Mary is that of most "prudent Virgin," and a special feast has been instituted by which she may be honored as "*Mother of Good Counsel.*"

In the very beginning of the apostolic life of Christ, His Blessed Mother proved herself indeed worthy of this title, when, at the marriage-feast of Cana, she thus spoke to the waiters: "Do ye all that He will tell you." And thus, with His faithful disciples as eye-

witnesses, the Saviour performed His first miracle, proving thus that he was indeed the Messiah.

It was Mary who gave the good *advice* to the waiters at Cana, saying: "All what He shall command you to do, do it."

*To-day, then, I will speak of the duty incumbent upon you all to assist your husbands and children with wise advice and salutary counsel.*

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*Rebecca*, at whom we will glance to-day as a pre-figuring type of Mary, imparted to her son an *advice* which proved most beneficial in enabling him to secure the blessing yielded to him by Esau.

Jacob received this blessing, because he accepted and acted upon the wise *counsel* of his mother, and not for once alone, for its effects were permanent. He saved himself and family because he, a second time, followed his mother's advice, and went "afar off" into a "strange country."

Every good wife and mother should esteem it her most sacred duty to impart the best advice, the wisest counsel, to those in whose welfare she is so deeply interested, for the twofold purpose that they, *as children of God*, may know what they should *do*, and what they must *avoid*, that they may retain the precious *right* to be called by that glorious name of a child of God, entitled to its inheritance in heaven.

*First*, Rebecca advises her son Jacob to endeavor to obtain for himself from Isaac, his father, the blessing awarded to the first-born.

This blessing represents all that regards our "*spiritual welfare*,"—the mercy of God towards us and the assistance which we desire from his grace to keep ever in view, in our every act, the great affair of salvation.

It represents the *determination* to save, not only our own souls, but to promote the spiritual welfare of those we love.

Blessed, indeed, is he whose wife is always ready with words of such wise and loving counsel, that, by his wife, he is reminded constantly that this world is not our home, that he might not be influenced by considerations of a merely temporal kind in conducting his business affairs; that he should never yield to the temptation of selecting, as a home for himself and family, a place where no facilities for assisting at divine worship in Church and for a Catholic education of his children are afforded; that he neither should enter into any business nor accept any office which will prevent him from performing his prayers and frequently receiving the Sacraments, or, perhaps, throw him into dangerous and unlawful associations, especially of secret societies and of habitual drunkards.

This is especially applicable to this country, where change, both of residence and business, is of such frequent occurrence, and where, with the greater number, temporal advantages possess such weight. And here the advice and influence of a good wife and mother can be productive of inestimable benefit to her husband and children, *especially* when the latter are of an age to choose a state of life.



They will be encouraged to repel all temptations of placing themselves in such circumstances as would endanger their souls.

The one thing necessary, my dear friends, is that you succeed in thoroughly instilling into their minds the force of these words of solemn import: "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he suffers damage for his soul?"

In consideration of this all-important truth, the Catholic matron should never weary in her efforts for the spiritual weal of those whom God has intrusted to her care. She must see that they avail themselves of those means of salvation, from which grace may be constantly derived, and which, as you all know, are principally prayer, instruction, zeal in assisting at divine service, and frequent reception of the Sacraments.

In these consists that *benediction* imparted to the children of God, by which they are specially distinguished from the "Esau," the children of the world!

All hail to her whose efforts, through her *counsel*, but still more through her *example*, have been so blessed by God that her husband never fails to begin and close the day with prayer; assists, when he can, at Mass during the week; spends the evening in the family circle, where he reads aloud the Life of the Saint for that day, or has it read by the children; and monthly approaches the Sacraments.

Happy, indeed, is the mother, who, through her wise counsel and good example, has instilled into the hearts of her children a spirit of tender piety; who leads

them to the practice of virtue, and who, above all, urges them to frequent and loving union with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Jacob, on his journey, beheld the mystical ladder upon which the Angels of God ascended and descended, and he exclaimed: "Truly, here is the house of God and the gates of heaven!" This, for us, is the holy *tabernacle*, and our intercourse with Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. And as Jacob said to the Lord: "I will not leave Thee until Thou dost bless me!" and he did indeed receive the Divine blessing; so, too, may every devout soul, who delights to visit Jesus in the Tabernacle, cry out. The Lord will listen to this desire, and impart to the faithful servant a greater knowledge of Himself in the interior life.

Jacob went to a *strange* country, and remained there, separated from his family, while we, far more privileged, can take up so easily our dwelling in a spot where is a Priest, and where we are, therefore, permitted to be with Jesus, Who is infinitely dearer to our hearts than father, or mother, or friends, be they ever so devotedly loved.

Rebecca advised Jacob to *fly* from the *danger* which threatened him, and here, too, she should serve as your model. Advise your husband, if you wish him to fly the *occasions* of sin, to avoid all intercourse with those who would lead him to the commission of sin. This is especially applicable in the case of a husband who is given to drink, or fond of squandering time in gambling.

With the same solicitude displayed by Rebecca, should you try to preserve your children from that which you know will be *dangerous* to their souls, and into which they are, alas! even at the most tender age, often too prone to rush. "Fly, my dearest child, from that occasion of sin; avoid that companion whom you know will cause you to wound the heart of a loving Saviour; avoid those dangerous amusements, especially during night, excursions, nightly picnics, balls, dances." Such should be the constant *advice* of a careful mother. It is generally evil *association* and *example* that destroy the effect of the best training, and open the way to the worst temptations, that scatter the best seed until it is trampled under foot and lost forever.

It is through evil association and example that children cause their parents the keenest pain and anguish, and deviate from the path of virtue, perhaps never again to return to it.

"Do as I bid thee, and all will be well," said Rebecca to her son. Every wife and mother should possess the confidence of her husband and children, to such a degree that the *advice* from her would be held in high and effective estimation.

What greater happiness for a wife, than to hear from the lips of her husband, that, having perfect trust in her piety and ability, he will, in all important things, ask her good advice.

How amply will a mother be repaid for her weary cares, when, from the fullness of a loving heart, her child exclaims: "My mother is so good, and knows

so well what is for my best welfare, that I can not do better than follow her advice."

What an honor, what a grace and blessing for you, could each one of you merit the title accorded by the Church to the Blessed Virgin: "Mother of Good Counsel!" That you may, indeed, be so favored, fail not to inculcate into the hearts of your children the most tender love, the greatest veneration for Mary. Urge them to love and honor her, to walk in her footsteps, and in all their difficulties to follow the advice given by her to the waiters at Cana: "Do all that He shall tell you."

In every trouble which may befall you, when life seems dark and dreary, and the weight of your care presses heavily upon you, glance at Jesus and Mary; and in their imitation, when you are in doubt as to the best course to pursue, you will invariably choose the better part which shall never be taken from you.

But in order that a mother may in all things manifest that she is, indeed, worthy to be called "Mother of Good Counsel," she must herself become a living temple of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God, and not of the world, must possess her heart, and she must implore frequently, fervently, the gift of counsel in its full plenitude from the Spirit of Light.

That this Divine Spirit may indeed bestow so precious a gift, the heart of her who seeks it, must be a heart filled with sincere love for the things which are above, and not carried away by a love of the world, and she herself must be one of those chosen souls of

whom the Scripture says: "They are urged by the Spirit of God."

There are, alas! too many mothers who are more solicitous for earth than heaven, for time than eternity; who, after the manner of worldlings, esteem it more important that they, with husband and children, obtain "the fat of the land," the blessing of Esau, for which they spare neither toil nor pains; while they evince the utmost negligence and tepidity in the discharge of their duties of Christian piety. What good can be expected from the children of a mother, who is not a living example of fervent piety?

According to the proverb: "No one can give what he does not possess." A stove is intended to heat a room, but under condition that it possesses heat itself. So, too, a mother, if she would aid others by good counsel to act according to the holy will of God, must first cultivate in her own heart so ardent a wish to do likewise, that her burning desire will impart its warmth to those she fain would aid.

If by her every act she evinces, that she herself lives only for God and heaven, then the admonitions which, in the daily walk of life, she is obliged to give to her family, will be well received, and productive of lasting good. Christian wives and mothers! invoke St. Ann; beg her to obtain for you grace; not only to act always for the best yourself, but to assist those you hold dear to do the same. For this intention, then, say daily until the next conference in honor of St. Ann, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, one Ave

Maria; adding the following prayer: "O holy mother St. Ann! obtain for me from the Holy Ghost the grace of 'good counsel,' for myself, for my husband, and for my children, to obtain with them the blessing of the primogeniture; that is, of our election to the inheritance of heaven." Yes, be, through the grace of God, a most prudent wife and mother in your family, a real mother of good counsel; and "blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE VIII.

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### RACHEL.

I WILL to-day present for your consideration, according to rank, one of the two holy women, of whom the Scripture makes honorable mention, from the time of the Patriarchs—Rachel, spouse of the Patriarch Jacob.

We will glance at her in spirit, and meditate upon those of her characteristics wherein she should remind us of Mary, and the benefit you may derive from the admonition contained therein for Christian married women.

In regard to Rachel, the Scriptures, in the first place, praise her wonderful *beauty*, and tell us, also, that she tended her father's *sheep*. In both regards she is a type of Mary; and Mary is the mirror of virtue, which you have to practice as wife and mother.

In this hour I wish to impress on you, especially, the obligation not only to give good advice to your husband and to your children, but to give also, in every regard, by your life, the encouragement and light of good *example*. Considering the qualities of Rachel, by which she became the type of Mary, I firstly point out her *beauty*, and how inexpressibly Rachel was

surpassed by the charms bestowed to Mary, the Mother of Christ. To understand this, we need only think of what that great Saint and servant of God, St. Denis, the Areopagite, an Apostolic Christian, and disciple of St. Paul, has said upon this subject. He may well speak thereupon, for he was so highly favored while still on earth, as to behold the Blessed Virgin Mary with his eyes. He says: "I esteem myself happy, infinitely happy, that I, through the goodness of God, have been permitted to behold the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, that amiable Virgin who far surpasses all heavenly spirits, and is even as much like unto God as a mere creature can be.

"When, therefore, St. John, the Prince of the Evangelists and Prophets, led me to the presence of this incomparable Virgin, I felt myself surrounded with a most wonderful light, and my heart replenished with such love and sweetness, that my very senses seemed about to leave me. I confess before God that, if Holy Faith had not taught me otherwise, I would not have taken Mary for a creature, but for a divinity."

But, however resplendent the exterior majesty, dignity and beauty of Mary must be, as Mother of Him Who is styled by Scripture the most beautiful of the children of men, immeasurably greater was her spiritual Majesty and Beauty, the merest glance at which threw even the Angels into an ecstasy.

According to the "Canticle of Canticles," these pure spirits thus gave vent to their joy at her assumption:



“Who is she, who is lifted up glorious as the sun, beautiful as the moon, even as a pillar of scent full of the sweetest fragrance?”

Behold an emblem of the beauty and sweet odor of virtue which sanctifying grace imparts to a soul! Every wife and mother should, by the light of her good example, so distinguish herself in the family circle as to win the love and admiration of all its members; so that, long after she has passed away, she will be spoken of and remembered through the fragrant odor which her virtue will diffuse, even from the other side of the grave.

It is well, indeed, with that wife to whose moral worth and sanctity her husband can bear willing testimony before God and man.

And happy is that mother, whether still in life or summoned to her eternal reward, of whose piety and goodness her children love to speak.

Wife! mother! long after the sun has beamed for many summers on your grave, and the snows of many winters have rested cold and white above your lifeless form, there will linger still, amid those you left behind, a silent monitor to warn, restrain or whisper words of cheer:—the memory of your holy life! My dear friends, the loveliness of virtue; believe me, is to be far more highly esteemed than mere personal beauty.

Rachel was at the same time a *shepherdess*. When Jacob, in his flight to Laban, drew near to the vicinity of his dwelling, he saw some shepherds in the fields, and interrogated them as to whether they knew La-

ban, and "how he was." They answered, saying: "We know him, and all is well with him; behold his daughter Rachel coming in with the flocks." And Jacob hastened to take away the stone that covered the well, and helped her to give drink to the thirsty sheep.

The above may be thus applied to the Blessed Mother of God: Mary, in the kingdom of her Divine Son, is the "good shepherdess," in the same sense in which Jesus styles Himself the "Good Shepherd," when he compares to sheep those souls which he came to lead to that fair and verdant pasture, the heavenly paradise; and all the qualities ascribed by our Divine Lord to Himself, when comparing Himself to the good shepherd, and to those who are indeed His sheep, are to be found in Mary, His beloved Mother, as the good shepherdess, and her faithful lambs.

Christ said of the redeemed human souls: "I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep, and they know Me, and hearing My voice, they hear and obey Me. I yield up My life for them, and no one is able to take them from My hands."

Mary may also say: "I am the good shepherdess; I know my sheep, and they know me."

When Christ hung upon the Cross in all the agony of bitter pain, He gave into her maternal care all those souls, who were one day to enter into His heavenly kingdom; and Mary knows them all. There is not a mother on earth who knows her darling

child as well as Mary knows each one of us ; not only in regard to the flesh, and those needs which only cease with life, but spiritually as well ; for every trial, with which God is pleased to visit us, is known to her loving heart.

Yes, she knows her sheep, and *they* know her ; they *hear* her voice, and they *obey* her. From her own pure and immaculate lips issued the prophetic words : “ And all generations shall call me blessed.” This loving *veneration* is, in fact, the mark by which the spirit of the lambs of the flock, the true disciples of Christ, the children of God are known and proved, according to the words of Simeon in the temple : “ On you the hearts of men shall be made manifest.” Where, indeed, throughout the vast expanse of earth could there be found a true servant of God, who is not at the same time a fervent, zealous servant of Mary ? And again, where could the Christian be found who, while his heart is penetrated with an ardent love of Mary, could be aught but a true servant of God ?

And here I may mention a historical fact, to which, as it has been scattered broadcast over the world, I need not hesitate to refer to, to substantiate the truth of the above. Protestants, misled by their founder, deny to Mary, the Mother of Him, Whom they acknowledge as their God and Saviour, the *salutation* which the Angel and St. Elizabeth bestowed upon her, according to the Gospel ; nay, they even go so far as to calumniate and vilify our devotion to her, and insist

that we honor Mary more than Jesus Himself. So far from this being true, those who have real devotion to the Blessed Mother walk constantly in the love and imitation of her Divine Son. And to this they are incited by the "word and example" of the "Good Shepherdess:" "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Therefore the Fathers and Doctors of the Holy Church, resting on the testimony of the Holy Scripture, assert with St. Alphonsus, that this devotion to Mary is a mark of perseverance to a blessed end, and therefore a mark of election for eternal life. "Whosoever finds me finds life, and will draw salvation from the Lord." Thus does the Holy Ghost speak of her as the Church explains: "I am the Mother of the knowledge of holy hope, and of fair love."

What Christ, as the Good Shepherd, declares of Himself, the Blessed Virgin may, through Him, assert in her own regard: "No one can take from Me the sheep given into my charge by My Father." So Mary may assert: "No one can take from me the sheep trusted by my Son into my charge." Therefore, O Mothers! let each one of you be, indeed, a "good shepherdess" to your children. They are the lambs of the flock of Christ. See that you lead them carefully along the path which ends in Paradise. Care for them from their earliest infancy with such earnest solicitude that you can truly say: "I know my children, and they know me; they know me, they hear my voice, and obey me. I speak loving words of cheer,

and thus lead them to pastures which furnish the most precious food for their souls. I correct them when they wander from the path, and bid them aim at something higher than to revel amid the fleeting joys of earth, to live happily, in the worldling's pernicious sense of the word.

"I warn them against plunging into pleasure's giddy maze, and teach them instead to seek for heavenly things.

"I guard them with a care which knows no rest from those ravenous wolves, those seducers of innocent youth, who walk abroad robed in garments of sheep, seeking to rob my little lambs of that sanctifying grace which gives life to the soul.

"For this I deem no toil too great, no sacrifice too keen; nay, I would shed the last drop of my blood to preserve pure and good those cherished ones, given me by God to rear for heaven, that we may meet in that happy home."

Christian mothers! behold, I have marked out the road whereon you must tread to prove that you are, indeed, faithful guardians of Christ's little lambs, and that your dearest wish is to lead them to what the Church, in enunciating the praises of Mary, styles that incomparable Virgin, "Gate of heaven." Yes, she is, indeed, the portal through which all may enter the lovely fields of Paradise, that delightful pasture which the Good Shepherd provides for those, who hear His voice and follow Him.

If the Catholic matron, as I told you, can best ful-

fill the duties of her state towards those souls intrusted to her care, she speaks more effectively by example than by words. She should impress on her children, especially, at the earliest possible age, to love Mary and be devout to her.

Believe me, this devotion is the source from which arise those numberless streams of grace which cast their living waters into the garden of the Church, to be distributed by Mary to her faithful children.

The Catholic, whose heart is filled with a tender devotion to Mary, goes with eager step to the pasture of the Divine *Word*, tastes of it with joy, and seizes every opportunity to be instructed in His faith.

The true child of Mary will possess a singular attraction to *prayer*, to devotion and piety, and will feel drawn, in a manner which he can not withstand, to the altar, where Christ's love to us constrains him to abide with the children of men.

The true child of Mary will feel an earnest desire to participate, to as great an extent as possible, in the happiness she felt in being near her Son; therefore he will frequently visit Jesus in the *Blessed Sacrament* and frequently unite with Him by a fervent Holy *Communion*.

The true child of Mary, in the hour of *temptation*, never fails to seek refuge with her, the Mother of God, the Conqueror of hell; so that, assisted by her heavenly power, it can, under her maternal shelter, crush the head of Satan.

Therefore, from the most tender years of childhood,

instill into the hearts of your children the *devotion* to the Blessed Virgin. To accomplish this provide a beautiful and devout picture of Mary, and let it be one where she is depicted with the little Infant in her arms; or a fine statue of her, to be placed in a distinguished part of the house. On Saturday and Sunday keep before it a lighted lamp, and, when the season permits, adorn the little shrine with fresh and fragrant flowers.

From the moment when the lisping accents of your child, in its first attempts to speak, delight your heart, teach it the name of Mary. Say, with your little one, the "Hail Mary;" and when the sound of the blessed bell rings out upon the air, recite devoutly the *Angelus Domini*, in honor of the Mother of God.

Take care that your child wears constantly a blessed *medal*, and, when it is old enough, have it invested with the *Scapular*. Assemble your family at certain times and recite the *Rosary* in common.

Let the month of *May* be marked by some special devotion to the Mother of God. For example, erect a little altar in her honor, and keep it tastefully adorned with lights and flowers during the whole month.

In conclusion, I would remind you all to implore the intercession of St. Ann, that she may obtain for you grace from God to walk as sheep which indeed belong to the flock of Mary, and as the "Good Shepherdess" of your children as well. Thus may they follow your example, and be filled with devotion to the Blessed Daughter of St. Ann, who will assist you to bring

them up faithful members of the one true Church. That this may be accomplished, say daily, until the next conference, in honor of St. Ann, one fervent Ave Maria, to obtain, through her intercession, the grace to guide your family by your good example, especially in regard to your *devotion* to *Mary*. If you succeed in that, "Blessed art thou among women!" Amen!



## CONFERENCE IX.

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### LIA.

IT is recorded of Lia, the second wife of Jacob, that God blessed her with children; while Rachel, for a long time, remained barren, and then brought forth but two, while, at the birth of the second child, she died.

*To-day I will compare this blessing conferred by the Lord upon Lia with the prerogative with which He has invested Mary as the mother of all the children of God, the mother of those who will one day win salvation and be forever blessed.*

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This comparison will give me occasion to call your attention to the *motherly* care with which you have to watch over your families. Yes, when the Lord declared unto Abraham: "I will multiply thy seed, even as the stars in the firmament and the sand upon the shores of the sea," this promise was fulfilled in Mary as the mother of Jesus, at Whose side she stood, the heavenly Eve, and Who, from the cross, committed to her those souls He had come to save: "Son, behold thy mother; Mother, behold thy son." St. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and in him Mary was

to behold all those children whose salvation the Lord commended and intrusted to her care.

She herself sings, in the "Magnificat:" "From henceforth all generations on earth shall call me blessed!"

Holy Scripture records of Lia: "that she was blear-eyed." This was with her a natural defect; but in Mary's beautiful eyes, the same condition, in a supernatural manner, was realized, not, indeed, to disfigure, but to adorn the lovely countenance of the Mother of God.

Who can compute the *tears* which fell from her *eyes*, as in agony and grief she wept beneath the cross? Truly might she have given to each one of her children the name chosen by the dying Rachel for the Babe just entering the world—*Benoni*—which signifies "Child of my sorrow."

In the hymn entoned by the Church, in commemoration of the seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, the following words are appropriately chanted: "What man can refrain from weeping at the sight of the tears of the dolorous Mother?" These tears should admonish you, O mothers! of the course to take when your hearts are torn with anguish—the grief of knowing that all your efforts, your wise counsel and good example, have been in vain.

Think of St. Monica, who spent her time praying and weeping for her husband and son, St. Augustine. For many years this beloved child trod the path which leads to ruin, yet his mother prayed on. She was

greatly consoled by the following words, spoken to her by a certain Bishop: "It can not be that the child of so many prayers and tears will perish."

Let this be a source of consolation to those mothers whose children fail to correspond with their unwearied care. Persevere in prayer, and offer up to the Lord the tears you shed for the conversion of those you love so well. "Had I no children," said a mother to me once, "I might feel less dread at the thought of appearing before the judgment-seat of God, but now I tremble at the thought." I asked her if this fear originated in the knowledge that she had, in any point, failed in her duty as a mother. "No, Father," she replied; "I do not know any thing that I could have done to bring them up in the fear and love of God that I neglected to do." "Then do not fear," I answered; "the Lord will not cast you off." But how few mothers can truly say this.

Well, indeed, will it be for her who *can* say, with full right, that she has done all in her power for her family, but in this ALL much is comprised.

It means that she must have the testimony of her conscience that, by *prayer* and the worthy reception of the Sacraments, she prepared herself to receive the nuptial blessing on the *wedding* day, in that perfect plenitude with which the Church loves to bestow it upon her children.

Her conscience must also assure her that she always recommended to God and His Immaculate Mother each one of her children, not only after its birth, but

even in a more special manner, before she had brought it into the world to be baptized.

Then she must be able to say that she was careful to have her children baptized as soon as possible; and that, at the earliest moment practicable, she taught them to offer the loving prayers of their innocent little hearts to our Divine Lord, and His Blessed Mother. Also, that, as they merged from infancy to childhood's years, and to youth, she took care that they recited their *morning* and *evening* prayers, and conscientiously obeyed the *Precepts* of the Church.

Her conscience must also be able to assure her that she had her children *instructed*, as soon as possible, and as thoroughly as possible, in their holy faith, so that they might, if necessary, as is so often the case in this country, explain its tenets to those who do not believe.

In order that she may be considered as a mother who has done *all* for her children, she must be able to affirm that she has never permitted her children to wander through the streets at night-fall, or to fritter away the precious hours of youth, in idle gossip at some neighbor's house, but that she, by loving kindness, won them to spend the evening hours at *home*, and provided good books, *especially* the Lives of the Saints, for their perusal, besides encouraging them, like the *apostolic* Christian, to assist the Church, and win souls to the true faith. Thus, through their efforts, this great country may be led, eventually, to join the only true Church of Christ.

There is one truth which I would especially recommend each of you to keep constantly in view, viz: That upon the earnestness of your care depends not only the salvation of your own children, but that of *their* children and descendants to the most remote generation, perhaps even to the end of the world.

Let me say some words of explanation, and you will perceive the truth of this. Let us picture to ourselves a youth upon whom, in every year of his life, his mother has exercised the most vigilant care, and who has realized her fondest hopes, growing up in the fervent practice of his holy faith, as he advances to manhood's years. He chooses the married state and proves to be a good Catholic husband. His example so influences his wife that she, too, serves God with her whole heart and brings up her children in his fear and love.

These children are equally careful to imitate the example of their mother, and will raise their children in the same way to become good and virtuous Catholics. Think now of the incalculable good effected throughout all ages by so many souls, and all owing to the care of the *first* mother. What fruit for heaven in all those years!

Indeed, no better assurance of salvation can a mother have, at the judgment-seat of Christ, than the testimony of the souls she has preserved for God.

"O Christ," they will say, "behold this mother!" Had she not brought up her children in such a holy manner, *we* might not have been reared in thy love

and fear, but have, perhaps, been lost forever!" And will it not be for the good mother *a heaven in heaven*, if those beatified souls, to evince their gratitude, will share with her their celestial bliss and joy. Care thus for *your* children. O Mothers! how can I sufficiently congratulate you, especially if, through your solicitude, you have directed a son to the knowledge of his vocation to the *sacerdotal* state, and led him to properly prepare for that sublime calling! Because, having attained the object of his aspirations, he will be instrumental in leading numberless souls to God!

All this may be understood to relate equally to your daughters. They may marry, and, through lives of piety, sanctify their husbands and their children too; or their thoughts, having been from early childhood directed to heavenly things, they may give up the world, and offer themselves to God in a conventual life, and thus attain a much higher degree of glory in heaven.

But, ah, the *terrible* thought! What a frightful accusation will be hurled at you on the day of judgment, and how excruciating the torments, which will be your wretched portion in hell, if you fail to bring up your children in the fear and love of God,—if, through your neglect your children have grown up without prayer, instruction, or proper discipline.

If children neglect the duty of *prayer*, because their mother fails to set them the example, and if they are *ignorant* of their faith, because she was unable to

instruct them, through ignorance and laziness, how great will be the punishment of that mother in eternity! If she fail to procure them books, which might enlighten them on the subject, and reads herself, or permits them to read, instead of the Lives of the Saints and other edifying books, profane novels and newspapers; terrible will be her fate in the other world!

If the mother can say, with truth, that she has always done all her part in regard to her children, she must have also the testimony of her conscience, that she did her utmost to impede a union between a child of hers and an Infidel, or Protestant, or apostate Catholic—no matter that he was rich.

The children of such unions receive usually no proper religious training, and would, in all probability, imitate the example of the Protestant or indifferent parent, and so the evil would last until the end of time.

How terrible for a mother who has been remiss in this regard to meet, at the judgment-seat of God, innumerable souls who will cast at her the most bitter accusations, and cry out that had she done her part as a good mother in guarding her children from the contact of evil, that *they* also might have been good and pious; whereas, *now* they must forever dwell amid the regions of despair and torments.

*What* could you say in your own defense, O faithless mother? And if such accusations mark your passage to eternity, think how fearful will be the curses which those damned souls of your children and their descendants will never cease to hurl at you

in hell! How immeasurably will your torments be increased when the Lord will fulfill His word: "Bind them into bundles, and cast them into the fiery abyss that, having sinned together, they may also suffer together in the excruciating pains of hell!

*Now* do you realize, O Mothers! the importance of my words on good and bad *Education*?

If you provide the former, what a *blessing* awaits you in your own, and your children's children! If you do not, what a *malediction* will fall upon your heads!

Then let your maternal solicitude continue until your latest breath, and the Lord will bless you for it a thousand-fold. Whole generations, on the day of final doom, will pour forth their gratitude, and enter with you into eternal life.

If, up to this time, you have educated your children in a truly Christian manner, then, indeed, you may thank God with joyful hearts; but, if it be otherwise, at least resolve to atone for your neglect as far as you can. Speak to their hearts in order to supply what is, and was, deficient in this regard. To atone for what is lacking in their religious instruction, besides fervent *prayer* and encouraging *words*, procure even now, *books* such as will remedy the want.

Let me relate what happened to me once. While giving a mission in the city of New York, I met a gentleman and his wife who purchased four copies of each of the books upon religious subjects, which I wrote for America. Upon questioning the husband as to



why they required *four* sets of these books—that is, four copies of each—he told me that they had *four* children, all settled in life, and away from the paternal roof; but that they neglected their religious training; that one was unfortunately already a Freemason, and that they, being apprehensive lest they had not been sufficiently careful in instructing them and giving them good example, they wanted now to purchase for every child those instructive books to remedy the evil as far as possible, so that their children might not rise up and accuse them on the last day.

Was not this great foresight on their part? When I expressed my high satisfaction to the husband, he answered: “Father, don’t give praise to me. I had to do it. My wife insists upon my buying them.” Wives and mothers, follow her example; surely she will one day receive heartfelt thanks from her husband and her children in heaven.

Until the next conference, invoke St. Ann; say every day one fervent Ave Maria, that through her intercession you may feel true compunction, and shed bitter tears for any neglect of which you may have been guilty in regard to your children. Resolve, also, from this moment, to make amends for it as far as it lies in your power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Do it, and thou shalt be “blessed among women.” Amen!

## CONFERENCE X.

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MARY,

THE SISTER OF MOSES.

FOLLOWING the series of women praised in Holy Writ, to-day Mary, the sister of Moses, the great servant of God, attracts our attention. No doubt, in many respects she holds a distinguished rank among the women of the Old Testament, and may be compared, not in her name alone, but in many instances of her life, to Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

*What I will particularly refer to at present is the "canticle of praise and thanksgiving" which she chanted surrounded by all the women at the shores of the Red Sea, and present thereby to your consideration one of the most important duties you owe to God—gratitude for the bounty He has manifested to you.*

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First, as to the very name of this heroic woman. She was called, as has already been mentioned, "Mary," thus already showing one point of resemblance with her of whom the Gospel says: "And the name of the Virgin was Mary."

Another point of similarity between the two lies in what the Scripture relates of the wonderful rescue of the infant Moses, by whose side his sister Mary watched.

As you all know, Pharaoh issued an edict for the extermination of all the male children of Israel; even as Herod, later on, commanded the murder of the "Holy Innocents," with a view to destroy Jesus, the Lawgiver of the New Testament.

The mother of Moses conceived the idea of wrapping her babe in *swaddling*-clothes and placing it in a basket by the river bank, and placed his sister Mary at its side to see what would come to pass.

The hope which she scarce dared breathe to herself was, that the daughter of Pharaoh, who frequently came to the spot, would see the child and save it from perishing; and every thing was accomplished as she had hoped.

All who read this event in the life of Moses are easily induced to think of the Divine Child, which Mary placed in the manger, and by Whose side she was at the moment when the Angels proclaimed to the watching shepherds: "You will find the Child in Bethlehem, *wrapped* up in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." The king's daughter intrusted the child to its own mother to nurse, while she adopted him as a son.

Beside the crib, absorbed in love and adoration, was Mary, destined by the Eternal Father, to nourish, with her own milk, Jesus, whom He not only adopted

as a Son, but Whose only-begotten Son, the Saviour was.

Mary, the sister of Moſes, later on, went forth from *Egypt* with her brother. So did Mary with Jesus.

When Mary departed with Moses they still had to fear from the vengeance of the tyrant king, but the arm of the Most High was stretched forth in their behalf, and "chariot and horsemen were sunk in the wave." Not a single one of his powerful army escaped; and, as the lifeless forms floated upon the waters of Egypt's dark sea, Moses burst forth into that sublime Canticle of praise, which we read in the Book of Exodus, beginning with those inspired words of victory: "Let us sing to the Lord, for He is magnified; the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become salvation unto me. He is my God, and I will glorify Him."

Six times one hundred thousand men lifted up their voices and sang this canticle, and Mary led the strain as it was taken up by the women of Israel.

It was a hymn of jubilee, such as never before resounded on earth, and never will the like be heard again until its glad, triumphant strains resound in heaven, as we are told by St. John in the Apocalypse.

All that is capable of filling the heart of man with victorious joy animated the Israelites, as, upon the Red Sea's shores, they exulted over their wonderful deliverance. There is, nevertheless, one heart whose gratitude surpassed that felt by *all* the Israelites—

nay, by all the children of men—towards God. I mean the heart of Mary, when she stood upon Judea's lofty mount, and intoned that sublime hymn of praise, the "Magnificat," whose strains still resound throughout the lofty heights of heaven and earth.

Who indeed could, even faintly, depict to themselves the depths of gratitude which Mary felt, and still feels, towards Him who conferred upon her, an humble virgin, the honor of becoming the mother of Him Who delivered the human race from the tyranny of Satan, and thus elevated her to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, of all the choirs of the holy Angels, and all the Saints.

*You* may derive an important lesson from the example of Mary,—that it is most just and salutary to mingle with your adoration of the Divine Majesty the most ardent sentiments of *grateful* Love, and to be, as it were, *impelled* by the weight of this emotion to readily fulfill the arduous duties of your state of life with a most joyful heart.

We may readily perceive the deep import of this duty of *gratitude*, by reflecting for a moment on the great influence which that sentiment exerts upon the human heart.

First, if a person is indebted to another for many and great benefits,—perhaps for the happiness and prosperity of his whole life,—he will surely do all in his power to avoid *offending* his benefactor.

This applies, in its full weight, to the Christian whose heart is animated by gratitude to God, and in

a particular reference to a holy Christian *mother*. To perceive this clearer, consider a mother who, even in her first years, gave her heart to God, and thus remained through life pure and innocent. She chose for her husband a good Catholic; she lives with him in love and peace and prosperity; she reared the children given to them so that she might once return them to God. Is it not but just that, from the fullness of a grateful heart, she should cry out: "Never, never will I offend that God who has created me in His own Image and Likeness, and redeemed me by His precious Blood; Who called me to be a child of His Holy True Church, and who preserved me pure and innocent from my early youth. Never, ah! never will I outrage, by sin, that God, Who provided for my temporal welfare, by giving me a vocation to the married state, and thought of my eternal good in the husband whom He sent unto me. By his example, he is a light to guide me on the path to Paradise; by his kindness, he consoles me in the weary troubles of life; and with Him I hope to enjoy the unending bliss of heaven.

"Never, ah! never will I *offend*, by sin, that God who has blessed me with children whom I love, and in whom my maternal solicitude bears the richest fruit; from whom I can look forward to tender and loving care in my declining years, and who, I feel sure, after my death, will promote the honor of the Church of God, and labor for its propagation.

"Never, ah! never will I *offend* a God to Whom I

owe so much. No; rather do I long, by a holy life, according to the duties of my state, to manifest the gratitude that burns in my heart for Him. 'What shall I render to the Lord for all he has given me?' as once holy David cried out. Yes; I unite the affections of thanksgiving to God with the affections of gratitude of the mother of Jesus, and intone, like she did, the '*Magnificat*.'

"Yes; my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, and hath done great things in me. He is mighty, and Holy is His name. From henceforth 'all generations'—indeed, my children and their posterity—will call me 'blessed,' because I have preserved the souls whom God intrusted to my care for Him, and not one of them is lost. Like St. Paul, I will cry out, with the most intense desire of my soul: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me do?'"

I hear his reply: "Love your husband; sanctify your soul and his; love your children; save and sanctify their souls." O my God! how I thank Thee that I, as a Catholic wife and mother, by a careful fulfillment of my duties, can manifest my fervent gratitude to thee.

Yes, wives—mothers!—if it has been thus with you; if thus far you have been led by pleasant paths through life; if it has pleased God to replenish your hearts with joy and consolation, He merits, indeed, your grateful thanks.

But if it has been otherwise, and the hand of the

Lord has been heavy upon you ; if you have had to drain the cup of sorrow to its very dregs, with the dolorous Mother beneath the Cross, then, believe me, you have greater reason still to thank the Saviour who died upon the cross, provided that you suffer according to the example of Mary, taking your troubles from the hand of God, who permits them to give you the choicest opportunity to gain merits of the highest value in His eyes by your heroic *patience*. You may find, also, a particular consolation by thinking that you may have, in this way, your Purgatory while yet on earth, through these sufferings, patiently endured for love of God.

Moreover, you have an occasion to merit rare jewels for a heavenly crown ; more precious far than all the little acts of love and kindness which the most devoted husband could show, during the longest life, to his wife.

Think, too, that if it should be your privilege to touch his obstinate heart, and win him to repentance, what a joy you would feel in this vale of tears, and what multiplied joys would be yours in heaven, when, in that blessed home, you hear his happy soul cry out that, but for your prayers and tears and good example, he would have been lost forever !

All this applies equally to a case where children, upon whom you have lavished untiring care, do not respond to the efforts, in their behalf, which you never cease to make. Redouble them rather, for there is no more exquisite joy for a mother than to behold her



children returning with their whole hearts to God, won to come back by her prayers and tears. I once met a mother who fainted, so overcome was she with gratitude to God, and joy, when her son, who had sworn in her presence never to receive the Sacrament again, listened to the inspirations of God, at a mission—went to Church and approached the Tribunal of Penance.

In conclusion, I would admonish each one of you to *thank* the Lord for having called you to serve Him by the zealous fulfillment of your duties as a Catholic wife and mother; for sincere *gratitude* to God is at the same time a powerful means of *supplication*, in response to which, and as a reward for it, God will bestow still greater graces for the sanctification of your souls. Invoke St. Ann with fervor, and, until the next conference, say, daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria. Beg her to obtain for you, from God, a grateful heart, thus enabling you to devote yourselves to his service with the fervor born of gratitude and love. Yes, be grateful to God, and prove this disposition of your heart by your care to avoid sin, and your zeal to do good through gratitude to God, and you shall be “blessed among women—among wives and mothers.” Amen.

## CONFERENCE XI.

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RAHAB,

THE GUIDE.

WHEN the people of Israel had almost completed their term of wandering through the desert, and had begun to anticipate the delight of entering the promised land—Canaan—Josue sent two men to reconnoiter, secretly, that he might gain some information about the country before going thither with the people of God. His messengers went, therefore, to Jericho, and sought lodging in the house of a woman called Rahab.

But scarce had they arrived in the city than word of the event was brought to the King, who was filled with apprehension, fearing that the children of Israel would take possession of his kingdom. He sent, therefore, to Rahab, to bring forth the men who had taken refuge in her house; but she, determined upon saving them, returned evasive answers to the royal envoys, and, directing her lodgers to go to the top of her house, covered them with stalks of flax; then, at the approach of night, she advised them to flee into the mountains. Then, to facilitate their escape, Rahab lowered them, by means of a rope, from her windows,

for her house joined the city wall. Thus she saved their lives, and, in return, her whole family was saved when Jericho fell at the sound of the trumpets.

The fact, that the lodgers of Rahab were spies, sent on to reconnoiter the promised land, has suggested to me the idea of the subject of my Conference to-day. It is the heavenly disposition of mind, reminding continually of heaven. If the heart of a wife and mother is filled with this heavenly spirit she will, with watchful care and prudence, try to lead also her husband and children on the way of salvation towards heaven.

Canaan is an emblem of heaven, the *promised* land for us, children of God, as we journey through the wearisome desert of life, and for which we must provide on our way.

That it is not only important, but absolutely essential for us to be thus provided for the other world, we are reminded in the most absolute manner by the Princes of the Apostles. "We wander before the Lord, and seek, on earth, the abiding city of God," says St. Peter; while St. Paul cries out: "If ye have risen with Christ, seek ye the things which are above, where Christ abides." And when God's minister daily offers up to him the Holy Sacrifice of Mass; the Church sends forth, as a reminder to her faithful children, the solemn words: "Sursum Corda" —"Lift up your hearts"—"Lift them up to heaven, our true home;" while from millions of loving hearts daily comes the response: "We have lifted them up to the Lord."

That Mary in this regard appears gloriously exalted among the children of men, requires no proof from me. If, while yet on earth, her adopted son, St. John, beheld the gates of heaven unclose before his enraptured gaze, and looked with awe upon its mysteries, in how infinitely greater degree was this true of Mary, the Celestial Queen! With what ardor did she long for heaven, especially after Jesus had ascended there!

“I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God,” cried out the holy martyr St. Stephen. How much more perfectly was Mary permitted to enjoy this privilege—to behold Jesus, her Divine Son, in His glory while yet on earth! This so intensified her desire to be with Him in heaven, that at last she burst the bonds which held her, an unwilling captive, here below.

Now, as it is of the deepest importance for every one to live *for Heaven alone*,—and, while still on earth, to amass treasures of merit for our celestial home; to contribute our share that others may serve God, and be happy with Him forever,—the most efficacious means to live in this way is precisely the continual thought of Heaven. The truth of this may at once be recognized.

The code of Christian ethics, or justice, may be summed up in the following words: “Avoid evil and do good.” Now, if our hearts are consumed with a burning desire, a longing for Heaven, which increases more and more in our hearts, our aversion and horror

for every shadow of sin will increase in the same proportion.

Sin is certainly the only thing which can rob us of heaven. In the same way, if all our aspirations enter in this our longing for Heaven, will not our zeal in the practice of *virtue* awake to greater fervor at the very thought: Every act of virtue performed with a good intention, and in the state of grace, will receive its eternal reward and increase our glory and bliss forever! And if the Lord visits us with afflictions and trials to try our love and obedience, supposing that they are accepted with loving resignation, they will especially cast heavy weight in the scale of heavenly joys. Will this thought not strengthen our patience in the hour of affliction?

This is especially true in regard to the life of a Catholic wife and mother, considering the many troubles to which she is disposed.

She whose mind is entirely engrossed with the affairs of the world, who lives only for its goods, honors and pleasures, will deem no effort too great to obtain them.

Perhaps she will soon prove a great burden to her husband, who may not be able to earn a sufficient sum to replenish that purse which she so often holds up before him—emptied of its contents—for the gratification of her vanity, love of pleasure, or passion for enjoyment. Too soon will the husband grow distrustful of such a wife; for, should temporal loss come upon him, he might look in vain to her for aid

and kindly words, and love would give place to aversion and hatred.

Instead of encouraging her husband to look on the brighter side of things, and thus lightening, in some degree, the cross, by her repining and reproaches she adds new grief to his already overburdened heart.

Far different is it with a wife who is replenished with heavenly spirit and longing. By encouragement and example, she sweetens the bitter draught, and gently leads her husband to behold therein the holy will of God.

All this applies with equal force to the early training of children.

A mother who is wholly animated and guided by the spirit of the world, who thinks more of its goods, honors, and pleasures, than of her soul, will strive to possess them with unwearied zeal, and thereby neglect to give that care to her children, through which they will lead good and pious lives. She will deem it of little moment whether, when they first awake from sleep, they raise their hearts in fervent prayer to God, and, through daily instruction and admonition, grow more zealous in prayer and in the service of God, assisting with zeal at the divine service in Church, and receiving often the Sacraments.

She will be indifferent to what should so deeply interest a mother's heart. The endeavor to discover the vocation which God may have given to her son or daughter,—whether He asks the sacrifice of their youthful hearts in the priesthood or religious state, or

whether He calls them to serve Him as faithful Christians in the married life. All this is a matter of not much moment to her! Finally, the great affair of our salvation, in a great part, depends upon our having embraced that state of life to which we were called by God.

The mother who is animated by the spirit of the world, takes little heed of how her children deport themselves, when they immediately, after having made their first Holy Communion, leave the paternal roof.

She takes little heed whether they associate with frivolous companions, whose faith is, perhaps, on the wane, or even tolerates their close company with decided infidels and mockers of religion.

Alas! the fearful account which the justice of an offended God will one day demand at her hands, ever recurs to her mind. Little heed does she take of the terrible doom which, on the day of judgment, will be meted out to her, should any of her children be lost through her fatal neglect.

What will it avail her, then, that she has provided well for her children, according to the world? Will the Judge excuse her because she has procured for them positions where they would gain indeed an abundant measure of the honors, wealth, and pleasures of this life, but at the same time be exposed to the greatest dangers of salvation? If this hapless mother, instead of providing her children with instructive books, would let them read novels, scandalous papers, and all

kinds of lascivious books, the consequences thereof will for her be fearful!

It is not sufficient to give *occasional* encouragement and advice, and to speak from time to time only of God and heaven. No! the entire disposition of the mother's heart should evince that her mind is *always* fixed on heavenly things and approaching eternity.

And that this may indeed be so, I point to the character of those messengers sent by Josue to explore the country of Chanaan. I mean to say: Mothers, consider often the reasons which, if rightly considered, will create in your heart this longing for heaven. The motives which instill in our heart a desire and longing for some object are *wealth, honor, health, pleasure*, intercourse with those dear to us, and a fortune which can not be taken away. In heaven only is to be found that possession for which we yearn, and which alone can satisfy the heart: "God is mine; heaven is mine; *All* is mine."

In that glorious realm the greatest *honors*, a throne and *crown*, await us. We will be as kings in the kingdom of Christ, with the right to enjoy a bliss of which the measure is infinite, the duration eternal. How, then, can a soul which not only believes, but *meditates* upon what she believes, fail to be replenished with a longing desire for heaven, and resolve to do and suffer *every thing* to win so great a prize?

Let the faithful soul but place in opposition to this, the contemptible and perishable nature of all that the world can give its votaries, even though it display its



richest treasures, its rarest joys, its highest honors. Then let her reflect upon the fate which in hell awaits all those who do not live on earth for Heaven, and perish forever!

But let me repeat, it is not enough that the wife and mother for herself is filled with that longing for Heaven, she has to *explore*, if such is also the case with her husband and with her children. Alas! how often wives and mothers sin through carelessness in this regard.

Ask a wife whether her husband attends to his religious duties, and, sad to say, she often professes entire ignorance on the subject. "Does your husband go regularly to Church?" "I do not know." "Does he approach the Sacraments?" "I do not know." "Does he belong to a secret society?" "I do not know." "*You do not know!* Why, then, do you not inform yourself as to the state of affairs, and remove the evil, if any exists?"

It is often the very same with a mother. "Do your children practice their religion?" "I do not know, Father; my daughter is out at service;" or, perhaps, "She is married, and my son also." "But, were you careful to learn all that was necessary in regard to the young man your daughter accepted? Did you know all that was required in regard to the young girl to whom your son is married? Did you ascertain whether they were persons of good moral character—pious and faithful Catholics?" Now, often, if an unhappy wife is asked, "Why did you marry a man of such a

character, we hear the answer: "I did not pay attention to his character and piety." And so, in a hundred other cases, there is a total want of the requisite *circumspection* and prudence.

*Woe* to the mother, who, in this regard, connives at any wrong-doing or neglect on the part of her children! Only too soon will she be looking back on the wretched past—each successive year marked by some new evil, and lament, in the bitterness of her soul, that it was her *own* fault. O careless mother! why were you so indifferent to the eternal good of your husband and children? Why have you not, by day and night, exercised a watchful—nay, even *suspicious*—care in their regard?

Begin to do so from this very moment, and, until the next conference, invoke daily the holy mother, St. Ann, in one fervent Ave Maria. Beg her to obtain for you grace from God, to think often, yes, daily, of Heaven. I would admonish you all at the striking of the clock, to think with the great St. Theresa: "God be praised, we are one hour nearer Heaven. If this longing will be from now also the longing of your heart, then, indeed: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XII.

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RAHAB,

THE DELIVERER.

IN my last conference I directed your attention to the evil results which can not fail to come from the neglect of a wife or a mother, who, because she is wanting in that disposition of heart which leads her to think constantly of "the things which are above," and fully penetrated with the spirit of the world, gives herself but little trouble as to how her family live in the sight of God. But there is yet another consideration connected with what Holy Scripture relates of Rahab. It is one which tends to remind you all to go constantly forward in your efforts to lead a better life, and to do all in your power to preserve your families from the ways of sin, or to lead them again to God, if, unhappily, they have turned from Him.

*I will address each wife and mother, who listens to my words to-day, as "Refuge of Sinners," in her own family, and will point out what is essential on her part, that her efforts for their lasting conversion may be crowned with success.*

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As in our desire to save ourselves and others from

the destruction of sin, the Church seeks to encourage us by the epithet that she bestows on the Blessed Virgin, and which we repeat whenever we, reciting the Litany, invoke her in the words of the Church, as "Refuge of Sinners."

Mary is, indeed, their never-failing *Refuge*. As such all Christendom has always regarded her; and even in the hearts of the greatest sinners, whose enormous offenses have almost hurled them into the very depths of despair; the thought of this tender mother still remained, sole star of hope, which glittered amid the dark clouds of gloom that enshrouded their souls.

If, however, we really wish Mary to be our refuge, we, on our part, must do all, that is necessary to obtain the grace of conversion through her maternal intercession. What this depends upon is shown in the clearest symbolical manner by the course which Rahab pursued to save the men, who, in obedience to the command of Josue, had gone, in advance, to Canaan.

She covered them completely with *flax*, and finally let them down from a window by means of a *scarlet cord*, her house being close to the city wall.

She also advised them to flee to the *mountains*, and from thence to *return* to Josue. Let us consider of what these circumstances should remind every Christian.

In the rescue of the spies we first note that Rahab covered them with *flax*.

Flax, according to the application of Holy Scripture,

is an emblem of the transitory nature of all things earthly. "All flesh is grass," cries out the Prophet. "The congregation of sinners is like tow heaped together, and the end of them is as a flame of fire;" thus we read in "Ecclesiasticus." And Isaias says: "Your strength shall be as the ashes of tow, and your work as a spark, and both shall burn together, and there shall be no one to quench it." Let me crave your attention while I illustrate what I intend to say, regarding the conversion of sinners.

Rahab covered the men with flax. How does Satan entice men to sin? By means of those *illusions* which he casts before the eyes of his victims, dazzling them to such a degree that the goods, honors and pleasures of this life appear as if they could, indeed, delight and satisfy the human heart.

Man may remind himself a hundred times of what Solomon declared in days of old,—“Vanity of vanities,” except to love and serve God.

The sinner does not believe it,—not at least so long as he can still enjoy, in undisturbed content, the joys of the world in sinful lust. It is only when the decline of life brings him face to face with death that his awaking conscience dispels the illusion, and the reflected light of eternity shows how he was beguiled. If, however, the sinner wishes to obtain and respond to the grace of a sincere conversion, he must not be satisfied with merely *seeing* the necessity of conversion, and the frailty of all things earthly, but it becomes necessary, through continual meditation, *to*

*twist the flax into a cord*, and, through the firm resolution of a true, sincere, and *entire* conversion, in humility of heart, and loving repentance, to accuse himself before God of his offenses. He must change his mode of life. Hitherto he has lived in accordance with the ideas of the world and its votaries, surrounded by those *walls* of prejudice so difficult to move, and protected by the false axioms of that world wherein its devotees seem to find a safe retreat.

The *cord* by which the spies were let down by the deliverer Rahab, was of a *scarlet* hue. This color is emblematic of the influence possessed by the grace of our redemption through the precious *blood* of Christ, with which our resolutions must ever be united, otherwise they will have no efficacy to preserve the life of grace within us, to secure the flight of sin, and to effect a thorough reconciliation with God in the Sacrament of Penance.

We are also required to glide, or gradually descend, by this cord, down to the very bottom, and guard lest we hang suspended half way thereon. In other words, we are warned against *concealing* any sin; but admonished to lay, with great humility, every thing openly and candidly before God's representative, *especially* concerning mortal sins.

Our spiritual father will thus be enabled to look even to the very depths of the soul, and impart to his repentant children that counsel which they must faithfully observe, in order to escape not for *that one time* only, the danger of damnation.

They must follow his advice, and so be preserved from future relapses, which might, after all, cause them to perish miserably.

The counsel which Rahab gave to the spies clearly points to the conditions required to advance in spiritual things, and to avoid the danger of relapse. She said: "Get ye up to the *mountains*." And what manner of mountains are these?

They are affections, *resolutions*, and practices of virtue, typified by seven mountains, of which Holy Writ makes special mention, namely: "Mounts *Sinai* and *Horeb*; the lofty height from which Christ delivered his celebrated *Sermon* on the Mount; Mounts *Tabor*, *Calvary*, *Sion*, and the Mount of *Olives*. These are celebrated on account of events most fitting, indeed, to excite those affections and resolutions of virtue which will be followed by its zealous practice on our part, to elevate our hearts, to animate them, and to secure us from the danger of *relapse*.

In Mount *Sinai* we behold an emblem of the *Law*, wherein we learn the duty of confirming ourselves in *faith*, and regulating our lives in strict accordance with its *arguments*, and with the most Holy Will of God; of hastening ever forward, paying no heed to the promptings of human respect, and utterly ignoring the false maxims of the world.

Mount *Horeb*, upon which Elias was so highly favored as to behold his Lord, reminds us to walk ever in His Holy *Presence* while we are yet on earth, as

the Lord admonished Abraham: "Walk before Me, and be perfect."

The *mount* upon which Christ preached his memorable *sermon*, is emblematic of the way of *Perfection* which we must ascend, as followers of Christ, not only avoiding grievous sin, but, as far as we can, preserving our souls free from the stain of every entirely willful, *venial* offense.

Mount *Tabor* should remind us of performing every act with the purest *intention*, and of the care necessary to free ourselves from our daily imperfections by the practice of the so-called "particular *examen*," as is specially indicated by two circumstances—the shining of the Divine *Face* like the sun, and the garments of Christ becoming white as *snow*.

Of what should Mount *Calvary* remind us? Your own hearts will tell you that every spot upon its sacred soil speaks of a fervent love for the Cross, a love which encourages and strengthens us to persevere *patiently* in the service of God, even if the *trials* with which He pleases to afflict us are so bitter that our poor, weak nature shrinks away in dread, and are so protracted that they only cease with life.

Mount *Sion* is an emblem of spiritual zeal and frequent intercourse with Christ in the Sacrament of His Love. It was here that Christ celebrated the Last Supper and instituted the *Blessed Sacrament*. On this mount, in the same room, were assembled the Blessed Virgin and the faithful disciples on that memorable day when they were "filled with the Holy Ghost," and



rendered fitting instruments for the extension of His Empire on earth.

Mount *Olivet*, finally, symbolizes a mind centered on heavenly things. From its lofty summit Christ withdrew Himself from the world, the scene of His weary toil and tears, and ascended to heaven, in order there to prepare for us a "lasting dwelling." Whosoever, therefore, keeps his thoughts constantly fixed on heavenly things will not relapse into sin, but, overcoming himself, he will win an endless victory.

With Mary, the Apostles remained and patiently awaited the advent of the Holy Ghost.

A loving intercourse with Jesus in the most Holy *Sacrament*, a true and fervent devotion to Mary, is, according to the teachings of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, a pledge of final perseverance and salvation.

Oh! how deeply momentous for us is the mystical interpretation of these *seven* mountains! What eminent virtue we see typified in each! If you, O wives and mothers, walk according to the lessons derived therefrom, in the Holy Presence of God, you will be indeed blessed. All will be well, not only with you, but with those dearest to your hearts, if you, remembering these various conditions, assist them to a true and lasting conversion with your counsel and operation, as the signification of these sacred mounts teach you to do. Then, as I confidently hope, when the last dread trumpet bursts upon the world, and the earth, with all its possessions, crumbles and is trans-

formed into a new heaven and another earth, you will enter, with those you love, into the everlasting dwelling, into the glories of the New Jerusalem, the Celestial Land of Promise!

Invoke St. Ann, that she may obtain from God, for you, the grace that, by banishing even the shadow of sin from your hearts, you may atone for the former transgressions of your lives. May you also, by wise counsels and good example, be indeed, each one of you, for your husband and children, if they fall away, a "Refuge of sinners," to be reconciled with God; then, no doubt: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XIII.

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### DEBORA.

AFTER the people of God had taken possession of the promised land, instead of kings to rule the people, there were judges chosen by the common voice upon whom developed the office of deciding any dispute which might arise, and protecting the citizens. In electing them their principal merits were discussed, and such qualifications as would render them eligible for the office taken into consideration.

The people did not hesitate to bestow this honorable office upon a woman, if she were fitted for it, and "Debora" was on one occasion called to accept it.

Debora, in her capacity as judge, presents for our meditation one characteristic which should adorn the faithful wife and mother, and of it I will speak to-day.

*In every family difficulty which may arise she should prove herself fully qualified to act as Judge, and amicably settle the dispute.*

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The Scripture calls Debora a prophetess, and relates of her that, seated under the spreading foliage of a *palm* tree, she pronounced sentence as occasion required, and adjusted all disputes which occurred.

The palm tree, as the pages of Holy Writ inform us, was called by her name ; and it was she also, who, by her presence on the battle-field, encouraged "Barac" and his army, finally enabling him, with the aid of another heroic woman, to gain the victory.

Debora, as *judge* and *protectress* of the people of God, seated under the graceful tree, is, in the symbol of the palm, emblematic of Mary.

As the *Palm*, when standing upon an eminence, towers far above the other trees by which it is surrounded, and looks down upon the loftiest plants of the earth, so is Mary elevated among all the children of men in her character as *judge*, and stands forth an admirable model of every quality that a wife and mother should possess, to adjust all disputes which mar the family peace.

Yes, she should be to all her household a *judge* and *protectress* who will never fail—a refuge in every need ; a judge who will decide with such wisdom, that in her family will ever prevail, as far as can be, that "peace which the world can not give"—peace with God and good will with all around.

But, alas! too many Christian women are deficient in this regard ; and it often happens that the *quarrelsome* temper of the wife herself and her *unjust* demeanor towards her family and neighbors forms a cause of dissension within and without the family hearth—and why ? Because they are deficient in those virtues we see symbolized, in the characteristics of the palm tree. That tree strikes deep roots, raising its *stem*

without branches,—spreads out its *crown* of well arranged leaves. Under the shadow thereof man finds a delightful *resting-place*, while he is at the same time presented by the palm with sweet and refreshing *fruits*. These qualities evidently typify the qualities of Mary among the children of men.

The deep and strong root points to her profound humility ; the straight, high stem typifies her absolute conformity with the will of God, and the entire purity of her intention :—all for the glory of God. The splendid, well arranged, wide-spreading crown of the foliage on the top of the palm symbolizes the crown of the virtues of Mary, which were harmonized throughout her life by her well regulated love to God and man,—those virtues producing such abundance of fruits for the comfort of men that the Church applies to Mary the words of the Holy Ghost: “Come to me all, and be satiated by my fruits.”

These qualities of Mary, typified by the palm tree, also point out the qualities that should be found in a wife and mother ; namely, to become a *judge* and protectress of all the members of her family, qualities in which many are deficient.

First, there is a deficiency of real virtue—the strong *root* of the palm is not there—the root of the tree of virtue, which should sink deep into the heart, is wanting ; in other words : *there is no humility*.

Wherever there is self-love, vanity and pride, there, too, will be external and internal discord, constant sins against fraternal charity ; the judgment will be warped,

in a greater or less degree, and that sense of justice which seeks to give every one his due can not fail to be impaired.

She who is not truly meek and humble of heart finds more pleasure with those of her children who, by their talents, are enabled to shine, or, by their accomplishments, can make a more brilliant appearance in the world. She prefers them to their less favored brothers and sisters whom society passes by.

This is true also of the wife who is deficient in *humility*. There are things for which she may be excessively anxious, but which her husband is not able to procure, and what is the result of this? Believe me, it can not fail to be a cause of dissatisfaction and constant quarrels.

If the wife, the mother, would indeed be the gentle mediatrix to preserve the sweets of peace and strengthen the family bond, she must strive after that which is signified by the tall, slender growth of the palm, viz. : a mind fixed on *heavenly things*. She must keep ever in view her last aim and end, and be solicitous only to know and fulfill the holy will of God.

While she seeks to inspire husband and children to do the same, she should admonish in the most emphatic terms, but with a gentleness which will not wound the heart.

“Let us do this, or avoid that, my dear husband, my beloved children. Let us bear our trials patiently, for it is the will of God, that we suffer here on earth.” Alas ! how different when father, mother, and children

are wholly engrossed by the thought of how to follow their *own* inclinations. What will follow? Discord, quarrels, and a home wherein the spirit of peace is not.

The *symmetrical* branches and graceful *crown* of the palm signify that well-ordered love towards God and man which, in a mother's heart, urges her on to the fulfillment of every duty, and, therefore, exerts an influence upon a life which yields the most abundant fruit, because it is regulated in accordance with the most thorough virtue.

Show me a home where good *order* prevails, where each exercise of piety has its appointed time, each member of the family fulfills his duties at the proper moment, and I will show you a household wherein a well-regulated—and, therefore, a blessed—life of domestic peace is led.

Even the house should give evidence, in its arrangement, that its mistress is thus admirably disposed; for there is nothing which affords a more favorable impression of her character than the neat and attractive appearance of her home, both within and without.

But, on the contrary, what an *unfavorable* opinion will be formed, if, instead of a beautiful order and quiet, the house presents, in every part, a chaos of disorder and confusion;—nothing in its own place, and nothing accomplished at the proper time.

If the mistress of a house lives according to the principles of piety and order, many clouds upon the domestic horizon will be averted, and the children,

from a very early age, will be accustomed to discipline, regularity, and mutual respect.

Both husband and children will feel an unlimited confidence in her, perceiving that she desires to please and make them happy whenever she can do so, without violating her duty to God; and knowing that, in any difficulty which may arise among them, she wishes only to decide, without partiality, according to the precepts of justice, the dictates of conscience.

But, also, in regard to the intercourse which others, especially with your neighbors and relations, how many of your sex live in a state of discord which often degenerates into lasting enmity. And why? Merely through that obstinacy which has its origin in *pride*, and a life in which regard for the duty of fraternal charity finds but little place, through that self-esteem and self-love which springs from a heart not influenced by divine love and heavenly thoughts.

Oh! should it not be the earnest wish of every Christian in your state of life to prevent discord, to give no occasion for it to any body, but to bear wrongs patiently, according to the admonition of St. Paul: "Bear ye in patience one with another;" and again: "If any man takes from thee thy coat, leave him thy cloak also;" as the Lord Himself saith; she should live as an angel of peace with all, trying to effect a reconciliation when the enemy has already caused dissension or enmity, and imparting good counsel to all around in the spirit of love.



I will here relate a little incident which I once read : It happened that two women were engaged in a lawsuit ; and on the eve of the day that sentence was to be pronounced, one of the disputants went to a neighboring Church, and knelt before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, imploring Mary to so influence the heart of the judge, that he might decide in her favor.

Scarcely had she gone when her enemy also came in to enlist the intercession of the Mother of God, that the case might terminate favorably to *her*. Then, as though the inanimate statue were endowed with life, the voice of the " Mother most amiable " was heard, speaking the following words : " She with whom you are at variance has just been here to enlist my aid. Both of you wish to win the day ; but listen to what I tell you : I have nothing to do with quarrels and disputes. Reconcile! "

Oh ! what a noble tribute of praise can be awarded to her who lives at peace with her own family, and never quarrels with her neighbors or relatives,—who hastens, like an angel of peace, to reconcile those who are at enmity. Yes, her worth, indeed, extends over the whole earth ! Beware, especially, of harsh and hasty words, which innumerable circumstances may call up to your quivering lips, and which will lead to quarrels deep and lasting, and may expose even your salvation to great danger through enmity.

It has even become a proverb : " It is well to fish in troubled waters ; " and Satan, from his own experience, knows how true this is. He knows the infinite good

he can prevent, and the immeasurable evil he can cause, if, among men in general, and families in particular, quarrels and discord may enter in.

The first blessing which the Holy Angels, at the birth of the Redeemer of the world, wished to mankind, was *peace*. The first mark given by the Evangelist, by which the first congregation of Christians at Jerusalem might be known, and by which all Christians should *still* be known, was the testimony: "They were all of one heart and one soul."

The pledge of this is a mind that will not admit the slightest thought of evil, as the fruit of universal love of our neighbor, for the love of God and His most amiable Mother.

Invoke St. Ann, the Mother of Mary, and, until the next conference, say, daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that, through her intercession, God may give you grace to inspire your families with such confidence in you that, owing to your influence, they may dwell in *peace* and holy *love*, your mutual joy unmarred by *quarrels* or *disputes*. If this is the case with you—living without discord and enmity without or within your family—being a true angel of peace—then: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XIV.

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### JAHEL.

AT the same time that Debora held the office of Judge, in Judea, and through her wisdom excited the admiration of the people, there dwelt among the Israelites a heroine, named *Jahel*, who, through her courage and rare presence of mind, conquered the enemy, put their general to death, and obtained a glorious victory, which filled the whole nation with wonder and delight. We, as children of God here on earth, must, in the spiritual life, wage continual warfare, but, if we employ proper weapons, and thus overcome the temptations with which the evil one assails us, this combat shall result for us into a glorious victory.

*As to the tactics with which we should carry on this warfare, we may learn them from the example of the heroine, Jahel. You should not only imitate it, but influence those in whom you are interested to do the same.*

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When Sisera, the General in command of the forces of the King of Chanaan, drew near with a great and

powerful army, Debora spoke thus to Barac: "Go lead an army, engage in battle, and the forces of the enemy will be delivered up to thee by the Lord, but to a woman will belong the palm of victory." Barac acted in accordance with this advice, and Debora accompanied him when he led his troops to war. The opposing armies met on Mount Tabor, and a terrible struggle ensued. Barac had only ten thousand warriors, while his opponent led forth an immense force—and their weapons, too, were of a superior kind, so that, humanly speaking, there was scarce a hope of victory for Israel. But, behold! a supernatural terror set in upon the Chanaanites, and they fled in fear and confusion; while Sisera himself—the General—leaping from his chariot, sought safety by hastening away on foot.

He reached the tent of the heroic Jahel, and thus spoke: "Give me, I beseech thee, a little water, for I am exceeding thirsty, and permit me to rest within thy tent. Should any one come and ask thee: '*Did any one enter here?*' tell them no."

Jahel promised to do all he requested. But what did she do? The moment she saw that Sisera, her country's deadly foe, had sunk in a dreamless slumber, she took a long *nail*, selecting one with a sharp point, and very strong also, and placing it upon the temple of the unconscious man, took a heavy hammer—and then? Then she drove it through his brain, fast into the ground, so that he passed from sleep to death.

There he lays—her people's foe—dead before her eyes; the danger over; the victory won, and tributes of praise exalting Jahel above all the women of Israel were sounded through the land.

Let us now glance from Jahel, the conqueror of Israel's foe, who sought to cast the people of God from off the face of the earth, to Mary, the heavenly conqueror of Lucifer and his rebel host.

Mary, at her entrance into this world, by her immaculate conception, drove, as it were, into the head of the infernal serpent a nail both long and of exceeding strength, and very sharp, and later on, when she stood beneath the Cross on Calvary, crushed it for evermore.

But in order to fight and conquer, according to the model and under the protection of Mary, something is necessary on our part.

This is to conquer sin as the only real impediment to salvation, and confound those foes which fain would lure us to its darksome paths.

These enemies are the *world*, the *flesh*, the *devil*.

But no matter how strong, how powerful they are, they may tempt, indeed, but can not overcome. The whole success of the battle depends upon our lawfully fighting against temptation; and the most efficient means for this, we may learn by applying Jahel's mode, in her encounter with Sisera, to ourselves, when the enemy approaches our hearts.

The first thing which comes to our notice in this, is that she did not go in search of Sisera, for he

came to her tent, which should teach us a very important lesson of which the word *temptation* itself reminds us.

Satan will seek for *you*, my friends,—never should *you* go in search of him; avoid the *proximate occasion* of sin, with the firmness and self-sacrificing spirit inculcated by Christ Himself in the following words: “If thine eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; or thy hand or foot, cut it off, and cast it away.”

Oh, how many are tempted and fall, because they *love* the danger of sin, persistently remain therein, and, as the Holy Ghost declares, perish thereby.

Jahel took a *nail*—a nail strong, sharply pointed, and very long. It would be difficult to find any other object which in so precise and evident a manner portrays those qualities by which our *will* should be qualified to win for us the victory than this long iron nail, with its sharp point, which proved so formidable a weapon in her hands.

Iron is an emblem of *firmness* and *strength*. In the Holy Scripture we read: “Iron conquers all,” which means that, if we would overcome every temptation, and never again consent to offend God by sin, it will not suffice to exercise only *half a will*; to utter an irresolute “I might, indeed,” but to firmly exclaim: “*I will!*”

Too often, however, the will is wanting in this quality, and may, indeed, resist the first attacks of temptation, but will finally *bend* like a yielding nail of lead.

That a nail may quickly penetrate the object into which it is to be driven, without missing its aim, the *point* must be even, not broken or blunted at the end. This, when applied to our will, means that, in order to conquer temptation we must make the most *determined* resolutions, and seriously reflect upon *what to do*, and *what to avoid*, that our combat against the wiles of Satan may turn to a glorious and successful victory.

How many Christians there are, who have, indeed, the *will* to do right, but neglect to make the *proper* resolutions to aid them when the hour of struggle comes.

The nail which Jahel chose, was also fully *long* enough for the purpose it was intended for. The resolutions which some make only refer *in part* to the temptation. They are too short, and not sufficiently firm nor determined. Such is the case when they only refer *to the sin itself*, and do not include the occasions and temptations, so apt to make one fall.

Jahel placed the nail upon the temples of Israel's sleeping foe. *Sisera slept—Jahel watched*. Christ Himself says: "*Watch and pray*, that ye enter not into temptation." We must not only resist, we must *prevent* temptation, and should therefore consider well in order to remove every thing which tends to awaken the passions.

Jahel placed the nail on the *temple*, not on the hand or foot. In the latter case Sisera would have awakened at the first stroke,—wounded, indeed, but

not killed; he would have arisen at once, and then what would have been the fate of poor Jahel! Let us make the application.

Satan will certainly abandon the field if a soul resists with determination, and conquers him at last; but if her resistance is marked by a *want* of determination, he will put forth all his seductions in seeking to cause her fall; tempting her more and more, and always with greater force, until her last hour.

But if his allurements are met by a *firm* and *decided* opposition, with the same *directness* with which Jahel placed the nail on the head of the slumbering Sisera, the devil will be terrified at such a manifestation of energy, and will ignominiously fly.

Holy Scripture says that Jahel placed the nail so as to drive it *through the brain* of her mortal foe, wherein lies a most important lesson, to which refer those words of St. Paul: "Satan seeks to beguile by the false show of an excited *fancy*, which has its seat *in the brain*." This cunning spirit seeks to *dazzle* and deceive the human heart, depicting the delights of sin as exceeding great, while, instead of yielding any joy, they only bring remorse and pain.

Finally, Jahel took a *heavy hammer*, and with it drove the nail through the head with such direct aim, that she fastened it to the ground.

This heavy hammer is a *vivid remembrance* of the truths of eternity, especially of the four last things, which we should never forget.

Had Jahel merely used her hand as a hammer to



strike so strong a nail as that selected for her purpose, Sisera would most surely have been aroused from sleep, and her fate would have been sad indeed.

What imparts to our will that firmness which will aid us, in the hour of combat, to win the day, is the constant thought of the great affair of salvation, the continual remembrance of these several articles of faith, as an exact rule of life, in our efforts to serve God. But one *God*, one *soul*, one *life*, one *death*, one *judgment*, and one *eternity* for each one of us; an eternity of bliss, or an eternity of woe—forever! forever!

Each of these truths will be as a *hammer* sufficiently strong to conquer every foe, every temptation, when united to those little words, *forever, eternal!*

The nail went through to the ground. This admonishes us never to forget the truth: "All earthly things will perish." Nothing is permanent, my dear friends, save that which awaits us in eternity. If we keep this constantly in mind, the head of the temptation will be so transfixed it will lose its power to harm.

This instruction is of so much importance for you, wives and mothers, because Satan, knowing well how the evil example of a wife and mother will influence the husband and children, exerts every effort to tempt you as God will *permit*. But imitate the heroic Jahel and you will be victorious, no matter what the temptation may be.

Invoke the intercession and protection of St. Ann,

and, until the next conference, say daily, in honor of the mother of Mary, one fervent Ave Maria, that she may recommend you to Mary to protect you in the midst of all your *temptations*. If you vanquish them all, then indeed: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XV.

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### THE DAUGHTER OF JEPHTE.

AT that time, when the reign of kings had not as yet been established in Israel, and the people were governed by Judges—as I have heretofore remarked—chosen by the people, we read that Jephthe made a rash and inconsiderate promise and vow to God to gain the victory; and that, when returning home, his daughter consented to fulfill the vow made by her father, and offered herself a willing victim to the Lord; she consented to give up all thoughts of *marriage*, and to serve Him in the state of *virginity*.

This, in the Old Law, when the birth of the Messiah was yet expected, was a sacrifice, and an unheard-of and heroic one, a spiritual death.

*I will take advantage of this occasion to-day to admonish you, mothers, of the urgent duty incumbent upon you to guard well that your daughters preserve their innocence, and make choice of that state of life to which they have been called by God.*

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It is only since Mary, Queen of Virgins, was chosen to be the Virginal Mother of Christ, that virginity is held in such high esteem in the Church. Blessed are

those whom God calls to this exalted state. They begin, as Christ Himself asserts, a life which is a glorious reflex of that which the Angels lead in heaven.

It is true that all are not called to enter this exalted state, and marriage is also deemed an honorable one in our holy Church, for God Himself has elevated it to the dignity of a Sacrament, and it is a sacred duty, which mothers can not be too strict in fulfilling, to exercise such a watchful care over their daughters, that they will pass the years of their maidenhood in stainless purity and innocence, until God calls them to enter the married state.

Equally urgent is the obligation which rests upon *you*, mothers, to assist those of your daughters whom God has chosen to serve him in the *religious* life, that they may heed his call.

Be careful lest, by placing any obstacle in their way, you deprive them of such a happiness and *merit*.

I have said that this hour should be devoted to reminding you of what is necessary, on your part, to be done to preserve your daughters from losing their virginal purity, that they may grow up to womanhood models of correct deportment, and an honor to their sex. That your maternal wishes may, in this regard, be gratified, you must begin, ere childhood's years have passed, to watch over them with untiring care, and to avoid giving them scandal yourselves, lest they might, perhaps, even while young, offend against the angelic virtue. This may result when children of different sexes—brothers and sisters—are permitted to

occupy the same bed. Many excuses are urged for this. Some say that such things never would enter their childish minds; others allege poverty for allowing it, saying that their supply of beds and covering is insufficient. Alas! the demon of impurity is only too ready to tempt even children, and steal their first years from God. And it is useless to urge *poverty* as an excuse, for nothing more is needed for a good bed—and one, too, which is conducive to health—than a large sack, or case, filled with straw, with a good cover, for which, if necessary, clothing can be used.

Encourage, in the hearts of your daughters, while still young, the spirit of *prayer* and a taste for exercises of piety; to succeed in which, inculcate *early* rising and devout recitation of *morning* prayer.

Do not stop here, but try to inspire them with a fervent love of prayer *in general*, and, above all, a zeal in practicing the same.

The mother must also take heed lest her daughters form habits of idleness, and should, therefore, not only assign them regular household tasks, but see that they are diligently performed.

A young girl who shrinks from *labor* and prefers to rock to and fro in a comfortable chair, with idly-folded hands, rather than to use them for honest work, or who is constantly strumming the piano, is in very great danger of yielding to temptations against holy purity.

According to the proverb: "Idleness is the mother and the beginning of sin," and so it is, even though at

first there seems no cause for apprehension. It throws open wide the portals of the imagination, and renders both eye and ear accessible to the suggestions of the tempter.

A young girl who cherishes no love for *prayer*, and evinces no taste for *work* or *industry*, lives continually in the proximate occasion of sin; especially in constant danger of being tempted, by her unguarded phantasy and senses, against holy purity. But what more than all endangers purity and virginal chastity, is *association* with giddy and frivolous companions, for their example is most pernicious.

The boldness manifested in their whole demeanor, when they walk, stand, or sit, or participate in some social entertainment, tends to diminish the horror towards every thing vulgar, which pure-minded girls must feel, and imperceptibly opens the way for sins against the angelic virtue.

Much less should a mother permit her younger daughters, even though they are still small, to associate with bold and badly-behaved boys.

Such companionship would be most injurious, precisely because they *are* young, and because such boys are often already confirmed in the sin of impurity.

Resolve, therefore, to confess any remissness of which you have been guilty in this regard, and be more watchful. Notice, carefully, where your daughters go, when they leave the house for an *evening's* enjoyment, for this desire to go out with others, "just for a little amusement," as is generally said, is fraught with the

greatest danger to the preservation of virginal purity.

What will your daughters hear, O mothers! amid a gay and giddy throng? Believe me, through the conversations too often carried on in a gathering of young people, temptation finds entrance to the soul, and who can tell what unseemly conduct, too, is permitted even in the presence of persons of different sexes?

There is another point which demands special attention. You must not only be most careful in regard to the associations formed by your daughters, but you should also forbid them attending balls, picnics, parties, moonlight excursions, and theatres.

Should they murmur and remind you of mothers—Catholic also—who do not assume so strict an attitude, tell them that you are actuated only by a wish to do them real good through devoted maternal *love*, and that long after you have sunk into the grave they will be most grateful for your loving care.

But what can I say of such mothers as permit their daughters to attend such places in company with young *men*, and remain until a late hour of the night? And they allege as an excuse that marriage is contemplated between the parties! Fatal delusion! That very fact should cause a mother to redouble her care to prevent the virginal purity of her daughter being tarnished, or its luster even dimmed.

For the same reason, mothers, do not allow your daughters, even when at home, to remain alone with

any *male* visitor, young or old ; nor permit them, when contemplating marriage, to remain *alone* with the betrothed.

They may meet to enjoy each other's society, but it must be in presence of the parents, or some members of the family ; and in regard to these young women who are at service, and intend to marry, let them go to the house of some mutual friend, during the day, where the contemplated husband can also be.

I admonish you, mothers, to impress upon the minds of your children that the more careful they are to preserve a *modest* and quiet demeanor, the more readily will they be sought in marriage by those whose present worth will be a pledge of their future fidelity.

Take care, also, that your daughters do not give way to vanity through an excessive love of *dress*, and a desire to please, which leads them to deck themselves out in the hope of attracting the attention of some young man, and eventually winning his heart. Believe me, such evident *extravagance* in dress would only tend to alienate the heart of a worthy young man from marrying one who is addicted to such folly, and why? Simply because he would doubt his ability to support her as a wife in the style which vanity leads her to adopt, a truth of which you must remind your daughter when you learn that she intends to choose the married state.

Of course, a mother must furnish her daughters with becoming *attire*, but not to such an extent that their



*vanity* will be constantly fed. Let them dress well without putting on every silly fashion that appears, and, above all, in accordance with their *station*.

But there are some things which, even more than *extravagance*, should be avoided in dress. A young girl should observe the greatest modesty therein, and never so far forget herself as to appear, either in or out of the house, in a garb which could offend the rules of Christian propriety. Then, too, her looks, her gait, her words, her whole demeanor in fact, should be a mirror of the modesty which finds within her heart its home.

*This* is not the case with those girls who permit their gaze constantly to wander round, who continually indulge in jests and laughter, and who give scandal even by their walk.

Let a mother watch that her daughters do not spend their precious time in reading *novels*, *romances* and *illustrated* newspapers. To prevent them doing so she should have good books in the house, such as are best fitted to instruct the children of the Church thoroughly in their religious duties, and encourage them to live in accordance with the *maxims* of the Saints. The frequent—nay, daily—perusal of the lives of those great servants of God, will tend to promote this happy effect. She should be most particular to have them well instructed for Holy Communion, and see that at the proper age they approach the table of the Lord.

Then they should approach monthly, or even oftener, to the Sacraments, and enter a *Confraternity* of

the Blessed Virgin, or of another society, established for the girls by the Church.

Should your daughter be called by God to serve Him in the married state, you have to see if her future husband is a really pious and good young man, and that she prepares herself with great care to receive abundantly the graces connected with the Sacrament of Matrimony, and be enabled to fulfill her marital and maternal obligations in a holy manner.

But if, Christian mother, God should, from among your daughters, call one to serve Him in the religious life, send forth your most heart-felt thanks to Him for so great a grace, and assist your favored child to fulfill the wish of her fervent heart.

Many a mother has regretted, with bitter tears during her whole subsequent life, that she acted otherwise than this; for it is a well-known fact that the victim of a lost vocation generally passes a very miserable life, and becomes a burden to her parents.

On the contrary, a daughter consecrated to the Lord, by her constant prayers and holy life, which she offers to God as a perpetual oblation, will bring down the blessing of God, for time and eternity, upon the whole family.

Another motive to urge a mother to exert the most excessive care in the fulfillment of her duty, is the thought of the inexpressible shame to which she would be exposed if her daughter should so yield to temptation as to become a mother in a sinful manner. Oh! what unutterable mortification does such a misfortune

bring, not only to the guilty culprit, but to her family as well.

Perhaps in this very assembly there are mothers who regret, but too late, that they did not exercise a greater vigilance in regard to their daughters, by which they would have spared themselves the misery of having a child, who must be to the family a permanent disgrace.

Invoke St. Ann, the Mother of the Queen of Virgins, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one fervent Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the grace of having daughters who, before God and man, walk as models of modesty, chastity, and honor; and who, long after your bodies lie moldering in the dust, will think with grateful love of the care with which you preserved in them their *virginal* chastity, and guided them in the election of their *vocation*. If you acted in this way: "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVI.

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### NOEMI.

WHEN, during the administration of the judges, there came a famine in Palestine, a certain man of Bethlehem went to dwell in the land of Moab, with his wife and two sons, until plenty would once more smile upon the holy land, and permit him to return to his home. The family name of the man was *Elimelech*.

During their sojourn in Moab he died, as also did the sons whom Noemi his wife had borne, to the intense grief of their mother.

After ten years of sorrow, a yearning to return to the home of her youth came upon Noemi; and, having gratified the desire, the tidings of her arrival spread abroad, and the people said one to another: "Behold, Noemi has returned." Now Noemi, in Hebrew, means "The beautiful," and the sorrowing mother replied to the greetings of her friends: "Call me not Noemi, the beautiful, but rather salute me as Mara, for my life is bitter indeed." *Mara*, in Hebrew, means "bitterly afflicted."

*I will make the application, and devote the present hour to pour the balm of consolation, especially into the*

*hearts of those whose lives God has been pleased to embitter with many griefs, and direct their attention to the cultivation of a virtue most essential for a wife and mother.*

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The wife of Elimelech had two names; one she received in childhood, the other she assumed herself. Both of these, *Noemi* and *Mara*, bear a certain reference to the Mother of God, and the manner in which I will apply them to your state of life will soon be perceptible to your minds.

“Noemi, the beautiful!” Ah! yes; this epithet is due to Mary in every regard.

First, she is saluted by the Angel as “full of grace.” Now, if a soul, as the image and likeness of God, in the state of sanctifying grace is already so resplendent and beautiful, that all the loveliness which earth can show can not even approach thereto; what idea have we not to form of the surpassing beauty of Mary as the Mother of God? Mary, whom a prince of the heavenly realm saluted as “*full of grace!*” *Full of grace*; not merely replenished with a certain measure thereof, surpassing that of all the children of men, but *full of grace*, in a manner which exceeds by far that which adorns the united choirs of angels, whose Queen she is.

But, even in the beauty of her Person and the nobility of her appearance, Dionysius, the Areopagite, as I already mentioned, declares that, when he beheld Mary before him, he was so overwhelmed at her ex-

ceeding beauty that, if faith had not taught him otherwise, he would have believed her to be a divinity.

Therefore, when Holy Scripture designates Jesus as the most beautiful among the children of men, similar praise may be applied to Mary, as fairest among the daughters of Eve.

She is the chosen one, the lily among thorns, as the "Canticle of Canticles" salutes her; and what can we say, that finds words, to express her beauty and glory as, arisen from death—transfigured—she sits enthroned at the side of Christ in heaven?

Mere beauty of person, however, is of very little moment, and needs not to be mentioned in proclaiming the praises of a bride or wife, for Holy Scripture says: "The beauty of a wife is vanity;" on the other hand, "Those who fear the Lord God deserve all praise." There is a *spiritual* beauty, and to it the words of the "Canticle" especially refer when the Holy Ghost, addressing the spouse of Christ, cries out: "Thou art all fair, my beloved, and in thee there is no spot." This beauty of the soul, so precious in the sight of God, should certainly adorn every virgin who embraces the married state, and in the faithful fulfillment of her marital and maternal duties grows ever more and more a fervent child of the Holy Church. This zealous compliance with her duties as wife and mother will cause her to become even saintly, and adorn her soul with a wonderful beauty.

Let us now consider the second name assumed by

Noemi when bending under the weight of her bitter sorrow.

*Mara*, "the sad." Now, no matter to what state of life we belong upon this earth, the divine will has decreed that we shall find no other way to heaven than the royal road of the Cross. Even Mary herself, the purest of virgins, the only one chosen from among all the children of men to be the Mother of God, and pre-elected to be one day enthroned beside her Divine Son in heaven, eternally to rejoice in the beatitude of God in a degree never permitted to man nor Angel, was not exempt from sorrow. On the contrary, oh, what agony tore her heart as she stood beneath the Cross, nearest to Him Who, through the lips of the Prophet, cried out: "Oh! all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

"Do not call me Mary, but *Mara*, the afflicted." Ah, yes! in her widowhood she stood beneath the Cross; Joseph, the faithful partner of her joys and sorrows, was dead, and now her maternal arms were waiting to receive the corpse of her only Son, Whose Virginal Mother she was.

Every wife may be very sure that for her also a cross is prepared, and *sufferings* awaits her on the path of life, if she is resolved, as a true child of God, to fulfill His will on earth. I repeat: Let every body be ready for the cross; but especially married women.

Eve was the first who transgressed the divine command, brought into the world innumerable temporal

ills, and banished us all from Paradise. She did all this, and the punishment by which her daughters, especially those who enter the married state, have to atone for it, is severe indeed. The divine punishment: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children" is verified in them and soon after their marriage, for many a one offers the sacrifice of her life, by giving birth to a child.

And, even if this is not the case, for other reasons the weight of the cross, which the wife must bear, as she pursues her constant round of tasks, presses on her so heavy, indeed, that she might well be called a *martyr*—a sorrowful mother.

To enumerate some of these trials: A girl marries, and, after having spent her honey-moon in the hope to live happy and comfortable, with the prospect of a joyful future, after a few brief months beholds her husband stricken down by some disease, and torn from her side by death.

Or, there is a maiden who gave her heart and hand to one whom fortune blessed with golden dower, and all seemed bright upon the wedding morn. A few brief years have passed, and all is changed. He loses all his fortune, becomes poor and sick, and want pursues the unfortunate pair, and, instead of enjoying all the comfort that wealth and love can give, the poor young wife must herself provide for the support of all.

Or—more bitter still—the husband falls into evil ways; becomes a drunkard, an adulterer; may scoff at the religion she holds so dear; and dare to load



with abuse her whom he vowed to love and cherish. In fine, he may develop such a character that, had the wife known him better, he never would have gained her hand. It may please the Lord to afflict with sickness the wife herself, and she has to endure, besides the pain, the sorrow of seeing that her husband manifests no care for herself or little ones. Perhaps some, who listen to me to-day, know this too well, from the saddening experience of their own life.

And more than one *widow*, perchance, is sitting before me now, who has not long passed the day of her nuptials. Let me ask you, poor suffering child, did you think on that auspicious day that your happiness would be so brief? In addition to the grief of widowhood, some, who have been reared in luxury, the pride of wealthy parents, are forced to earn, by constant toil, a sum which scarcely affords them a scanty support.

Traveling through the South, after the unfortunate war, during the course of my missionary labors, there were many of the Southern ladies who, before the war, had hundreds of slaves to obey their slightest wish, yet, at this time, had to gain a meager subsistence by weary toil of washing and serving as hand-maids. Their husbands fell upon the battle-field; and their sons, too, went bravely forth and died. .

There may be mothers here suffering from some obstinate malady, which has troubled them ever since they gave that babe, which God bestowed, a place in their heart, and welcomed it with fond maternal love.

Verily, there are comparatively few women who might not say, with Noemi: "Call me Mara, the afflicted." Oh! how often, when the weight of your cross, poor, banished children of Eve, seems too heavy to bear and ready to crush you beneath its load, do you not long for some *solace* in your grief? Listen, and from my words to-day you will surely derive some healing balm!

Whatever may betide you, thank God that He has called you to serve Him in the one true *Church*, and illumined your hearts with a *faith* which can not fail to console you, by making you love the Cross, in imitation of Christ and His Saints.

Think of St. Elizabeth, who stands forth in the calendar as the great example for married women. She, the daughter of a King, was the victim of the vilest calumnies, and, on the charge of adultery, was, with her children, banished in ignominy from the royal palace. Nay, she was even reduced to beggary, and frequently turned from the doors, laden with abuse, by those among her own subjects, whom she had often sustained with her generous alms.

Might she not have cried out: "Call me not Elizabeth, but *Mara*, the afflicted. O God! when and how have I acted to merit this?"

Far different, however, were the sentiments of this heroic woman. She regarded her heavy cross in the light of faith; she looked at Mary standing, in deepest woe, beside her dying Son, and that look whispered of sufferings borne for God's dear love. She felt how

precious they are, and the sweetest solace filled her heart at the thought that God had found her worthy to stand so near the Cross. She hastened to the Church, with her children, and entoned a solemn "Te Deum."

Afflicted wife! Sorrowing mother! Be your trouble what it may; whether God has been pleased to take your husband away by death; or, perhaps, permits you to suffer from unkindness at his hands, more cruel still than death; or, it may be, that he has deserted you to struggle on through life; be consoled, for the royal road of the *Cross* is the only way to *Heaven*.

It is your unhappy lot, perchance, with all your other woes, to have children who repay your maternal love with cold neglect, and turn away without a kindly word in all your grief. Perhaps your own family calumniates and despises you, or you meet with naught but ingratitude from those to whom you have been most kind. Whatever may have been your affliction, look at Mary beneath the Cross, and imitate St. Elizabeth in that sublime *resignation* in the most holy will of God.

Never let the morning light nor the shades of even appear without your having kissed, devoutly, the precious five wounds of your crucified Jesus. When you take your Crucifix and press your lips to the wound of the *right* hand say, within yourself, "God knows it," and do not look upon your trouble as coming from the hand of man.

Kiss the wound of the *left* hand, and reflect that suffering is no misfortune, but a glorious opportunity of resignation to the Divine Will, and testing the depth and strength of your *love* for God.

Kiss the wound of the *right* foot and say, within your heart: "I have sinned and deserved an infinite punishment; perhaps, by mortal sin. I have often merited to be cast into the eternal flames of hell."

Kiss the wound of the *left* foot, and think that *patience* hath a perfect work, and is the source of innumerable merits.

Kiss the sacred wound of the sweet Heart of Jesus, and say: "Thus hast Thou, my Saviour; thus has Thy Blessed Mother; thus have all the Saints entered heaven. Jesus, I resign myself to Thy Holy Will; Thou, O my crucified Love!"

Implore the intercession of St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you, from God, the grace of a great and perfect appreciation of the benefit of *suffering* from the pure motive of His *Love*. And may you receive grace to bear *patiently* your daily Cross until you are called to wear the Crown of Glory and Bliss. Cross-loving and patient mother, never complaining of God because of your Crosses, "Blessed art thou among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVII.

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### RUTH.

WHEN Noemi, of whom I spoke in my last Conference, went back to the home of her youth, her daughter-in-law, Ruth, returned with her. Holy Scripture relates of Ruth that the Lord blessed her, because she was willing, by diligence and industry, to support herself and not be a burden to her husband's mother. Yes; she was even so highly favored as to become the ancestress of Christ our Lord, as the Gospel says.

*This trait in the character of Ruth which the Scripture mentions when narrating how assiduously she gleaned in the fields of a certain Booz, a relative of Noemi, suggests to me to speak to you to-day upon how essential careful housekeeping is in a Christian wife and mother.*

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The virtue of *domesticity* was glorified by the zeal with which Mary, the Mother of God, practiced it, from one incident related in Holy Writ of her solicitude in this regard.

It was at the wedding of Cana, and it was *not* the

parents of the bride or bridegroom, who told Jesus of the difficulty which had arisen in the course of the marriage feast, but His Blessed Mother, from which we justly infer that she tended her own house with greatest care.

Another proof that she possessed this virtue in a heroic degree, is the fact that, in company with the holy women, she went with Jesus that she might minister to His wants during His toilsome journeys, and care for Him, as well as His Apostles.

By *domesticity*, or domestic economy, I mean that virtue in a wife which, in Holy Scripture, called forth, from Solomon, such a glowing tribute: "Who shall find a valiant woman? From the uttermost coasts is the price of her; her husband trusteth in her, and she causeth him to be esteemed, and her children call her blessed. She riseth at earliest dawn, and eats not her bread in idleness. She careth for the cultivation of the fields, and for the garden of her husband. She laboreth diligently in the house, providing food and clothing for all. She avoideth overmuch talk; is mild, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She regulates every thing with order, and is kind to the poor and needy."

• The first quality, therefore, which the Holy Ghost praises, through the lips of Solomon, is *diligence*,—a most desirable trait in a wife, that she may assist her husband, and not, through idleness, be a burden to him, for certainly God created Eve to be a *help-mate* to Adam through life, not to remain idle at his side.

The spirit of *industry* will prompt a wife to do all in her power to advance the interests of her husband and increase his store, that he may be honored and esteemed by his fellow-men. She will avert from him the reproach and stigma of having an idle and slothful wife, who, by squandering his hard-earned money for dress and folly, will eventually ruin his business.

This virtue will also lead her who possesses it to see that the various household duties are well and thoroughly accomplished, each at the proper time.

To insure this she should *appoint* an *early* hour for rising; for it is a serious evil to spend the first precious hours of the new-born day in slothful sleep. The Holy Ghost, in his eulogy of the valiant woman, says that she rises *early*, even before break of day. Thus, she will have sufficient time to offer her heart to God in fervent prayer, before beginning her daily labor; for upon the manner in which the day is begun depends the way in which all its hours are employed—well or ill, and whether, when the shades of night envelop the world, the mistress of the house can retire to rest, her heart at peace with God. Oh! how inexpressibly sad is it not to see so many of your sex, so ready, in the first hours of the day, to pay homage to the demon of *sloth*, by spending in sleep the time which should be devoted to prayer and their household cares!

If the mistress of a house rises early, her servants will imitate her example; if not, the result will be a hurried recital of the morning prayer, and a neglect

to properly beg the divine blessing on all the actions of the day.

Oh! that my advice upon this point would sink so deep into the hearts of all who listen to me to-day, that they would be prompted to make resolutions and *keep* them, to faithfully perform their morning prayer and devotional duties. You would thank me, for all eternity, for having inspired you with the desire to do so.

The good wife, the Christian mother, should see that her husband, children, and domestics also fulfill the obligation of morning prayer, nor deem it sufficient to repeat a short blessing before partaking of the breakfast provided for them by the bounty of God. All together should, if possible, recite their morning prayers, which, if brief, can still be fervent, to thank God, from their hearts, for his gracious protection through the night; for having preserved them in life, and given them another day to increase their merits for a better world.

Christian women! even though these prayers should be but one "Our Father," with the Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed, the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, some prayers in honor of your guardian Angels, St. Joseph, St. Ann and the patron saint of each, together with an offering of your intention to do every thing in union with the intention and merits of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Angelus Domini at the close of the morning prayers, a few minutes would suffice; not more than six or seven would be required to sanctify the first moments of the



day, and merits would be gained throughout its course until the fall of night.

In the arrangement of your household duties forget not, when possible, to hear Mass, also, during the week; and when you are unable to do so, let some member of your family assist at the holy sacrifice, that through this channel, the divine benediction may, from the altar of God, flow bountifully upon your family, even as water is conducted from one principal basin into every house, that all may have a plentiful supply.

Next, you must arrange the work of the day, and appoint an hour for every different branch, taking special care to have the meals prepared at the fixed time, and as *well* served as your purse and skill permit.

If you are blessed with means, and have servants at your command, do not on that account deem yourselves exempt from a most careful attention on this point, and impress upon your daughters the necessity of care in the same regard.

If a husband perceives how his wife, in her solicitude for his health and comfort, never fails to spread before him properly prepared and palatable food, he will soon prefer to remain at home with her and the children than to take his meals abroad. This will foster a *domestic* spirit in the family, drawing its members more closely together, and will inspire your daughters with the resolve to imitate your example, should they also be in the same position.

It is a very significant mark of domestic happiness, if a married man praises publicly his wife as

the best *cook* of the place where he lives. If you are well versed in the culinary art, instruct your daughters thoroughly in it, and, in general, do not permit them to yield to idleness. Let them learn the mysteries of housekeeping at an early age;—cooking, sewing, knitting—even washing and ironing—any thing rather than to sit with folded hands, wasting the precious hours in reading novels, yawning over some exaggerated delineations of the current fashions, and torturing the ears of all around with jingling discordant tunes upon the piano. All this, too, often while the mother and even grandmother works wearily on.

A certain bishop called the sacristy “the mirror of the priest,” meaning, that if all is neat and in order therein, it is a convincing proof that the pastor is disposed to lead a truly pious life in strict accordance with the sublime state he has chosen.

In like manner the cleanliness and tasteful arrangement of a *house* may be said to reflect the interior of her, who presides over it.

Whoever has had occasion to visit convents has certainly observed the remarkable cleanliness which there prevails, which shows how studious nuns,—and, in general, all religious persons,—are to manifest, exteriorly, that they are striving after perfection.

Oh! what a disedifying picture is presented by a house full of dust and disorder! and what an unfavorable impression does it not give of its inmates!

The very reverse will be the case if the various apartments are neat, and the furniture arranged with

taste, while the walls and tables are adorned with well-executed devotional pictures and objects, which testify to the taste and industry of some member of the family.

The principal impediments in the way of careful and judicious housekeeping are *selfishness, useless visits, excessive loquacity* and *love of pleasure*.

It is rare, but, therefore, all the more edifying to find united in the character of a wife and mistress of a house a love of *silence* and *retirement*, for too often the contrary is true.

Hour after hour is frittered away—really squandered—in idle visiting and useless gossip, and entire days are spent in seeking pleasure away from home, without the family circle.

True *economy* will also prompt you to guard against permitting any thing to go to waste through neglect on your part; and to live according to your social *station*. It is incredible the comfort, in which families can live at a moderate expenditure by the exercise of a little care on the part of the wife in avoiding expense, and making every thing last as long as possible. In this particular great praise is due to the Bourgeoise women of France, who produce great comfort with very slight resources.

While, however, I advocate *economy*, I would warn you against permitting your efforts in that line to degenerate into *parsimony*. Guard against an avaricious and illiberal and stingy spirit.

Provide *generously* for the comfort of your family,

not only that its members may gather round you in peace and contentment, but that, through that very feeling of comfort, they will incline to listen to, and obey your voice.

Be liberal, not only to your own, but remember the suffering poor, whose sorrows should forcibly appeal to your hearts, and their grateful prayers will obtain many a precious grace from heaven for you, and for those you hold so dear.

Be generous also to Christ and His Church, by always assisting and contributing to the latter when you can, for which you, American ladies in particular, have many opportunities.

I would advise each one of you to join some *Confraternity* in your own congregation, established for the aid of the temple of God, His ministers, and the parochial schools.

Contribute as much as you are able towards furnishing the *Sacristy* and adorning the *Altar* of God, "the place where His glory dwelleth;" for thus you lend your aid to the worthy solemnization of the Divine service, and your children and children's children will be encouraged to imitate your example, and bless your memory.

May the Lord reward you all a hundred-fold for what you have already done in this regard, and will yet accomplish throughout your lives, for the love of Jesus and His holy Church.

God will not forget you, but will render sweet, instead of bitter, your dying hour. I trust that at the

next meeting I will have the consolation of hearing that the number of the members of the "Altar Society" has increased, and that *all* the ladies of the congregation have been enrolled therein.

As an inducement to join, I here promise to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for all who do so.

In your "last will and testament," wife and mother, forget not the needs of God's temple on earth, that you and your children, until the latest generation, may be amply repaid by the Lord. Yes; His blessing will bountifully reward you through the temporal benefits He will bestow on you and yours, for He will not remain a debtor to you.

Invoke the intercession of St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God grace to practice the *domestic virtues*, as I have described them here, for the promotion of your own salvation, and the temporal and eternal welfare of those you love. Merit the praise given by Solomon to the strong women, but this in the degree of Christian perfection, and: "thou shalt be blessed among women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVIII.

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ANNA,

THE WIFE OF ELCANA.

WHEN Heli was high priest in Israel, and the Judges ruled over the land, it happened that Elcana, with his wife Anna, made a pilgrimage to the tabernacle of the covenant. Anna's heart was very sad, for the Lord had not blessed her with a child; and in the Old Law it was looked upon as a disgrace, and even regarded as a punishment of God, to be without children. Sighing and weeping she poured forth her feelings of sorrow before the Lord, and besought Him to look favorably upon her, and bless her union with a son, whom she would bring up in His holy fear and love. And her prayer was granted.

Thus did the Lord turn a gracious ear to a wife, and listen to a prayer which came from her fervent heart, which determines me to-day—

*To speak to you of zeal in prayer, and earnestly recommend each one of you, as becomes a good wife and mother, to pray much for her husband and children.*

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Anna, the wife of Elcana, prayed with the most

fervent devotion, but in silence; her lips moved, yet no sound issued from them, and while her petition went forth to God, tears relieved her overburdened heart.

It being in ancient times the custom of the Jews to pray aloud, Heli supposed that she had taken too much wine, and requested her to retire from the temple until its effects would pass away.

But Anna begged that he would not rank her among the daughters of Belial; and assured him that her grief and disappointed hopes had grown too great for words. Then she told Heli the object of her petitions; and he said: "Go in peace, and may thy prayer be heard,"—as indeed it was.

I said this fervent prayer of Anna leads me to speak to you to-day of the duty of prayer, the high *estimation* in which you should hold it, and, above all, the frequency with which you should practice what will enable you to fulfill every duty belonging to your state of life. Yes; prayer will strengthen you to bear your part as wives and mothers, and to lead pious lives as children of the one true Church. You will at once recognize the truth of this, if you consider what prayer *really* is, and what experience teaches of its influence upon our lives. Prayer is the means instituted by God, in His munificence, for us to obtain grace sufficient to do all what He wants that we should do, and without which we can do nothing for eternal life.

St. Augustine sums up all that can be said in regard to prayer in a few brief words, thus: "He who

prays well, lives well ;” therefore, I earnestly admonish you all, if you would live in a manner pleasing to God, to pray often, and with devotion..

It is well, indeed, with the wife, whose husband can extol her piety, and eulogize her fervent love of prayer ; and happy is that mother whose children can say with truth : “ We have a pious mother, she prays a great deal, and visits the Church often ; yes, daily ; she goes to Confession and Holy Communion every month, and sometimes more frequently yet.”

But that our prayer may be really deserving of the name, and exert the proper influence upon our lives, we must have a due *appreciation* of it ; and, when you pray, pray in *spirit* and in *truth*.

Now, to raise and foster such spirit in our hearts, this spirit of prayer, and the esteem for it, we need only think of the noble and *exalted* act we perform therein, as the very *nature* of prayer. in itself clearly proves.

Prayer is, by its nature, an *elevation* of the soul to God ; or, in other words : He who prays approaches to God in spirit. Oh, what an incentive to be diligent in prayer ! Think of it, Christian soul—you approach to *God*.

Prayer is a *colloquy* with God. Think of it ! You are permitted to speak with God in prayer, as a loving child speaks to a kind and tender Father.

But prayer implies much more than this. It is *intercourse*, a *union* with God, by which we are permitted, even while on earth, to anticipate our future bliss in



Heaven. It was thus with the Saints who so often were, during prayer, lifted up from the earth in ecstasy.

Reflect, besides, on the character of the most exalted beings ; to pray suffices to make them happy.

Prayer is, as it were, the life of the *Angels*, who, since the day of their creation, unceasingly adore God in heaven ; who are—and remain—united to Him.

So it is, too, with *Mary*, who is our constant intercessor with Christ, in her celestial home.

So it is even with her Divine *Son*, Who there offers continually His merits to His Heavenly Father, pleading with Him and praying day and night in our midst, upon our Altars in the Most Holy Sacrament, as He has done for the long period of nineteen hundred years.

Are not these *motives* to instill in our hearts the highest esteem of prayer, and to invite us at the same time to the most zealous practice of prayer?

But we must pray *with fervor*, and, as Christ enjoins, *always* ; because prayer is precisely the means instituted by God for us to obtain a constant renewal of grace ; first, for our own sanctification, and then, to enable us to fulfill our duty towards those intrusted to our care, and for whose salvation we must one day render an account.

O Christian wives and mothers ! love and *practice* prayer ; often lift up your hearts to God during the day ; adore, praise and thank the Lord for the munificent graces for which you are indebted to Him as the work of His hands, and children of His Holy Church.

Above all, when you bow before the throne of God in prayer, beg Him for new graces, that your lives may be sanctified; ask Him to grant you an ardent desire to imitate the lives of the Saints. Petition for individual graces, that you may grow in *virtùè*, and become daily more pleasing in the sight of God.

It was thus with those great and devoted servants of God—Hedwige, Blanche, Elizabeth, and many other saintly women—whose virtues have given them a place among God's chosen ones.

There are, then, particular graces for which you should ask, that you may be enabled to practice those virtues through which your example will have a most blessed influence upon the sanctification and salvation of your husbands and children.

Pray to God, that the former may ever walk in the state of sanctifying grace, avoiding sin, and the occasions thereof, shunning idleness and those associates who might lead them into evil ways.

Pray, that your husband may not be so taken up with the love of riches, or worldly wealth, that he would abandon his former pious practices, and neglect to assist at the divine service in Church, and give up entirely the use of the Sacraments;—nay, that his inordinate love of money, and his desire to increase his temporal welfare and success in business, may not induce him to join some secret society, and so lose his soul.

Pray especially for your husbands, that they may be preserved from the awful vice of drunkenness,

for through this detestable passion they might yield even to temptation of violating conjugal fidelity.

But what shall I say to her who has chosen a husband from among those who are not of "the household of the faith?" Oh! do not lose courage; never omit your petitions to the Throne of Grace until constant pleading has obtained for him conversion to our Holy Faith. Make him acquainted with the Priest; give him such instructive books as are written to convince infidels or Protestants of the truths of Divine Revelation, and of the truth of the Catholic Church.

But if your husband is a member of our Holy Church, yet yields no obedience to her laws, never attends divine service, neglects to receive the Sacraments, and never says a prayer, I admonish you to pray constantly for him, and try your best, by love and kindness, to induce him to be reconciled to God, by a sincere confession, and then persevere in fulfilling his duties as a child of our Holy Church.

I only wish that every husband could give me the assurance I once received from a penitent at a mission, who said to me: "Except the grace of faith, Father, there is no benefit for which I so sincerely thank God as the good wife with whom He has blessed me. Night and day did she persevere in her prayers for me until God lent a propitious ear, and I returned to Him with all my heart."

Precisely the same, O mothers, is true in regard to your *children*, in order that you may obtain for them all graces necessary for their salvation.

From the moment you feel that God has deigned to intrust to your care a soul destined for heaven, pray that your child be born alive, and then fail not, at the earliest time, to have the regenerating waters of Baptism poured upon its infant brow. Do not defer to deliver it from the power of Satan, who holds it captive by original sin. Pray fervently that all your children may persevere in their baptismal innocence, and never have the misfortune of offending God by grievous sin.

Inspire them with a love of *prayer*. See that they attend *school* regularly, and always yield a ready obedience to you.

Pray that they may be preserved from the habit of *cursing* and swearing, or any of those sins into which children usually fall, especially if they have any intercourse with evil-minded companions.

Be fervent in your prayers, that they may have the grace to serve God in that *state* of life to which He will one day call them, and let your own good example and sterling virtues be for them a blessed memory long after you have passed away. It will keep them in the path of virtue, and sanctify them therein.

But should they, unhappily, wander from that path and forget the lessons you have taught them in their earlier years, imitate St. Monica, and cry day and night to God in earnest prayer, that He may have mercy on them, and touch their hearts so that they may return to Him, and you will have the happiness of a reunion in heaven.

But be aware that, if you expect the Lord to hear your prayers, they must be real, fervent prayers—not savoring of tepidity.

Therefore, shun all that tends to destroy the *spirit of prayer* in your hearts, namely: the excessive cares for the things of this world and forgetfulness of coming eternity. Keep, with utmost fidelity, your regular time for prayer. Rise early in the morning, that you may be enabled to devote sufficient time to this sacred duty. Try to assist every day at Mass; or, if that is impossible, to pay a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament in the evening. Walk, throughout the day, in God's Holy Presence, and, when the evening hour comes, summon your whole family, let the life of the day's Saint be read aloud, and then a devout evening prayer should close the day.

How infinitely better this will be, than if you were to waste your time, until a late hour of the night, in amusement and idle gossip! But, above all, a tender devotion to Mary, and a frequent intercourse with Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, will enliven and fertilize the spirit of prayer within our hearts.

Implore the intercession of St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one fervent Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you, from God, such a love for prayer therein, that the epithet applied by Holy Church to Mary, may also be applied to you: "Vessel of singular devotion." If you be a wife and mother of singular devotion, then, indeed, "Blessed art thou among women!" Amen!

## CONFERENCE XIX.

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ANNA,

THE MOTHER OFFERING HER CHILD TO GOD.

ANNA, the spouse of Elcana, of whom I spoke in the preceding conference, as praying in the tabernacle of the covenant, then afforded me occasion to direct a word of admonition to you, wives and mothers, upon the high esteem in which you should regard *prayer*; the zeal you should manifest therein; the proper mode of prayer, and the objects to which the petitions of a wife and mother should ever tend, viz :

First, her husband and his welfare, spiritual and temporal; and second, her children, that they may be blessed both temporally and eternally, that the precious blood of Christ may not be lost upon those so dear to her loving heart.

*To-day I will speak especially of the immense responsibility before God which weighs upon a Catholic mother, to answer once before the tribunal of God, whether she made them real children of God.*

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As you all know very well, God instituted matrimony in Paradise, that the human race might be prop-

agated, and the world peopled until the end of time. Therefore, He implanted in the heart of the wife the instinct of maternal love, the desire to receive children from God, and the solicitude to bring them up in such a manner that when she, with her husband, feels the approach of age and weakness, they would, with grateful love, bestow upon the parents that care and comfort so welcome when the close of life is nigh, or parents become poor.

Far more vividly, however, should the Catholic mother, enlightened by faith, realize the great *responsibility* placed upon her by God, when He intrusted her with the eternal weal of her children's souls.

How anxious should she not be to provide for them, not that they may acquire the wealth and honors of this world, and live in comfort and pleasures on earth, but that they may become, in the true sense of the word, faithful *servants* and *handmaids* of the Lord!

That you may readily understand my meaning, let us glance from Anna, the spouse of Elcana, to Mary, praying in the temple.

Anna;—this was also the name of the wife of St. Joachim; and you all know how God listened to the prayer of St. Ann, and gave her, as her own beloved child, Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, the Mother of the Redeemer of the world.

Mary had vowed her virginity to God. But, nevertheless, her petitions daily arose to heaven imploring God to bless the world with that Child Whose ad-

vent was so ardently desired, and Whose mission was the Redemption of man.

Longingly she prayed, therefore, for the coming of the Divine Infant ; and behold ! she herself was to be its Mother.

A wife generally offers her prayers to the Lord soon after her marriage, that He may give her children. Certainly, matrimony was instituted for the propagation of the human race ; and, therefore, in the heart of her who has assumed its cares, God has implanted a desire to behold herself surrounded with children. And this, more especially, because there is a much closer bond between husband and wife when they are blessed with children, than when the reverse is the case.

All this holds good in the New Law ; but for an end more holy and sublime by far, God elevated matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament, that thereby the number of heaven's glorious citizens might constantly increase, and the mutual interchange of their beatitude and glory go on for all eternity.

Parents who do not possess the grace of faith only desire children from temporal motives. But Catholics should aim at something higher, and wish only that, through an increase of family, the kingdom of God may be spread on earth and in heaven.

How ardently does not a queen long for children—for a *Son*, who, as heir to the crown, may one day rule over the land. But the Catholic mother knows full well that for every child she brings into the world



there is a crown prepared, and a throne awaiting in heaven—the kingdom of Glory.

What more can a Catholic mother desire for each of her children, than to participate in this royal destiny? That such a wish may influence her prayer, and that she may well understand what a sacred duty is imposed upon her, the Church has instituted a *Rite*, which was also prefigured by the action of Anna, the mother of Samuel, and prescribed to all the Israelite mothers, namely: the Presentation of their children to the Lord in the temple.

This is the rite of *churching* women. In this there is no imitation of the Old Law; but the rite remains so far connected with it, that it becomes the duty of the mother to thank God for having blessed her with a child, and also serves to remind her of the account she must render, as to the manner in which she fulfills all her maternal duties.

Yes, as to whether she has endeavored to bring her children up in God's holy service so that they might win eternal beatitude, or left them to fall into the ways of sin and be lost eternally.

It is, indeed, no light matter to be a mother! From the moment that God sends a child, we may justly say, the mother has no longer but one soul. No! she has as many souls as the number of children she receives, and they will be one day demanded at her hands. Woe to her if she does not make every effort to rear them for God. Mothers, you are reminded of this by the ceremonies with which you are received

when you, with your babe, enter the Church, and are met at the door by the Priest in the name of the Church.

He sprinkles you with *holy water*, and places a lighted *candle* in your hand as a token that by your example and maternal guidance, you should lead your child to the love and service of God, that it may be forever happy in heaven.

Then the priest will reach you one end of the *stole*, which is emblematic of saving souls. By this the Church wishes to convey the meaning that the mother also must participate in this sacerdotal duty, by constant efforts for the spiritual good of those belonging to her.

After this the Priest will recite with her the Lord's Prayer. Each of the seven petitions should remind the mother of her duties *as a mother*, and of the various graces she should ask from God to enable her to fulfill them.

Take the first petition: "Our Father." Say in your heart: God, thou didst create my child and give it unto my care; may I raise it, to live as Thy child.

"Who art in heaven,"—I must live so, even at the cost of all that life holds dear, that I may meet my child in that happy home. Not for this vain and fleeting world will I rear this image and likeness of Thine, but for eternal joys. Its soul Thou hast thought of for all eternity; for it Thou hast created heaven and earth; for it Thou hast even left heaven, redeemed it by Thy precious blood, and called it to be a child of the Holy Catholic Church.

In the perfect purity of its baptismal innocence it is an object of delight to Thee—a fellow-citizen of the Angels, a brother, a sister of the Saints.

Ah, then! should I deem any effort too great to aid my child in preserving its baptismal purity?

“Hallowed be Thy Name: Thy kingdom come.”  
 “May it, at the earliest age, give homage to Thee as God, Creator and Redeemer, and sanctify Thy Name. May it maintain and diffuse Thy kingdom, and thus fulfill Thy Most Holy Will on earth, even as its guardian Angel, with all the Angels in heaven, delight to do. Care, therefore, O Lord! for its temporal weal and life. Forgive *my* sins; and oh! should this little child, in later years, offend Thee, refuse not to say, Thou wilt forgive. Reject it not from Thy Holy countenance; assist it in temptation; deliver it from temporal evil and eternal woe.” Amen.

The priest proceeds in his wishes that the Lord may pour down his blessings upon the mother, and thus prays: “Save Thy handmaid, O Lord!” and the attendant replies: “Who trusts in Thee, O Lord! Send help from Thy holy place, and from Sion protect her. Let not the enemy have power over her, nor the son of iniquity approach to hurt her.”

Let us pray: “Almighty and eternal God, who, through the delivery of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hast for Christian mothers changed the pains of childbirth into joy and consolation, look mercifully upon this thy handmaid, who comes to Thy Holy Temple to offer her thanksgiving to Thee. Grant that through

the intercession and merits of the Blessed Virgin she, together with the fruit of her womb, may attain to Thy joys in the kingdom of eternal bliss, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen!

After this again the priest pronounces the words of Benediction: "May the peace and blessing of the Almighty God, the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, descend upon thee, and remain with thee forever. Amen."

The Priest then sprinkles the mother with holy water, and bids her go in peace.

Well is it for the Mother, upon whose mind this rite will make so deep an impression, that it will endure for her whole life as a perpetual memento of the important trust which she is called to fulfill for the kingdom of God. She has become the tutor of an immortal soul, which the Lord has confided to her care, one day to demand it from her again.

Let her never, never forget, even amid the busy cares which fill her daily life, to look upon her children in the light of faith, and send forth earnest petitions to the throne of grace for them.

Let her supplicate the Lord that, as a Christian mother, she may gather the most plentiful merits for eternal life in the communion of Saints, through the beatified souls of those children made happy by her maternal care.

Let the Christian mother never cease praying for all her children alike, that they may obtain grace never to offend God during their whole lives by any mortal sin.

This was the prayer which Queen Blanche offered for her son Louis, and he became a Saint.

In these our times, when the spirit of faith is so woefully deficient in the world, let the Catholic mother especially fervently pray that none of her children may suffer shipwreck therein. And if that grief already overshadows her life; or, if her dear ones, although believers, still have permitted their faith to grow lifeless and cold; let her, with St. Blanche, day and night, pour forth her soul in prayer to God, and thus obtain for them the grace of sincere conversion, amendment of life, and salvation.

Until the next conference, then, say daily, in honor of St. Ann, one Ave Maria, that, to reward your devotion for your children in praying for them, she will obtain for you, from God, graces for their salvation, and a heart filled with joy through their pious lives as His devoted children.

Mother, do you understand to-day, better than ever before, the immense weight of *responsibility* in regard to your children, and will you try to keep it, for lifetime, present in your heart? Then: "Blessed art thou amongst women!" Amen!

## CONFERENCE XX.

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ANNA,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL THE PROPHET.

IT will be remembered that the subject of my last conference was the important duty imposed upon you, mothers, by the Lord, of assisting your children, in general, that they may obtain grace to lead holy lives in His faithful service; or, if they have wandered from the path of right, to win them gently back.

To-day I will instruct you, in particular, how you have to behave yourselves if, among your children, there should be some who are called to serve Him as a Minister of God in the Sanctuary of the Church, viz: to become a Priest, or to enter the Religious State.

*Should you ask what course to pursue to aid in effecting this happy result, I would bid you cast a glance at Anna, the mother of Samuel, who not only brought her son to the Temple, but dedicated him to the service of the Lord therein.*

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Let us consider what hints are given to mothers by her attitude.

This favored child of Anna grew up to be the Prophet Samuel. Some of the books in the Old Tes-

tament were called after him, and among the Saints in the Old Law, he held a most distinguished place.

Reflect upon the important lessons you may learn from the pious Anna, and listen while I explain them to you.

First, Anna knelt in prayer before the Lord, beseeching Him to send her a son, and promising to devote him exclusively to His service. Let us consider how, in doing so, Anna became a prototype of Mary.

Mary, too, bore in her maternal arms the Infant Jesus to the Temple to offer Him to the Lord. She, the Queen of Prophets, knew that this Divine Child was the promised Messiah, consequently the High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedec, who would sacrifice Himself as an offering of praise, thanksgiving, petition, and reconciliation to His Heavenly Father on the Altar of the Cross.

She knew that this same sacrifice would then continue to be offered, through the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, until the end of time, upon the Altars of that Church which He came to establish.

She herself, as Queen of Apostles, would be ever ready to assist the Priests of the New Law, that Christ might become, through the apostolic zeal of the Ministers of the Sanctuary, a sign for the resurrection of many, and not for their fall.

To make the application, I would remind you of what I remarked before. It is in the nature of matrimony and its institution, for the propagation of the

human race, that a desire to become a mother springs forth in the mind of the newly-married bride. She desires to have children of her own; but as the same wish in the heart of the Catholic bride originates in a far more elevated motive, she should desire that, among her children, there may be a boy who would be called to serve God in the *sacerdotal* state. Few mothers, alas! however, think of this; among a thousand, scarcely one.

Although it would gratify them to behold one of their children embrace this holy vocation, they neglect to do what they could that God might listen to their prayer, and dispose his heart to so understand its sublimity, that, of his own unbiased inclination, he would choose the sacerdotal state.

Few mothers do what they can to assist a son to prepare himself for a true priestly career, by a life spent in the practice of every virtue and a high esteem of that holy state.

The mother should make the first effort, even when she bears the child beneath her heart, by trying, with more earnest zeal, to practice every Christian virtue. We read, in the life of St. Stanislaus Kostka, that his mother, before his birth, received on her maternal body an impression of the Holy Name, Jesus, as a visible sign that she was to be the mother of a child of benediction, who would one day glorify that Holy Name.

Later on, the mother should seek to inspire the child, whom she would fain behold a minister of God, with a fervent love of *prayer*, and early instruct it in the



most important truths of *faith*. A mother once said to me: "Since God has listened to my prayer, and given me a child, I will do all in my power to bring it up for His greater honor and glory. As soon as its little lips can utter the lisping tones of childhood, I will continually repeat to it the sweet name of Jesus, that it may be the first words spoken by my little one, and then that of *Mary*, that the sweet name of the Mother of God may be the second."

Then, when the child is old enough, the mother should teach it to visit the Church, and inspire it with a love of being in God's own *Temple*. She should explain the meaning of the different *ceremonies*, and have her son learn to serve at Mass as soon as possible.

Let her ask if he would not be pleased to have a little altar of his own at home, before which he might daily recite one "Hail Mary," that he may become a good priest.

To implant and nourish this desire in his childish heart, the mother should early instruct her little son upon the great dignity and sanctity which distinguish the *sacerdotal* state, and tell him that no other calling on earth will yield such abundant merits for heaven, and such divine consolation even here below.

It will be very easy for a pious mother to do this, in terms suited to his infant mind. "My dear little one," she might say; "you often hear children who are not so happy as to be little Catholics like you, when

they see a priest on the street cry out: 'There is a Priest!''

But do you know all that is meant by those words—*a Priest?* Those children do not know, but I will tell you.

Oh, my child, think of the great dignity and power of a Priest!

A *dignity* beyond that of all the Kings and Emperors in the world. Yes; more exalted even than that of the Angels is the dignity of the Priest; for he is the earthly *representative* of Christ.

Think of the honor it would be to be a Priest; for Christ is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and has Himself said: "Whosoever honors you, honors Me;" "As My Father hath sent Me, so I also send you."

It will be easy for you to understand that, if you think for a few moments what *great power* is conferred on a Priest, and what a sacred *Office* is his!

See him at the *Altar*. He changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, so that our Lord is at the same time in heaven and on earth.

If the blessed St. Michael, the Archangel, with all the bright winged spirits, who worship before the throne of God would descend to earth, they would minister to the Priest at the altar; the power of saying Mass is one they do not possess. What a blessing to have among us Priests; Christ is with us! You see the Priest enter the *Confessional*—what for? To hear the *confessions* of us poor sinners, and, as

representative of Christ, to absolve us from all our sins; a power which no Angel of God enjoys.

The Angels, indeed, hover over the sacred tribunal, to offer up their fervent prayers for those who seek forgiveness there, but *they* can not forgive. This none but the Priest can do. No King, no Emperor in the whole world can do this. No! *they* kneel to the Priest to confess their sins. *He* does not kneel to them.

He *preaches*, and sends forth the Word of God to his flock; he points out the way of salvation, and protects us against the attacks of the enemy, even until the end of our life. At the *death-bed* his assistance is the greatest consolation and protection, and a pledge of salvation; and after the soul has gone to meet its Judge he assists it by his prayers; and by the adorable sacrifice petitions the Lord, that its Purgatory being shortened, it may soon enter eternal bliss.

Do you know, my dear little one, that to the priest we owe all the happiness we have on earth? This, my dear child, is especially true of America, where there are so many heretics and infidels and wicked men, and salvation is endangered in so many ways.

If, my dear child, the Priests should ever be driven from out this land, your father and I would no longer remain here, even though gold would spring up beneath our feet.

No! rather would we suffer hunger and thirst, where we could have the ministrations of the Priest, and dwell in a strange land, than to remain in comfort

where that happiness could not be ours, and where would not be any Priest. Then, dear child, think of the treasures of merits which a Priest can amass to increase his beatitude in *Heaven*. And even here, what exquisite happiness he must feel to know that he need care only for the service of God and the salvation of souls. True, he may not possess the wealth and pleasure enjoyed by men of the world, but what of that. They can not compare with the heavenly consolations which God bestows upon the Priest. Oh! my dearest child, how blest would I, your mother, be, if I could but behold you at the altar offering up the adorable sacrifice of the Mass for *me*, and receive the Holy Communion from your hands!

“If I could hear a sermon from your lips, and see the listeners moved to tears; if I could see numbers throng around as you enter the confessional to save them, and promote their glory for heaven,—I, no doubt would, from my inmost heart, thank God that I am your mother. And why should that not be? You know that young Priest? he, too, was raised in this parish; why should you not have the same grace? It seems to me you have the requisite qualifications to study for the priesthood; I will speak to our pastor on the subject. Your father and I willingly would make every sacrifice, even to giving the last penny, to accomplish this wish so dear to our hearts.”

Behold here, mothers, how you can influence your sons to enter the sacerdotal state. Of course it would be wrong to *force* their inclination; for thus you might

cause not only their temporal, but their eternal misery, but you can, *and should*, if they evince any desire of the kind, encourage and assist them to gain their end.

All that I have said now is, in its way, applicable to your *daughters* in regard to their entering the *religious* state, which, believe me, is the most honorable, the most meritorious, and the most blessed for the female sex. Yes; you may indeed esteem it as an honor, if Christ the Lord, the King of kings, should choose one of your daughters as His spouse. Do not withhold her from accepting the loving call; let her follow the voice of the Lord. A young girl who loses her vocation to enter the convent, instead of being an assistance to her parents, rather becomes a burden to them through life.

Therefore, O mothers! aid your children by word and deed, as far as you are able, that if God calls them to dedicate themselves to Him in the sacerdotal or religious state, they may serve Him, and be saved with you and numberless other souls, through Christ our Lord. Then, O mother! invoke the intercession of St. Ann in heaven, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for one of your sons a vocation to the priesthood, and for one of your daughters a call to the religious state. But should it not be the Most Holy Will of God, then pray that they may at least embrace that state wherein they will best find scope to work zealously in the service of God, and for His

honor and glory. Is there amongst you here a mother whose son is a Priest, or whose daughter a sister,—and much more if several of her children had the happy vocation, and the mother disposed them to heed the call of God, then, indeed, “Blessed art thou amongst women.” Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXI.

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### ABIGAIL.

WHEN Nabal, a wealthy man of Mount Carmel, had acted in a wrong manner towards David, who, in consequence, resolved to take revenge, his wife, Abigail by name, set out, laden with presents, to meet and propitiate him, whom her husband had offended. She sought to accomplish this by a most humble petition for mercy, and through the very precious gifts she had brought.

Abigail said to David: "Nabal is a wicked man; according to his *name* he is a *fool*, incapable of speaking with any discretion, yet spare me and my house, and the Lord will bless you for it."

Through this *humility* and *prudence* she appeased the wrath of the King, who listened to her prayer, and even, after the death of her husband, chose her to be his wife.

This conduct on the part of Abigail should remind you of one quality most essential in the character of a wife and mother.

*I will speak to you this day of the godly virtues of humility and prudence, virtues which are so pleasing to the Lord if practiced by the Christian Matron, because they shone forth so brilliantly in His Blessed Mother.*

Prudence, as you all know well, is one of the cardinal virtues ; that is, one of those which must, as it were, accompany every true virtue, that it may ever remain so. It is the quality which leads the Christian in choosing means to accomplish some good and salutary end, to select and apply the best.

It is a virtue which every Catholic wife and mother should earnestly implore from God the Holy Ghost ; since, in the domestic circle, there are so many circumstances which must be taken into consideration to avert evil, both of soul and body, from herself and family, as well as to promote their spiritual and temporal welfare, and promote their eternal salvation.

This incident in the life of Abigail is especially indicative of one condition where prudence is most necessary in a wife : When her husband does not live up to his Holy Faith ; when he does not walk by her side as a true servant of God, as a father full of solicitude for the children intrusted to his care ; but is rather giving scandal to her and the children ;—to live with such a man is certainly the greatest trial of patience which one can undergo ; and while I compassionate every woman that has to bear this cross, I would suggest that there are many sources from which she may derive consolation, if she only knows the proper course to pursue, and is not wanting in *humility* and *prudence* ; two virtues which were exemplified in the wife of Nabal in an especial manner.

First, without hesitation, she confessed before David that her husband was a wicked man, and one with



whom no one could converse in a sensible manner—a man whose very name in Hebrew signified “*fool*,” and whose nature, indeed, responded to his name.

Now, Holy Scripture applies this epithet “fool” to every *sinner*, and truly he who recklessly offends God acts as a fool, as one devoid of sense.

The fool, for instance, looks upon all things as they appear to his own *imagination*; he behaves like a child, seeks amusement in the veriest *trifles*, and *laughs* at the *misfortunes* of others; nay, even at his own.

He hesitates not wantonly to *destroy* property, and often squanders his money and possessions, inflicting serious *injury*; and not on himself alone, for others must suffer as well.

At times he grows wild with *rage*, and scorns to listen to the advice or admonitions of his friends. The conduct of every sinner is precisely, in a spiritual sense, the same as this.

Holy Scripture, therefore, hesitates not to apply to them that name which they richly deserve—“fool.”

That it is extremely difficult for a wife to live under the same roof with such a husband is evident when we consider what *faults*, on his part, are principally calculated to embitter her happiness.

There are men, for instance, in whose hearts the last spark of faith has died out—who care not for religion—and who are, indeed, like unto the heathen. If a young maiden has been guilty of the folly of selecting for her husband one, who has no religion, any

sufferings, which she is subsequently called upon to undergo can only be ascribed to herself.

It may be that, previous to the marriage, he promised on oath, that, should any children bless their union, they should be brought up in the Catholic Faith; yet, after that hope has been verified, he will not allow them to be baptized, nor to attend a Catholic school, and declares that they shall never enter the Church to receive their first Holy Communion, nor be brought up in their mother's faith.

It may be that, while he makes no objections to his daughters being reared in the one true faith, he would fain insist upon the sons professing the Protestant belief; but woe to the mother who is not firm on this point. The true Church is the same for boys and girls.

No Sacraments for her; she will not be permitted to receive them; and should *death* surprise her in this unhappy state, she would be doomed forever to burn in the flames of hell.

If she fails to bring up her children in the true faith, no Priest can pronounce over her the words of absolution; therefore, she must disregard all opposition on this point, and fulfill her duty; otherwise, if one spark of faith still lingers in her heart, how can she enjoy one morsel of food, or lie down to rest at night? She must resolve to give up and suffer every thing rather than neglect her duty as a Catholic mother.

Herein we find a verification of the words of Christ :

“Think ye that I am come to bring peace on earth? I bring the sword.”

“The father shall be arrayed against the son, the son against the father, the wife against her husband. Yes, they will kill you, thinking to do a great service to God.”

What course, then, should the mother adopt that she may fulfill her maternal duties when the father is so bitterly opposed?

Listen! If she has his *solemn promise* that the children should all be baptized and brought up in the true faith, she must absolutely insist upon its fulfillment, saying openly and firmly that if he fail in this she will not remain with him. Let her remind her husband that the law will permit her to retain their children; and assure him that she will go where she can save their souls, as well as her own.

But if no such promise has been made, in answer to her demand, at the time of her marriage—if even the *mother* has been so lost to all sense of duty as to have her children baptized in another creed and reared in its tenets, she must be guided by the dictates of *prudence*, and from this moment begin her efforts with the utmost *discretion*.

For instance, if her husband really loves her, let her represent to him the great misery she must feel to pass her life with one so bitterly opposed to the Catholic faith, that he prevents their children from being instructed therein. Tell him that he, as a Protestant, could so easily permit this, as those of his per-

suasion do believe that all Christian denominations, the Catholic included, are equally conducive to salvation.

Catholics believe their Church to be the only saving. Christ instituted but *one* Church—the Holy Catholic Church—the only true Divine Church, which is, therefore, the only one in which salvation can be found.

If he remain obdurate, *then* the virtue of prudence must do its part. Be *prudent*, yet *firm*. First, she must have her children secretly baptized by the Priest, or, in case of impossibility, by some well-instructed Catholic. She has then herself to instruct the children, in the most essential truths of Catholic faith, and the common prayers, according to their capacities. When they grow up she has to make them acquainted with the promise of Christ, that His Church will remain the true one until the end of time, and that this is the Catholic Church, as the first and oldest of all. She must instruct them that the Protestants were guilty of the gravest error in falling away from it, and impress strongly on their minds those divine promises: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." She should say to them, when of due age, "My dear children, if Christ would have built this house over eighteen hundred years ago, and if He, with His own divine lips would have declared it should never fall, of course it now must have existed for almost two thousand years. But if that

house would be only three hundred years old! Did Christ establish it? By no means! Behold now, my children, the Catholic Church alone, of all the Christian Churches, has stood for over eighteen centuries, and is, therefore the only true Church.

“You must know, my children, that the parents of the first Protestants were all Catholics. They proved faithless to their holy religion. My children, you can not accept that what your father says upon this subject. Alas! he does not belong to our holy faith; but let us never cease praying that he may become a good Catholic, that we may all be saved together.”

And when the children have arrived at the proper age to receive, for the first time, the Body and Blood of Christ, then must the Catholic wife, who has married a Protestant, exert every effort to fulfill her duty in this regard. If it could not be done publicly, at the solemnity of the first Communion of the children of the parish, it has to be done secretly with the help of the Priest; and if the husband, hearing it, should be enraged and abuse her, she should intrepidly assure him, that she would never permit things to go on in an other way, or rather die,—you may kill me. This firmness will generally prevail. But what sin and folly it is to weakly yield the point, and say, “I can not quarrel with my husband.” Far better is it to differ on earth, than to experience the verification of those words of Christ: “Bind them into bundles, and cast them together into the flames of hell.” Ah,

yes, there they would miserably curse each other for an endless eternity.

Are there any mothers present so blinded to the real interest of their children?—Let me show them the criminal folly by which their curse is marked.

A maiden gives her hand at the altar to the husband of her choice, but with the express stipulation that should they have any children, she is to provide them with wholesome food. And, behold, in the course of time he wishes the mother to give them poisoned food! Think you she would be justified in complying with such a desire, merely for the sake of *peace*? No; she would be tormented by the voice of conscience, calling her a cruel *murderess*, worse than a tigress.

Well, the mother who weakly yields the contest about the faith of her children, is guilty of murder, in a *spiritual* sense; she destroys the souls of her children, a heinous crime in the sight of God. Rather let her say, “No, my husband; I will not give up in this. Do not think that I have given *my soul* to you. I owe more obedience to the laws of my God than to your commands; and if you think differently, the name ‘Nabal’ might be applied to you, for, *spiritually*, you manifest no sense, and act like a fool.”

Much depends, however, upon taking the proper *course* to obtain the consent of the husband.

If Abigail had not evinced such *prudence* and *tact* she would never have obtained her object with David,

and never, in later years, would she have become his wife.

*Tact* and *prudence* are required in other matters besides *religion* to preserve the happiness of the family.

What misery must it cause a wife to behold her husband treading the downward path! Drinking, gambling, wasting his time and abusing those whom he should hold most dear! What an example for his children! But what course must a wife, afflicted with this heavy cross, pursue? Let her bear it with *humility* and *patience*. Let her win his love *anew*, by constant kindness, and even anticipating his wishes; then she should seize the most favorable opportunity to place before his eyes the folly of his course, and to administer some loving words of counsel, which, if listened to, would prevent him from destroying her happiness and his own.

But should the most earnest efforts of a wife so afflicted meet with no success, she must console herself with the thought that to live with a person, such as he, with whom her lot in life is cast, has proved to be, affords her a better opportunity to amass treasures of merit for heaven, than to live with the kindest and most amiable husband in the world. This thought should comfort her who must, through life, walk by the side of one who does not possess the gift of faith, or who, although indeed possessing it, reflects discredit thereon by his sinful life.

Yes; her store of merits for eternal life will, by

humble and patient suffering, be increased a hundred-fold.

Invoke St. Ann. Beg her to intercede for you before the throne of grace, and, until the next Conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may assist you to walk in the world, guided by *humility* and *prudence*, at the side of your husband.

Yes, poor child of Eve, if you accept the cross imposed upon you, by your disordinate husband, truly and justly I may say to you: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.



## CONFERENCE XXII.

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### THE WISE WOMAN OF THECUA.

WHEN Absalom committed the crime of fratricide, David refused him admission into his presence, and condemned him to exile, so that, prohibited from coming to Jerusalem, he took up his abode in Thecua.

Joab, who espoused the cause of Absalom, trying to reconcile him with his father David, sent to Thecua and brought thence to David a *wise* woman to ask from him, as King and Judge, grace, that her son might not, in punishment for having taken his brother's life, be deprived of life himself.

She spoke, however, merely a similitude, but succeeded in her design; for David graciously pardoned Absalom, permitted him to return to Jerusalem, and eventually admitted him into the royal presence again.

This event, in the life of David, gives me an occasion to admonish you, mothers, to comply with another most important duty as mothers.

*Punish the faults of your children, but do it with prudence—in the proper manner.*

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Wherefore, and in what manner Mary, as a refuge

of sinners, begs her Divine Son to pardon us if we have offended God by sin, I need not demonstrate in detail. She is not only the wisest and most prudent Virgin, gifted with more wisdom than all the Angels of Heaven; but at the same time our mother *in* Christ, and the *real* mother of Christ.

In making the application of this to your state of life, the first thing to which I would direct your attention, as wives and mothers, is this: David banished his son Absalom. Mothers, you also are bound before God not to pass *unnoticed* those sins which your children commit.

Open the pages of holy writ and you will find, in various places, that parents are admonished, if warning and counsel prove of no avail, to punish their children corporally, lest, "sparing the rod" they "spoil the child."

They are warned not to spoil their children by manifesting a foolishly infatuated love for them which can only end in their eternal ruin. Rather apply the rod, when they require it; for if you do not, you have the assurance of the Holy Ghost, that through your children your old age will be filled with sadness and vexation, and bitterness will overwhelm your hearts.

Never need a mother, who has spoiled her child and refrained from administering the wholesome correction it deserved, look to it for honor and respect in her old age.

But this punishment must be properly applied.

Holy Scripture calls the seeress who spoke with

David, and who had come from her home in the far-off Thecua “ a wise woman.”

Now, let me make the application, and ask : “ In what respect is this prudence evinced by a mother in punishing the faults of her children ?”

She must perform this duty *in time*, and not defer the correction until the faults have taken such deep root, that, to eradicate them, would be a difficult task.

The tree must be made to bend while yet a twig. Mothers ! you must know, from your own experience, how soon the seeds of evil spring up, even in the hearts of the smallest children ; therefore the moment you perceive a fault, correct the culprit. Do not delay ; and if this be of no avail, take the rod and apply it with more or less severity, according to the extent of the offense.

I repeat what I have said before : Deep in the heart of the youngest child the germ of every vice exists.

Think of the seven mortal sins from which all others spring : Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth.

Even little children can show *pride* in their very gestures ; take pleasure in being gayly dressed ; they can be already tenacious to retain possession of small things which may fall into their hands. Their anger is often excited ; they envy their play-mates, who have some pretty toy, and often wrest it from them. They can eat to excess, touch and kiss others with sensuality, and give evidence of an idle and slothful dispo-

sition. These, in little children, are not sins as yet, but let the mother beware of making jest of such evil inclinations,—they would in time become sources of sins.

Rather let her make every effort to stifle the vice in its very germ, and, as soon as the child is able to distinguish between good and evil, the *first beginning* of every sinful act must be noted and corrected.

Never must the mother falter or grow weary in trying to make her child practice those virtues precisely opposite to the sinful inclinations it displays.

One point upon which I would crave your special attention is this: The mother must practice those virtues all the more assiduously *herself*, otherwise the little one will be scandalized by her behavior, no matter how she speaks. For example, if a mother warn her children against certain vicious inclinations of the heart which I have already enumerated, telling them that from those sources all sinful actions come; will her words be of any avail if they, as they too readily do, perceive that she is fond of dress, money-loving, avaricious, violates fraternal charity; that she falls into a passion upon the slightest provocation, and even hesitates not to curse? How can her corrections be productive of good, if they perceive that she cherishes the base passion of envy in her heart, forgets herself so far as to eat to excess, gives way to sensuality, and endeavors to gratify her fancies in every possible way? If a mother extol *industry*, yet is idle and slothful herself, will her words have any effect?

Rather will her children think in their hearts that she is no better than they—perhaps even worse.

In hearing the confessions of children, the Priest can at once perceive the pernicious influence which the evil example of a mother can have upon their lives.

The Confessor will ask if they have been guilty of cursing, and will be answered in the affirmative.

“Does your mother curse, too?” “Yes, Father.”  
 “Have you eaten meat on Friday?” “No, Father.”  
 “Your mother does not eat it either?” “No, Father, she does not.”  
 “Have you ever neglected to hear Mass on Sunday?” “Yes.” “Your mother also?”  
 “Yes.” “Are you exact in saying your morning prayers?” “No, Father.” “Is your mother also careless in this?” “Yes, Father.”

Behold how the example of a mother operates upon her children!

I will now offer a few brief remarks upon the punishment proper to be given, and the manner of administering it, that it may have a salutary effect.

First, observe whether your child is not living in some willful occasion of sin, which causes it to fall into certain faults. If so, *remove* that occasion at once, and have observed carefully what companions your children have, as they advance to maturer years, and with what class of friends they prefer to associate.

If you do not find these such as you can approve of, insist upon them being given up forthwith. Can you wonder that a young girl is fond of dress, of dancing, and gradually carried away with a desire to be present

at those entertainments which last until late in the night; that she loves to attend balls and theaters, if she selects as her most intimate friend one who is fond of appearing decked out in all the fashionable follies of the day, who attends all such places of amusement, and who even has forbidden intercourse with a person of the other sex?

Such pernicious friendship must be broken off *at once*.

All that I have said applies with equal force to your sons, and the boys or young men with whom they associate. Why does your son behave in so impertinent and ill-bred a manner?

Why? Because no sooner has school been dismissed, and his meals—especially the evening repast—secured, than he leaves the house and acts as he pleases until a late hour, roaming from place to place, noisy and riotous, and, in summer, even going to the river with other boys and bathing in the most indecent manner. Thus, instead of being at home to prepare his lessons for the coming day, he thinks of nothing but play.

But how much will you have to answer for, O mother! if you have failed to send your children to the Catholic Parochial School, and permitted them to attend a public school, where of God or religion no word is ever breathed; where the very atmosphere is redolent of godless ideas which, being ever before and around the Catholic child, finally sink deep into its heart. Yes; and it fills that heart at last with contempt for our holy faith and those who love and

adhere to its laws. What a fearful account you will be called upon to give !

All the more terrible if, thereby, your older children have formed the acquaintance of boys, already old in the ways of sin, with whom they roam the streets until late at night. Yes, perhaps they go so far as to neglect to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy-days ; walk into the country and pass those blessed days in hunting or amusing themselves at some way-side inn.

What follows ? They cease to receive often the Holy Sacraments, and begin to tread the downward path. The mother knows this, yet allows it to pass unnoticed, saying : “ What can I do ? ” they will not obey.

Punish them—I repeat it—punish them ; but do it in such a manner that your children can perceive that you only wish to do your duty, and that through love and solicitude for their eternal welfare.

I once knew a father in Vienna who, before he administered that corporal punishment which he deemed his child had deserved, assured the little culprit that in using the rod he was only fulfilling the duty which, before God, rested upon him. Nay, more ; previous to, and after the infliction of the punishment, he accustomed it to say one “ Our Father,” that it might tend to the greater good of its soul. The child wept more, as, in faltering tones, it pronounced the prayer, than at the sharp touch of the rod, for its little heart was more grieved at having offended God and its father than at aught else.

Now, I wish to say some words before closing the present Conference to the widow who marries a second time and takes to her new home some children of her former marriage.

Such a mother often objects, when the step-father punishes them, but this is entirely wrong; for the question is not whether a *first* or *second* husband is the father, but whether her children deserve correction or not. If they *do*, they should, by all means, have it.

All this is applicable when the husband is a widower with children by his first marriage; but in this case the *step-mother* may punish too often and severely, being not always inclined to receive the children of another with true maternal love.

Mothers, question your own hearts as to whether you have been faithful to your duty or not. Follow my counsel. Do all in your power to correct your children, if they falter in the way of Christian justice and piety.

If you fail to succeed, God will not require you to answer for them, but will give you the reward due to a faithful mother.

Until the next conference say every day one Ave Maria, in honor of St. Ann, that she might help you to merit the praise of being a *watchful* mother, correcting the faults of your children in order to be justly called: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.



## CONFERENCE XXIII.

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### BETHSABEE, THE MOTHER OF SOLOMON.

AS we read in the Book of Kings, Bethsabee, upon one occasion, came into the presence of her son Solomon, who, as soon as he perceived her, arose from his throne, advanced to meet her, and before he resumed his seat, bowed before her in token of respect. A throne was erected for her by his orders, and she was seated at his right hand.

Thus did this great King honor her, from whom he received his life.

The interpreters of the Holy Scriptures, and the Fathers of the Church in general, behold in Solomon an emblem of Christ; and, in this incident of his life, a foreshadowing of the exaltation of Mary at His right hand in Heaven. His example is at the same time an admonition to children to respect and honor their mothers.

But there is also a correlative duty resting upon the mother, which is to live so that the children will be impelled to honor her for the virtues which shine forth in her life.

Christ, Who, as God, gave the commandment, "Honor

thy Mother ;” as Man set a glorious example of its fulfillment here on earth—yes, an example which was at once glorious, wonderful and perfect.

He selected Mary for his mother, and she became so in a manner different from any mother before or since—different from any other mother until the end of time.

For God gave her her Son. Jesus had no earthly father, and so He was exclusively her *own*, unlike any other child of earth. With her own milk, she nourished Christ our Lord; with her He dwelt for thirty years at Nazareth, under the same roof, while to the world He only granted three years.

She also accompanied Him when He left that home, and went forth to diffuse the faith Whose light would illumine the world. It was her simple word which elicited His first miracle at Cana in Galilee, and in those ministrations which her Divine Son required as man, as well as the Apostles, she was ever ready to bear a part. And when Jesus had accomplished the work of redemption, and hung in agony upon the Cross, this blessed mother stood beneath, her heart wrung with the pain of “that sword which pierced her soul.”

Ah ! but she crushed down the anguish of that maternal heart, and found shelter there for all those souls redeemed by the merits of her dying Son, and accepted the trust as He left them to her care.

They became her children, for He elected her, so to say, as co-redemptrix of the world.

To her He first vouchsafed the light of His Divine countenance when He burst the confines of the tomb, and arose all glorious and immortal from the dead. He left her to ascend into Heaven that He might receive her there as His own dear Mother, enthrone her by His side, and crown her amid strains of harmony from golden harps, touched by angelic hands. Then, indeed, to her may be applied the words of St. Paul: "He hath exalted Her, and hath given Her a name above all others, that in the name of Mary every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Mary entered into the glory of her Son, where she is enthroned at His right hand."

As Jesus is the Mediator, with His heavenly Father, for us, so is Mary our Mediatrix with Him, her Son, as she herself manifested to St. Bridget in these words: "No sinner who seeks refuge with Me, will be lost. I will lead him to My Son, Who, through His own infinite merits, will reconcile him with his eternal Father."

In this lies a special admonition for you, mother, to lead such virtuous lives—in every way—that your children will be *impelled* to pay you well-merited honor and respect, and thus participate in the blessings which the Lord has attached to the fulfillment of the fourth commandment.

*Now what are those qualities which a mother should possess in order to be honored and esteemed by her children? I will place them before you to-day.*

Christ honored His Mother, because she entered pure and immaculate into existence.

He honored her, because the Holy Ghost blessed her, even at the moment of her conception, with a plenitude of *graces* which far exceeded those which Christ ever did, or will, bestow on the Angels and Saints of Heaven.

He honored her for those *virtues* through which she became a brilliant mirror of the divine perfections—even as the Holy Church styles her The “Mirror of Justice.”

He honored her, because she desired solely and entirely to know and fulfill the most holy *Will* of God, as we learn from the Gospel for the festival of the *Annunciation*. She only gave her consent to become the Mother of His Son after she understood from the Angel that such was the Divine Will. “I am the handmaid of the Lord,” she said: “may it be done unto me according to Thy word.” Oh! what sublime resignation to the Adorable Will is contained in those words, which, later on, her suffering heart re-echoed on Calvary beneath the Cross.

Jesus honored His Mother because, as man, He was *indebted* to her for so much. She waited on Him with a tenderness which had no *parallel* on earth; went with Him through all His weary way; served Him with more than a mother’s devoted love; and stood by Him to the last while His executioners loaded Him and her with bitter scorn.

Christ honors Mary in a special manner, and hears

her *prayers*, because it is her dearest care to assist those souls whom He redeemed.

He honors her because it is her constant *care* through prayer and intercession in Heaven to obtain for His Holy Church and all its members new graces to console His Sacred Heart.

Learn from this beautiful example of Mary whereupon it depends, and what qualities should adorn you, that you may win the honor, as well as the love, of your children, and may force them to venerate you; and if they honor you, they will be ever ready to *obey* your voice.

I know well that human nature is prone to sin, and that you are not free from its many weaknesses; but overcome yourselves, so far at least as to avoid scandalizing your children.

A child, for example, is admonished at school to begin the day with prayer, and thus in the *early* morning give his first thoughts to God. But what if he sees his mother remain so long in bed, that she entirely neglects this important duty?

A child is told in school that a good Catholic regularly says the *evening* prayers. What if he sees that his mother makes no pretense of so doing?

A child hears in school what beneficial results follow from reading *books* of devotion, especially the Lives of the Saints. But he knows that his mother manifests no taste for spiritual reading, but selects, as her favorite literature, the newspaper, and books filled with the spirit of the world—novels and romances.

The teacher at school warns his *charge* against the terrible vice of *cursing*. This child knows that his mother is addicted to it. He hears at school that to omit to hear *Mass* on Sundays and Holy days of obligation darkens the soul with mortal guilt, yet his mother ignores this precept at leisure.

He is told that by eating flesh-meat on Friday, and at certain prohibited times, the eternal punishment due to mortal sin is incurred ; yet he sees that his mother not only eats meat herself, but provides it at such times for the whole family.

He is told at school that the day of the *Lord* must be *sanctified*; yet he sees that his mother not only neglects to attend *Mass*, but spends the afternoon of that holy day in some favorite place of amusement.

The child hears from the pulpit that the theater, the ball and the dance are alike dangerous to the soul ; yet he knows that his mother scruples not to be present at each, and lets his brothers and sisters go there.

The child often hears how beautiful is the virtue of *resignation* to the divine Will in trials and *sufferings* ; yet he can not fail to perceive that, so far from saying "Thy will be done," His mother grieves, laments, even curses and casts a gloom over the household with her vain repinings. How *could* any child honor a mother in whom he perceives such lamentable defects ?

Christ honored His Mother for her *virtues*. You, also, mothers, should try to merit in your family the title "mirror of justice," that, not by words, as much as example, may you instruct your children.

How edifying it is to see a mother zealously practice prayer, attend divine service, approach the Holy Sacraments, and through humility, patience, mildness and fervent love of God preserve the peace of Christ at home and abroad! Her children will not be slow in remarking all this.

Christ honored His Mother. Well he knew the immeasurable depth of that tender *love* with which she cared for Him from His earliest infancy.

What an impression it will make upon a child to see that his mother prefers to suffer herself rather than that he should want food or clothing, or be deprived of some innocent recreation!

It is self-evident that children can not fail to honor a good mother, and to extol her from the depths of their hearts.

Be thus loving and tender to your children, and they will honor you not only in life, but cherish your memory long after you have passed from earth and home and will rest in the grave.

Christ honored His Mother because she remained *faithful* to Him during His apostolic life, and never left His side in all His agony.

If you would have your children honor you, let them see and feel that, although they may have left the home of their youth for another, you still love them, and will assist them in any way you can.

Fail not to aid them as far as you are able, especially when the dark clouds of adversity gather above them, and misfortunes come thick and fast. Then,

haste to extend a mother's helping hand ; your children will honor you if they know that their eternal welfare is your dearest care, and that your greatest fear is lest they, through the evil example of others, might grow cold in the practice of the one true faith.

Christian mothers ! if you endeavor to live according to the glorious model you have in the Mother of God, your children will indeed honor you and hear your words with the deference which springs from filial love. They will heed your wishes, obey your commands, and venerate you before and after your death before God and man.

Pray to St. Ann. Until the next conference say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the grace to live so that your children can not fail to honor you, and to learn from you to walk in the *imitation* of the Lord. Not only your children will respect you, but all that know you will honor and respect you ; and you shall be "blessed amongst women." Amen.



## CONFERENCE XXIV.

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### THE QUEEN OF SABA.

AT the time when Solomon, through his wisdom, by the building of his magnificent temple, the splendor of which went beyond all description, by his palaces and the grandeur of his court, astonished not only his own subjects, but all the neighboring princes, his fame penetrated even into the dominion of the Queen of Saba, and, longing to see for herself, she came forth to visit the King.

She fain would assure herself as to the truth of the reports that his mental qualities were so brilliant, and the manner in which his royal dignity was sustained, so splendid, that they dazzled the eyes of all. She wished to learn, in fine, whether it was all so grand, so magnificent, so wonderful as rumor declared it to be.

She, therefore, set out with a large retinue towards Jerusalem, and, when she had personally convinced herself that the reality by far exceeded the description, in her amazement she said to the King: "The report which I heard in my own country is true, concerning thy words and concerning thy wisdom. I did not believe them that told me till I came myself, and

saw with my own eyes that the half had not been told me. Blessed are they who stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom."

What Holy Scripture relates of the visit of the Queen of Saba to Solomon has suggested to me to speak to you to-day of a custom which, as experience teaches, exerts a very great influence upon your lives, and is no doubt often the cause of your burdening your consciences, not only with your own sins, but with those of others.

*I will, therefore, to-day direct a word of admonition to you, wives and mothers, regarding the visits you make and receive.*

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The Scripture narrative of the Queen of Saba certainly tends to her praise. Her royal retinue and the abundance of her precious gifts give evidence that the riches of this world were hers, and that among the princesses of the earth she held a most prominent place.

But all these exterior glories were held as naught by her in comparison to the privilege of beholding Solomon in that celebrated visit which she paid to assure herself that the reports she had heard were true, and to remain near him some weeks.

We are here reminded of the happiness enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin in being permitted to dwell in such close proximity to Christ. She, also, was a daughter of the royal line of David, related by blood to Solo-

mon ; but, oh ! with what infinitely greater splendor does her glory shine forth through the rich treasure of her graces and merits, and unsurpassable wisdom, verifying indeed the words of Holy Writ : “ Behold here is more than Solomon.”

Oh ! think of Mary’s happiness in being privileged to dwell so near to Christ in their secluded home in Nazareth. They lived together for thirty years of her life, and well indeed might she also say to Jesus : “ What Holy Scripture revealed of you through the inspired writings of the Prophets, which so often I have read and pondered upon, was wonderful,—yet infinitely greater and more wonderful, my Jesus, do I find that which I now experience in your adorable Presence, in the sweet intercourse I am permitted to have.”

As soon as the promise announced to Mary by one of God’s most glorious messengers had become a glad reality ; she went to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth, to render her all the assistance in her power, and to sanctify him, who was to be the Precursor of her Divine Son.

From this event in the life of the Blessed Virgin, I will take occasion to speak a few words of admonition to you that you may learn how to render your visits salutary to yourselves and others. Thus you will grow more zealous in the *service of God*. If you disregard my words, however, too often these visits will prove dangerous to the soul, and cause you to grow weak and wavering *therein*.

Concerning the usages of society to receive and make visits—let me, before all, ask you a question: Are you *fond* of visiting? Do you like to receive visits, and *who* are they with whom you thus associate?

Generally *relatives* or *neighbors*. In regard to the former, it is not only permitted, but even recommended to maintain an interchange of visits to strengthen the bond of relationship for mutual assistance, edification and love.

Even here, however, if the proper measure be not observed, such visits may prove detrimental to the soul.

This is true in a greater degree of visits made to persons who reside in the neighborhood—merely *because* they live so near.

In this regard, first, inquiry must be made as to their character and disposition, and, whether they are persons whose acquaintance would tend to your mutual edification and eternal benefit.

There can be abuses, however, even when the persons are good, which may be productive of sad consequences,—and these may occur when the visits are too long or frequent.

Many precious hours are lost thereby, and often the visitor will suffer in the estimation of others, who, being truly pious, will be disedified at such *waste* of time.

But where solid piety is wanting, such frequent visits, especially if they are also *protracted*, give occasion to many sins of the *tongue*, for, according to the prov-

erb, "In the multitude of words, sin shall not be wanting." And it is so. Am I not correct?

Long and repeated visits will beget *idle* gossip. Many occasions of sin will be found in the vain ambitions and *boastful* conversation carried on, not to speak of the *uncharitable* and even *slandorous* words repeated there.

These are the most dangerous sins that one may fall into. For it easily happens that by much talk serious injury is inflicted on the reputation of another. Very possibly grievous sin is committed.

Besides, frequent visits are fatal to the spirit of *industry*. The comfort of the family is no longer cared for as it should be, while vanity and a passion for *dress* are fostered in the heart.

In the course of these visits it generally happens that one of those present is more richly attired than the rest, who will at once be seized with a desire to appear in similar style.

But it is, above all, the spirit of *devotion*, and interior prayer which is its life, which suffers during these incessant visits—thoughts of creatures interpose and prevent a filial intercourse with God. So much is then said that causes distractions, excites the imagination and opens wide the portal of the heart to temptations of the worst kind.

A master in the spiritual life has aptly said that "no one can, at the same time, speak much and often to God and to man."

The spirit of devotion which is at times granted to

us during prayer, soon evaporates with one who opens the door of the lips and permits it to remain open. Even one of the greatest luminaries in the spiritual life, St. Thomas à Kempis, thus acknowledges of himself: "As often as I have been among men, I have returned less a man;" that is, not the same zealous Christian as before; and yet the contrary should be the case.

In paying visits, our aim should be, even though we should forfeit some golden opportunity of earthly gain which might otherwise have been ours, to earn some merits—of brighter gold by far, for Heaven—by seeking to improve the hours thus spent in intercourse with others. For example, be careful to turn the conversation upon some edifying subject, something which would turn the hearts of your friends to God, and induce them to serve Him with more ardent zeal, to assist His Church according to their ability—to care more earnestly for the spiritual welfare of their children—to win souls to embrace the true faith, and to persuade sinners to return to God by a good confession.

Such were the visits made by the hermits of the desert. Witness St. Anthony and St. Paul, who, when together spent all their time in conversing for their mutual edification and encouragement in the service of God.

We read, also, of the two great servants of God, St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, his sister, who met but once during the course of a year, that upon one

occasion while they held converse together, in order to detain her brother, St. Scholastica, prayed to God, and, lo! her prayer was answered in a miraculous manner.

A fearful storm burst over the earth, so that the Saint was entirely prevented from returning to his cell, and thus he was compelled to remain and converse with her upon that eternity, drawing ever more near, as the most effective preparation for their blessed death, which, indeed, ere long, joined them in Heaven. *Such* visits, although of infrequent occurrence, are recommended.

Do not be so influenced by human respect as to permit those in the company, who are very fond of talking, and wholly penetrated with the spirit of the world, to *chatter* continually; many precious hours are thus frittered away by visiting, and sins are then committed in other ways—by a proper want of *decorum*, or through excess in *eating* and *drinking*.

I have but one more remark to make: The Queen of Saba came from afar to visit Solomon, of whom she had heard so much, in the hope of receiving satisfactory answers to the questions she intended to ask him.

Solomon was a wise man, but he was also a sensual one, who, later on, forgot his duty to God, and walked in the ways of the wicked. As a wise king and judge, all the Holy Fathers agree that he was a type of Him who said of himself: "Behold! here is more than Solomon." But what is all the splendor—what is all the wisdom of Solomon compared to the wisdom of

Christ, and the splendor of His kingdom as King of kings, and Lord of lords?

*You* have the happiness and privilege of visiting him really present in the *Blessed Sacrament* of the altar. Oh! with what zeal should you not avail yourselves of so great a favor!

Visit lovingly and often, then, this dear Saviour who awaits you in His lowly Tabernacle. All that you have heard in regard to His perfection, but faintly portrays that which you will experience when you learn to know Him, *personally*, through intercourse with Him in the Sacrament of His *love*.

“Blessed,” said the Queen, “are those who stand before Thee always.” She was obliged to depart; you can remain with Christ, even as He abides with you. Oh! then, listen to My words: If you live in the vicinity of a Church, take, if possible, each day one little quarter of an hour and accustom yourselves to visit Christ, the Lord, in the most Holy Sacrament. The heavenly Solomon will repay your loving fervor a thousand-fold; you will be replenished with wisdom from above, and your hearts will glow with a longing desire to sanctify your lives. That this may indeed be so, until the next Conference, say daily, in honor of St. Ann, one fervent Ave Maria. If you don’t lose time by visits, and if you edify by your visits others and yourself, and if you pay frequent visits to Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament, then, indeed, “Blessed art thou amongst women.” Amen.



## CONFERENCE XXV.

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### THE QUEEN OF SABA.

THE visit of Saba's celebrated Queen to the magnificent court of Solomon furnished the theme for my last conference, in which I admonished you to guard against that spiritual injury which seldom fails to result from long and inconsiderate *visits*. Too often they cause the mistress of a house to neglect her duties, open the way for numberless sins, and certainly exert an incalculably bad influence upon the domestic life.

To give, therefore, a general admonition which will be beneficial to very many wives and mothers, I would admonish all of you to regulate your visits, make them as short as possible, and dispense with them when you can.

But the example of the Queen of Saba will teach you another lesson. It speaks of a *quality* which should ever distinguish those of your state of life who have the happiness to belong to the true faith. I allude to that spirit of liberality which shone so pre-eminently forth in the many precious gifts which she presented to her royal host, and whose generosity Solomon returned with royal munificence.

*Imitate this generous queen, and liberally assist in supporting the Kingdom of God upon earth, the Church of Christ, and those who are vowed to her service.*

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From the Scripture narrative of the Queen of Saba we learn that she presented to Solomon one hundred and twenty talents of gold, of spices a very great store, and a number of rare and precious stones. She was not unobservant of the splendor with which Solomon adorned the Temple of God, and, as King of the chosen people, provided liberally to support the honor of his dignity, and she desired to offer him the most magnificent presents.

But, before all, let us glance at Mary, the blessed Mother of God, and learn that, although the munificence with which this Queen assisted Solomon to beautify the Temple and adorn his royal dwelling was great indeed, yet the liberality of the Heavenly Queen surpassed it by far.

First, in a spiritual sense, in regard to the Temple of God in our souls, for the Scripture says: "*You are the Temple of God.*" What were all the shining gems, the precious stones, the delicious perfumes, which the Queen of Saba presented to Solomon, compared to those jewels of great price, the rich treasure of merits wherewith the Immaculate Virgin loved to beautify the heart which beat only to honor God? What could be more delicious than the odor of virtue which hung around the temple of her heart? Yes, her sole de-

sire was to render it a Temple worthy of the Living God!

But Mary was also solicitous that those places consecrated to Him for the external celebration of Divine service in the *Primitive* Church should be fittingly adorned, as we know from the private revelations made to holy souls. After the descent of the Holy Ghost, when the Christians assembled to worship God, it was one of her principal cares to see that the apartments set apart for the purpose were properly arranged, and the altar decorated with care. Indeed, she herself loved to adorn the Altar of God, "the place where His Glory dwelleth," and was ever grateful to those who assisted in the sacred task.

The Mother of Jesus and the Queen of Saba form two noble examples for your imitation, and their conduct contains an admonition for you all.

First, do all in your power to *decorate* the Temple of God in your hearts, by the fair flowers of virtue you implant therein, and the sweet odor which your devotion exhales.

In addition to this, however, you should, according to your means, interest yourselves in the beautifying of the House of God, and contribute to its wants, as far as you are able, not forgetting to contribute to the necessities of the Ministers of the Altar, with a liberality equitable and just. For, if this Queen in the Old Law, before the Sun of Christianity had dawned brilliantly upon the world, felt herself so powerfully urged, through such knowledge of God as she pos-

sessed, to apply some of that wealth with which He had blessed her to His honor, by beautifying His Temple, as well as in decorating the palaces of Solomon, how great should not be your zeal to render the Church to which you belong a Temple more fitting for the honor of God! Do your part, that every thing may be, as far as possible, worthy of Him Who condescends to dwell therein. See that the Sacristy is well provided with *vestments*, and every thing necessary for the celebration of Divine worship; and let not your generous care cease here, for the Pastor to whom God has intrusted your spiritual welfare must be provided with a suitable dwelling. Contribute your share here, also, and see that his house is arranged with due regard, both to the preservation of his health and his sacerdotal dignity, for you must always remember that his is not an ordinary calling, but the most exalted and honorable that can be. In this regard I would give you the following advice:

Let each one who listens to my words, endeavor to promote in her husband that spirit of generosity which will induce him to contribute liberally to the support of the *Church* and its *ministers*, the *school* and its *teacher*; but if he should unfortunately belong to that class of characters who concern themselves but little about religion, she must proceed in another way.

She should tell him that, apart from all consideration of Holy Faith, he should feel urged by human motives to do at least as much as all honorable mem-

bers of the congregation do—that he should certainly blush to be known as one who never lends his aid to bear the burden which should be shared by all. He certainly knows well that if all would act in so ungenerous a manner, there would be neither church nor school, pastor nor teacher; yet he demands their services for himself and family whenever he deems proper. Urge him to do what is right and just in this regard—what is done by the rest of the congregation, generally.

Should he remain unmoved by these representations, the wife may let him remain unmolested, but appropriate a portion of the money which they earn in common for this good end.

I would admonish you, also, to become members of one or *other* of the *Sodalities* in your church; or, if you live in a new settlement, take the initiatory steps in the matter yourselves.

Begin the good work and persuade your associates to co-operate with you. Then, whenever the occasion presents itself—for instance, at the annual recurrence of the different Festivals when more than ordinary decoration of the altar is required—do not hesitate to offer your services to the Priest.

If God has blessed you with wealth, ask the pastor what articles he is most in need of in the Sacristy concerning vestments for the different Feasts and for the celebration of the different *solemnities* during the ecclesiastical year, and no doubt you will learn that he is but poorly supplied with chasubles for the different

festivals,—that he requires a canopy, banners, candlesticks, etc. Should there not be a plentiful supply of altar linen, especially such as come in contact with the most Blessed Sacrament, see that the deficiency is remedied at once.

The gold which Solomon received from his father David, and, later on, from the generous Queen, he devoted to the service of the temple with such great liberality that even the snuffers, used to brighten the waning lights, were of pure gold. Consider well, then, what generous provision should be made for the celebration of our divine mysteries in the New Law, where *Christ* Himself, the Incarnate Son of God, is offered to His heavenly Father.

In ancient times, when the *Sacrament* of Matrimony was still held in great honor and esteem, those brides who were rich in this world's wealth, chose for their wedding dresses the most elegant material, elaborate embroidery upon cloth of gold, interwoven with pearls and many precious stone. After the wedding day the bride would present her nuptial garments to the Church, that a *chasuble* might be fashioned from its lustrous folds. Thus, when the newly-made wife beheld her dress devoted to God's holy service at the Altar, her bridal garment as a vestment for the Priest, devout feelings of tender devotion could not fail to result from it, and rejoice her heart. Yes; there should exist among you that holy zeal which would cause each one to emulate her neighbor in liberality to the Church, and eagerness to promote the worship of

God, in generously assisting the Priest and contributing to the support of the schools.

Behold what occurred during the time of Moses! While still in the wilderness, the great lawgiver, intending to erect the *Tabernacle* of the Covenant, called the people together and requested them, if they had brought any rich material, gold or precious stones, from Egypt, to give him a portion thereof to be employed in the service of the Most High. This they did with such joyful hearts and such generosity that, according to Holy Writ they brought to Moses earrings and bracelets of the purest gold, and the richest stuffs, and all with so great a degree of enthusiasm that Moses was obliged to quell their generous ardor by proclaiming that he had enough, and even more than he could use.

What do you say to this? Think you, my good friends, that the ladies of this congregation ever overwhelmed their pastor with presents, such as material for vestments, and the various other articles required for Divine service in such profusion of gold, silver and precious stones, that he was obliged to send them away?

Nothing of the kind has ever happened here, I am very sure; and I can safely say that no pastor in the world has ever been troubled in this regard in such a way as Moses by those Jewesses of old.

Try, then, at least, and do your best, and you will not only receive the thanks of your children and your children's children, but your generosity will be a

source of spiritual profit to them, since it will enable them to assist with so much more devotion at the Divine service.

Therefore, may all of you make the following resolution: "If in the present year you are as rich in this world's goods as you have been in the past, and you find that the Church and the various objects I have mentioned to-day could still be improved by your liberality, why should you not do the same this year, too? Are your husband, yourself, and your children less worth this year than in the past? If each family would make a yearly donation of the tenth part of what they earn to the Church, as the Jews of old did, would not the House of God be richly decorated?"

But, above all, when the last hour of your life is at hand, act in accordance with the counsel of St. Augustine, and consider Jesus one of your children. In other words: If you have *three*, divide your property in *four parts*, three for your children, and one for the Church. Your heirs will lose nothing by this; for "every thing depends on the blessing of God."

It would not have been fitting, had the Queen of Saba made such costly and abundant presents to King Solomon without receiving any return. Therefore, Holy Scripture relates that, with royal munificence, Solomon presented her with all that her heart desired.

Therefore, in conclusion, I assure those of your number who love to manifest a liberal disposition to the Church, and to whatever would promote the in-



terests of religion, that the Lord will reward you a thousand-fold, by conferring temporal and eternal blessings upon your families. He would never let *your* generosity surpass *His*, which is greater than that of all earthly Kings.

Beg St. Ann to intercede for you in heaven, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the spirit of generosity to the Church, and the will to ever hasten, not only to her assistance, but to the aid of those who serve Him as her Priests. If the Pastor and all that know you can say of you : This wife and mother is the most liberal and generous of all the women of the Congregation towards the Church, the priests, and the school, then, indeed : " Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXVI.

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### THE WIDOW OF SAREPTA.

AT the time of Elias there dwelt a widow in Sarepta, and it came to pass that the place was visited by a famine. The Prophet, having come to the city, saw the woman gathering sticks in the street, and begged her to give him some water that he might drink. As she went to comply with his request Elias asked for a morsel of bread also, and behold, this compassionate woman, although she had but a handful of meal in the house, made a little cake thereof, and gave it to the Prophet to eat. But, from that very day, the Lord rewarded her charity; for the meal, as well as her provision of oil, lasted during the entire continuance of the famine.

This event, contemplating the compassionate and liberal manner in which the widow acted towards Elias, and how richly the Lord rewarded her for it, affords me an occasion to speak to you to-day of a quality which can not be too much commended, and which every wife and mother ought to possess in a distinguished degree, to promote the blessing of God for the temporal and spiritual welfare of her family.

*It is mercy and liberality towards the poor, and, in general, a readiness to assist the oppressed, and a zealous practice of the works of mercy.*

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In this respect, also, Mary, Queen of Prophets and of all Saints, shines forth as an example which can not fail to encourage you in this virtue.

The Church has many reasons to inspire the hearts of her children with the most unbounded confidence in the Blessed Virgin, so that they may seek her assistance, and hasten to her as a sure refuge, not only in their spiritual wants, but also in their corporal afflictions.

Witness the invocations by which she addresses her in the Litany: "Mother, most merciful!"

Witness the many places in the Catholic world distinguished by miraculous events, their shrines adorned with remembrances of the wonderful help obtained through the intercession of Mary, no matter what kind of affliction molested the suffering petitioner.

Let us think, especially, of the many, many cures of the various invalids, in every part of the globe, effected through the invocation of Mary, from far away in the shadowy past down even unto the present day.

We have no reason to be astonished thereat, because she was elected to become the Mother of Him, Who is the *Incarnate Mercy* of God, and who recommended us to Mary from the Cross; to her, who feels for us as a mother, and would take each one of us

into her loving heart. Therefore, did the Lord create in her the most *compassionate* heart that ever existed, excepting always the Sacred Heart of Jesus Himself.

She is full of the most ardent desire to help us, if we only seek refuge with her with real *confidence*, and it is to her a source of the most exquisite joy, if we, on our part, are always ready to extend to others a loving, helping hand.

She will mete out to us a glorious reward for our charity; to merit which I will to-day encourage you to practice this virtue, and place before you those *motives* most appropriate to induce you in your relation as wives, as mothers, and as mistresses of your homes, to be especially zealous in fulfilling this duty of active sympathy towards the afflicted and the poor.

In this regard I say, first, every mistress of a house should be anxious to be merciful to the *poor* and afflicted, that the blessing of God may prevail in her house, and endeavor by this very benevolence to the poor to assist her children, even for this world, in their *temporal* needs.

How greatly, in this regard, a compassionate heart and a generous spirit towards the poor contributes, is clear from the most solemn promises of God Himself in the pages of Holy Writ.

Thus we read already in the Old Testament in the Book of Proverbs: "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him." Do you hear this, my friends? To assist the poor "does

not mean to give *away*," but it means to "*lend* to the Lord."

God gives not as men do, five for one hundred, "but one hundred for five." For again we read: "The man who is inclined to mercy will be blessed; for he has given his bread to the poor." Do you hear this promise made by God Himself? "Honor the Lord with thy property, and your barns shall be filled with plenty, and your cellars overflow with wine." "Nay; *try* me," says God the Lord, through the lips of the Prophet Oseas, "by giving alms, whether I will not open the sluices of heaven over you in benediction."

From these passages we understand, as St. Zeno justly remarks: "By giving alms is meant, making the Lord our *debtor*." Oh! how advantageous is this, even for the *temporal* weal of the family, since God is so infinitely rich, and no debt is too great for His Divine liberality.

Consider, dear mothers, how solemnly Christ Himself confirms all these promises when He cries out to all His own: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, and pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall be given into your bosom." If you would, therefore, ward off the ills of poverty and want, promote the prosperity of your husband's temporal affairs, and prevent them from going wrong; if you would be preserved from fire or sickness, which might reduce you to the condition of those who solicit alms at your door, be as *compassionate* as you reasonably can; be *liberal* towards the

poor ; so that, if God should permit temporal troubles to visit you, He would not send them as a punishment for your hardness of heart, but only as a trial of your patience and virtue, and as an opportunity of obtaining merits, greater in number and more precious, too, for heaven. Far more important, however, is the exercise of the corporal works of mercy, if we consider what Holy Scripture assures us of their influence upon our *virtuous* life, and earnest endeavor after Christian *perfection*.

Let us, also, in this regard consider the expression of Holy Scripture. The inspired words of the Prophet Joel, tell us that "Alms cleanse from sin, and cause us to find mercy and eternal life." In like manner we read in Ecclesiasticus : " Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sin ;" by which we are not to understand that a Christian can recklessly go on in his evil ways, and persevere in sin with impunity, provided only that he gives abundantly in charity ; but that we, through alms-giving, acquire graces from God to discover our sins, confess them properly, and never relapse therein. Its meaning also is, that by a generous assistance of the poor and afflicted, we will receive grace to stride rapidly on in the way of justice.

We read in Isaias : " Deal thy bread to the hungry, cover the naked, then thy light shall break forth as the clear midday, and thy justice shall go before thy face ; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear ; thou shalt cry, and He shall say : Here I am, and I will fill thy soul with brightness !"

In a still more impressive manner does St. Paul admonish, and assure us of this in his Epistle to the Corinthians, when he writes, "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, will multiply your seed if you give alms, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice, that you may abound into all bountifulness."

What increases especially this merit is the assurance of Christ: "What you have done unto one of my little ones. you have done unto Me."

Alms-giving not only increases. in this manner, our merits for heaven, but it also secures them. Surely David, in the days of old, already sang in the third Psalm: "He hath distributed; he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth forever and ever;" and Christ Himself, most assuredly, admonishes us that we must place our merits for heaven, by means of alms, into the hands of the poor, that we may be certain to obtain them there, and preserve them forever, "where thieves do not enter in, nor steal, and where the moth doth not consume it."

But of all the arguments I could place before you, the most important is that which we read in the Gospel of Christ Himself the Judge, and his address to the children of men, on the last day.

This address relates, personally, to those among us, who, for His dear love, assist the poor. Christ assures us, in the most explicit terms, how, on the day of judgment, He will thus address those who have, in this world, ennobled and beautified their lives by

works of mercy, namely: "Enter into the kingdom which My Father has prepared for you; for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was naked, and you covered Me; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; sick, and you visited Me." Then shall the just say: "Lord, when did we all that to you?" And Christ, the Judge, will answer: "Amen. I say unto you all, What you did to My least brethren, you did it to Me." In that sense, as we have already remarked, this love and charity towards our neighbor is a most efficacious assistance to our leaving this world in the grace of God, and appearing before His judgment-seat clad in the "wedding garment."

It can not fail to be a source of the greatest consolation and encouragement to you all to listen to what I have just now said, and reflect that you provide for your own temporal and eternal welfare by the exercise of the sister virtues, *compassion* and *liberality*.

Be particularly careful to instill the spirit of active love of our neighbor into the hearts of your children, by word and example,—a most efficacious means of doing which is to place the alms you intend to give into their hands, and make them give it to the poor.

The mother who follows this suggestion will make her children realize, even at the most tender age, the promise which God has attached to the virtue of charity towards the poor, and will cause them, long after she has left them, to look back upon her example as a bright star on the sky of life. Yes; they will



love to remember her merciful benevolence, and will often exclaim: "My mother was a truly charitable woman; no one was more liberal to the poor, for she never turned a petitioner away without a gift. Surely God has dealt mercifully with her, and she is enjoying now the bliss of heaven."

Wives and mothers! beseech St. Ann to intercede for you in heaven; and that she may do so, say each day in her honor, until the next Conference, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you, from God, this virtue and that interior disposition that will *impel* you with true compassion and the greatest readiness to assist the poor, according to your ability, that the Lord, in return for it, may assist you and yours, with His gracious benediction for soul and body, and "thou shalt be blessed amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XXVII.

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THE MERCIFUL WOMEN AT THE TIME OF THE PROPHET  
ELISEUS.

AS we read in the Book of Kings, there once came to Eliseus, the disciple of Elias the Prophet, an afflicted widow, who, in the most imploring terms, besought him to have compassion upon her, or she, with her children, would fall into the power of her creditor, and eventually starve.

The holy man listened to her tale of sorrow, and when the pathetic appeal was ended, he said, not being himself blessed with the goods of this world: "What wouldst thou have me do for thee? What hast thou in thy house?"

The poor woman told him that her sole possession was a little oil, upon which the prophet directed her to borrow, from her neighbors, as great a number of empty vessels as she could, and then to take the vessel which contained her oil, and, pouring therefrom, fill all the vessels which she had borrowed. And, behold! the oil flowed without ceasing until the last vessel was filled, when she said to her son: "Bring me yet another;" but he replied, "I have no more."

It was not needed, however, for she had already sufficient oil to pay her creditor and sustain her family until the arrival of better days.

*Catholic wives and mothers, to-day I will demonstrate to you what these vessels of oil should remind you of in regard to the instruction of your children.*

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In my last conference I touched upon the truth that charity to the poor, on the part of a wife and mother, is productive of the most beneficial results, even in regard to the temporal welfare of the family.

But, deeply as a mother is naturally interested in seeing her children prosper in this world, that interest should be subservient far to that with which she endeavors to preserve them from the dangers of losing their faith, and tries, by every means in her power, to promote their eternal weal.

First of all, look at Mary, and try to instill into the hearts of your little ones a devotion, alike tender and constant, to her; for such a devotion is a signal pledge of love and fidelity to our Holy Faith. The venerable Simeon said to Mary: "*In thee the hearts of men shall become manifest.*"

As long as your children give evidence that they love the Blessed Mother, and burn with a desire to pay her every honor, you need be under no apprehension in regard to their attachment to our Holy Faith. Nevertheless, to receive this very devotion to the Blessed Virgin for all the time of their life, and to

be able to spread Holy Faith, to live accordingly and to defend it, they have to be thoroughly instructed in our holy religion.

I would, therefore, remind you of the particular exigencies of our times and country, to which this thorough instruction has particular reference.

The miracle of Eliseus affords me an apt subject for comparison. The oil may be taken as an emblem of instruction in spiritual matters, and the vessels which contained it of those books wherein such instruction may be found.

Try, therefore, to have a little library in your house containing those instructive books, which I will enumerate now. Otherwise, believe me, you can not say that you have done all that is necessary to instruct your children in such a manner that, when they leave the house and are no longer under your immediate supervision, they have a proper knowledge of their holy religion, live according to its tenets, and labor for its propagation and defense, as the times and country in which we live most undoubtedly require in a very high degree.

In this regard, therefore, the first point is, that a youth become thoroughly penetrated with the conviction that Jesus Christ founded *but one true Church*, to which all must belong in order to serve Him and to be saved.

Mothers, from the earliest possible moment—as soon as your children have reached an age to comprehend your meaning—speak to them of the happi-

ness it is to be a child of this one true Church, in the following strain: "My dear children! there are many in the world who vainly fancy that if they only believe in Christ—the Bible being the Word of God—they are Christians, and can secure their eternal salvation *without* the pale of the Catholic Church.

Do not, however, permit yourselves to be deceived; for Christ himself has declared: "Whosoever believeth not, will be condemned." And what are we required to believe?

All that the Holy Catholic Church, which Christ has founded, believes and commands us to believe; for even from the Divine lips of the Saviour issued those words: "He who will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee like the heathen."

My dear children, among all the religious denominations throughout the world the Catholic Church is the only one founded by Christ,—because the Catholic Church alone has existed upon earth since Christ lived upon earth. He established this Holy Church when he said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

You must be prepared, however, when you leave home to hear many objections brought forward against what I am telling you; but, believe me, they will be the most utter falsehoods,—calumnies without any foundation. You, mothers, will find convincing replies to each one of them in my work, entitled: "*Catholicity, Protestantism and Infidelity*," which I ad-

wise you to procure; and on Sundays see that your children read, with careful attention, one objection or the other, and repeat with them the answers given therein.

It will require in every week not more than one little quarter of an hour, on Sundays or Feasts, and the knowledge thus gained will preserve them, with the assistance of God, from doubt and apostasy when they leave their home. Here, O mother! you have the first vessel for oil: *family instruction* for the children intrusted to your care.

Tell them, secondly: "Heretics and infidels will seek to persuade you that the Church has *deviated* from the doctrine of the early Christians, and that all that she teaches now has originated in the brain of some priest in what they are pleased to designate "the dark ages." But, my children, such assertions are also false, foolishly false and calumnious. No, my children, the Christians in the *first centuries* entertained precisely the same belief which is taught in the Church to-day, and she is one and the same through all the centuries which have gone and come.

You will find ample proof of this in another book which I wrote, entitled: "A Manual of the Catholic Religion for Self-instruction."

Its pages are filled with collections of quotations from the Holy Fathers of the first centuries, which establish *the aforesaid* in the most incontrovertible manner. Here you have the second oil vessel, wherein

you may always find means for instructing your children whilst they are still at home with you.

Therefore, tell them to read this volume, and learn that what the Holy Fathers say of Confession, of Mass, and of all the Sacraments, is precisely the same as we are taught to-day. Tell them that if they become thoroughly versed in the contents of this volume they can at once silence any street preacher and cover him with confusion, as he scatters broadcast his calumnies against the Church, and at the same time it will cause them to persevere in their holy faith.

Thirdly, say to them: "My dear children, faith alone is not sufficient; we must *live* according to its teachings, and such a life consists of nothing else than in following Jesus Christ."

In order that the Christian, in this imitation, may ever walk zealously before God, it is requisite to aspire to a more and more intimate *knowledge* of, and a great *love* for Him, which grows more ardent with every breath.

An unfailing means of increasing this love in our hearts is to honor the sweetest "*Heart of Jesus*," for this devotion leads us to the *Tabernacle* of the Lord, where he is substantially living, present before us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Intercourse with Jesus in this Sacrament will lead us to the personal knowledge of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, and this will not only inflame our hearts with love towards Him, but strengthen and urge us on, to follow His example as zealously as possible. To pro-

mote this I wrote a third book entitled: the "*Sacred Heart Mission Book*."

This is the third vessel wherein you can constantly obtain that oil of instruction which will lead your children to God. Present to each one of them this Book of Prayers and Instruction, and let them be enrolled in the "Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

Fourthly, in order that the Christian may be preserved from the misfortune of falling away from the one true faith, he must be submissive to the Head of the Church, who is infallible in all decisions relating to that faith. Alas! that there is such a widely diffused ignorance on the part of Catholics on this point—an ignorance which places them in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck in their faith, when they hear our enemies cover this dogma with ridicule, and are not able to give an account of what is really meant by Papal *Infallibility*.

To remedy this defect, therefore, I have prepared a work upon the *Imfallibility of the Pope*, which I admonish each one of you to procure, and let your children read through with warmest care.

It is the *fourth* vessel from which perpetually flows that which I have compared to oil, in the instruction of your children around the family hearth. As this article of faith is especially in our times an object of most common attack by infidels, heretics and Catholics only by name, and as this article is usually misunderstood and represented in a false light, you



yourselves and your children should especially, in regard to this dogma, be most carefully instructed.

Fifthly, in order that the well instructed Christian may go on also *joyfully* on the way of salvation, he must often and seriously think of that "last hour" which will come upon us all, and one final destination, which is heaven. Many Christians, however, may think, "What can one know of Heaven, while still on earth?"

Believe me when I reply, enough and more than enough, if we have only a lively faith; and if we, as the Apostle admonishes us, while striving to work out our salvation, glance, as it were, in a mirror at its joys, and think of the divine plenitude with which He shall bless us in Heaven.

To this end I would direct your attention to my work entitled, "Easter in Heaven."

It is the *fifth* vessel of the oil of instruction for the protection of your children, as children of God.

Sixthly, however, "words move, examples draw." You know well that the number of Saints who have already entered Heaven can only be counted by millions, and they were, like ourselves, men. What is more fitting, therefore, than that we should say, with St. Augustine: "If they could do so, why not we as well?"

All this I have demonstrated in the "Lives of the Saints," adding an instruction for each day. Oh! how delightful will be the fragrance of the virtues which the family will, ere long, begin to practice through this *daily* spiritual reading!

This is the *sixth* vessel wherein you will find that which will protect and guide the children of God through the stormy scenes of life.

Finally, in order to obtain abundant grace to live as the saints have lived, it is essential that we entertain the greatest devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary, and frequently venerate her as the Mother of Good Counsel.

To promote and diffuse this devotion, I have written a book for the *Month of May*, in honor of the blessed Virgin Mary, which is the *seventh* vessel of the oil of instruction to be provided for your homes. In conclusion, my dear friends, I would admonish you to procure all the books of which I have spoken to you, and, as from a perpetual fountain, the oil of instruction will ever flow to you and yours.

Surely your husbands will listen favorably when you request them to purchase this little *library* for you. Fail not to make the request. Tell him that as your time is occupied in nourishing your children fondly every day, and in dressing them, how much easier you can take care of their spiritual wants by procuring for them such a home library of a few books for life-time.

Pray to St. Ann, and, until the next Conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria that she may obtain for you from the Most High the happiness of seeing your children receive a thorough instruction at home, and our holy faith deeply implanted in their hearts, that upon the terrible judgment-day you will

have no fear that they will rise up and accuse you of having neglected to care for their souls. Once more, get your home library, buy the series of books mentioned, read them with your children, and, "Thou shalt be blessed amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XXVIII.

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### THE WOMAN OF SUNAM.

ELISEUS the Prophet frequently went to Sunam, and, whenever he did so, he called at the house of a certain family, where he never failed to meet with a kind and hospitable reception.

This was not all, however; for the mistress of the house, not content with showing this occasional kindness to the man of God and his servant Giezi,—having conceived a great veneration for the former,—said to her husband: “I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often passeth by us; let us, therefore, make him a little chamber and put a little bed in it for him, and a table and a stool and a candlestick, that, when he cometh to us, he may abide there.”

This kindness on the part of the hospitable matron was not permitted to go unrewarded, for a great miracle was wrought in her behalf by Eliseus.

After some time, when her only son, whom God had given to her through the prayer of the Prophet, was taken from her and died, he raised him to life again.

Oh! then, what ardent gratitude did this mother, so suddenly uplifted from the darkest grief to joy beyond comparison, pour forth to the Lord and His

faithful servant, for this twofold grace imparted to her for her hospitality towards Eliseus.

Commemorating these circumstances in the life of that good and pious woman, and of her veneration for the Prophet Eliseus, and how God rewarded her care for him by a great miracle, I take occasion and will address you to-day on your duty:

*To practice the spiritual works of mercy always with still greater zeal, that the blessing of Heaven may be granted to you and your families for time and eternity.*

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We have already contemplated the compassionate heart of Mary, and considered how willing she is to assist us, "poor banished children," in our bodily ills, how much she merits the epithets by which the Church so constantly addresses her: "Virgin most clement! Virgin most merciful!" But this disposition to aid us is manifested in a still greater degree by the Blessed Virgin as "Refuge of sinners and Queen of Apostles."

And if Mary looks with a benign and gracious countenance upon the exercise of charity and kindness towards the temporal wants of her needy and afflicted children, far more dear to her maternal heart is the frequent practice of those works of mercy which minister to the wants of the soul.

Ah! yes; more than any other created being, Mary knows the value of a soul.

She is the Mother of that Redeemer, who, through her, came into this world to seek *for what* was lost,

and to shed for each soul His precious blood on the tree of the Cross.

She is the mother of that dying Saviour, Who, amid His anguish and bitter pain, forgot not to recommend to her loving care the souls He came to save.

This hour, my dear friends, shall then be devoted to awakening in your hearts *an ardent zeal for souls*; and to pointing out those persons *in regard to whom* you, as wives and mothers, should be especially assiduous in practicing these works of mercy.

First, in regard to the value of the spiritual works of mercy, I would remind you of the well-known saying of St. Chrysostom: "One single work of zeal for souls practiced towards our neighbor is worth more before God than all the good which a Christian could accomplish, were he to support all the poor upon earth at once, erect hospitals, and wait upon the sick who sought shelter there; and this because the corporal works of mercy relate merely *to the body* and our external welfare in this world. It is far otherwise with the spiritual works of mercy, which embrace all that tends to benefit the soul, to secure our salvation, and increase those eternal joys for which we are created."

This is placed in a most glaring light when we, for a moment, compare the very nature of these spiritual benefits with the nature of corporal works of mercy, and place them in a parallel to them. You know, since your childhood, that the Catechism mentions the principal corporal works of mercy as follows: "To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe

the naked, to ransom captives, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead. Now, then:

He who assists others in their spiritual necessities, feeds the *hungry* and gives drink to the *thirsty*.

Ah! yes; the soul, as soon as it leaves the body, hungers and thirsts after God in an infinitely greater degree than *it can ever experience the pangs of hunger and thirst on earth*.

The Christian who assists others in their necessities and poverty of the soul, who aids them to enter the state of sanctifying grace by baptism, or helps them to enter again the state of sanctifying grace by receiving worthily the Holy Sacraments, will clothe them anew with that heavenly garb which St. John beheld upon the Saints of God, and which he compares to the *byssus* worn in days of old, or to fine linen glittering and white.

The precious stones which adorn this celestial raiment and enhance its value in an infinite degree, are the good works a soul, after her conversion, endeavors to perform before the eyes of God, and according to His good pleasure and will, *with the greater zeal*.

Whosoever assists, in their spiritual needs, those souls whom Satan has held *captive*, perhaps for years, chained fast by the fetters of sin in the darksome prison of the eternal wrath, *breaks* the galling chains and leads those weary souls into the glad, *free* light enjoyed by the children of God.

He also delivers them, if they persevere until the

end, from the chains of eternal damnation, and leads them to the kingdom of celestial freedom and bliss. He who assists others in their spiritual needs harbors, indeed, the *stranger*, who wanders hither and thither without a home and wearied with living on husks ; for he reopens for him that Heaven which, according to Holy Scripture, is our true country, our eternal home, the promised land, the heavenly Jerusalem, wherein we have, as children of God, indeed a right to enter.

The Christian who practices these works of zeal for souls not only visits the spiritually sick, but applies a remedy which never fails to heal ; and not only buries the dead, but we may rather say, he raises them to life again.

The desire and impulse to zealously practice these works of mercy will grow still more intense if we consider the joy with which our efforts are contemplated by God, Christ our Lord, His Most Blessed Mother, and all the Angels and Saints, and reflect how many rich graces they implore for us, in a thanksgiving for the saving and sanctification of their dear ones upon earth. Besides, this care for the salvation of others is for us at the same time a pledge to insure our own salvation, and to increase for ourselves the joys of Heaven, because we will participate to a greater extent in the beatific vision of those to whose conversion and salvation we contributed here below. No doubt, if Christ in such an emphatical way promised to those who perform, through love of Him, the works of cor-



poral mercy as we have heard, how much more will He bring to eternal bliss those who perform the spiritual works of mercy so dear to His heart! Look around, therefore, and see whether there are not in your neighborhood good and upright souls, persons who, through your efforts, may be led to accept the grace of conversion to the true faith. You might converse with them, lend them books, and by directing the attention of your Pastor to them, bring about the desired result.

Forget not the duty of giving your share towards the support of those missionaries of the Catholic Church who, in some distant foreign clime, toil day and night to win pagan souls to God.

If this, speaking in general, is imposed upon us as a duty, how much more urgent it becomes in relation to those with whom God has united us by the closest bonds and with whom our lives are linked by the most intimate and loving ties. The following persons especially belong to this class:

First, the *husband*. With what unwearied care should every married woman seek to induce her husband, by word and example, to be particular in saying his night and morning prayers, to assist zealously at divine service, to spend as much time as he can with her and his family at home, and to receive frequently the Holy Sacraments.

If, perhaps, he has permitted years to pass over his head, without having had recourse to these channels of grace, then implore him,—yes, if it is necessary,

even upon your knees—to return, and to be reconciled to God.

Represent to him how his children would, perforce, lose all filial respect towards him if he would, by neglecting, as a true Christian, to walk in the way of salvation, live and die excluded from the Holy Sacraments.

And if it be your unhappy lot to have a husband who yields to the fatal passion for drink, do all in your power to induce him to give it up.

If, however, he seems deaf to all your prayers, and insensible to your tears, possess your soul in *patience*, and bear the heavy cross.

Perhaps, God will still have mercy upon him, bring him to a sense of his duty, and grant him a true sorrow of heart for his sins.

Another duty from which a wife can not escape is to prevent her husband, if she can, from forming such associations, or joining such societies, as would separate him from our Holy Church, and, perhaps, even wrest the faith from his heart. Oh! what praise is merited by her whose efforts in this regard are so successful that her husband does not enter a secret society, or who, if he is already unfortunately therein, leaves it without delay. And what produces this result? It is in consequence of her assurance that she would rather die than touch one penny for herself or her children of that money for which he sold his soul to the devil. For this is most certainly done by him who separates himself from the Church, excludes him-

self from the valid reception of the sacraments, and even debars himself from the privilege of being buried in consecrated ground.

Listen to one incident in my missionary life. I was once conversing with a person who told me that he would be willing to leave the secret society of which he was a member, but he had already paid in a considerable sum of money from which, if he left, his wife and children would derive no benefit, which he would greatly regret. His wife, who was present, rose up at once in a transport of virtuous indignation, and exclaimed: "Rest assured that never, never would I make use of a single penny of that vile money for which you sold your soul to the devil. No! I would scorn to do so, even though, in order to support myself and children, I had to wash until my fingers streamed with blood."

This decided noble declaration had its effect; for the man immediately left the society.

Next are your *children*, for whose spiritual welfare you are bound to provide by seeing that they avoid sin and the occasion of it, and are zealous in the practice of virtue, according to their state of life, by which their salvation will be secured.

If they have already left the house, do not think that you are thereby released from the duty of caring for their souls and salvation. On the contrary, how often, in the daily walk of life, do we meet with a daughter who has an infidel husband; or a son, who has married one who is not of our holy faith, and,

consequently, not in the way of salvation. Then it becomes for the mother a sacred duty, by intercourse with the one, who is not of our holy faith, and by providing him or her with books of instruction, to do all she can to effect their conversion to the Church of God. But, above all, she must never weary in her efforts to win the souls of the children, that she may save them for His celestial kingdom.

Besides the children, the servants of the house are entitled to particular care and attention, in matters of religion, at your hands, precisely because Divine Providence has led them into your house and family; and, as the same roof shelters both mistress and servant, you may have an opportunity to exert a beneficial influence over them.

For the same reason it is your duty to labor with especial ardor for the spiritual weal of those among your relatives and friends who live in the same place with you, or abroad.

Implore St. Ann for her intercession in heaven, and, until the next Conference, say daily one Ave Maria, in her honor, that you may, in such a way, take care of the spiritual welfare of others, especially of your children, that you may be entitled to say: "Thanks be to God, all my family is a really pious family; they are, through my efforts, all true children of God and His Holy Church; all my servants are good Catholics, and I hope I saved already a number of unbelievers and sinners. If so, then: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XXIX.

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ANNA,

THE MOTHER OF TOBIAS.

WHEN Salmanassar, the King of Assyria, led away many Jews into captivity, there was among them a pious and saintly man, called Tobias. He espoused a virgin of his tribe by the name of Anna, who bore him a son, whom he also named Tobias.

While still children, you all, of course, have read in your Bible history the Scripture narration about this son, an account at once affecting and instructive; and you, no doubt, remember how the zealous father, feeling his end approach, sent his son to a strange country, how he remained absent long after they expected him to return, the deep anxiety which filled his mother's heart, and the proportionate excess of joy which rushed over her soul, as she, sitting on a hillock near her house, perceived her returning son.

She ran into the house full of joy, and cried out to his father: "Father, behold thy son cometh!" and but a few moments, indeed, elapsed before the son, accompanied by the Archangel Raphael, entered the

room, embraced his father and mother, and kissed them with the greatest tenderness and affection.

The greater the affliction was which the mother of Tobias experienced when he delayed so long, the more intense was the joy of her heart, when she embraced him and welcomed him home.

In her affliction, as she so mournfully ascended the hill, longing and watching for his return, she is an image of *Mary*, as she toiled up *Calvary's* steep ascent and stood beneath the Cross, praying that the sinner might return from the path of sin into the way of virtue.

In the last Conference I admonished you of the duty, according to the example of *Mary*, who, for the salvation of souls offered up to the heavenly Father her only-begotten Son, to manifest the greatest zeal for souls, and to do all in your power to promote the salvation of others, especially of those intrusted to you by God.

*To-day I will point, especially, to a means which is one of the most effective in preserving souls from temptations, or, if they have sinned, to return again to God, and this is devotion to the Mother of God.*

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There is nothing more true than that the happiness of good parents is caused by the knowledge that they have good children; and children who do not respond to their care are a source of unhappiness to them.

During one of my missions I happened to meet a married couple, in the parlor of the Priest's house, whose attire betokened extreme poverty. I said: "You seem to be very poor." "Yes," answered husband and wife together, "we are the poorest married couple in this congregation, and, nevertheless, the happiest." "How so?" "Oh! our Pastor has so often told us, that of all the children he has under his care, ours are the best. Indeed we have good, pious, obedient children, a thought which sweetens all our misery on earth."

That they had a right to speak thus, the heart of each mother present here to-day will not dispute. What do you think, which one amongst you here present is the happiest of all? Is it the one blessed with the greatest wealth? No! It is the one who can say, My children are my consolation; they are the most pious and virtuous in the whole congregation, as the Priest tells me. Indeed, what joy can countless wealth afford to her who, as a Catholic mother, has the grief of beholding her children live in such a way that her heart is torn with apprehension lest they, dying in sin, be lost forever.

And in the same degree does a mother experience the sweetest consolation when her erring child turns to God.

How often do I experience this in my missions, when sorrowful mothers give vent to their anguish, because their sons or daughters have not for years received the Holy Sacraments! How earnestly they

implore me to pray for the erring ones, that they may not reject the grace thus given to them by the mission, but be once more reconciled to God!

Then before the mission is closed they bring me the joyful tidings: "My son has listened to my prayers; my daughter has promised me to make the mission, and 'to be good;'" here they are.

That the mother may, on her part, do every thing possible to bring up her children for heaven, and keep them in the way of Christian zeal, or, should they depart therefrom, insure their return later on, I said she should not only herself cherish a great devotion and love towards the Blessed Virgin, and daily recommend herself and family to the maternal heart of her, but also endeavor to inspire her children, as early as possible, with the same devotion.

To this end let her, while they are still little infants, place around their necks a medal of the Mother of God, and accustom them, as soon as they commence to speak, to learn the Ave Maria, and to recite it every morning and evening; and as soon as the first peal of the "*Angelus Domini*" resounds from the belfry, she should insist upon all in the house reciting the prayer upon their knees.

She should provide a beautiful *picture* of the Madonna for the family sitting-room; and see that on Saturdays, and especially during the month of May, and on the feasts of our Blessed Lady, fresh flowers and a lighted lamp are placed before it.

She must be careful that her children, when they have



attained the proper age, are invested with the *scapular* of Mount Carmel, and wear the livery of the Mother of God, as a perpetual remembrance of their duties, to live as true children of such a Mother.

But especially let her endeavor to receive Holy Communion on the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin, and at the beginning and close of the month of May; that thus her children, through this salutary example, may become accustomed, in all necessities of soul and body, to seek refuge with Mary.

We read in the life of the blessed Gerson, that when he asked for bread or fruit, his mother made the boy kneel down before an image of Mary, and required of him to ask her for it. Whilst the little child lifted up its hands, and gazed with loving confidence up to the picture of Mary, she stood behind, and let bread or fruit slide down, as if Mary from her heavenly store had presented him with it. Thus she instilled in the heart of the boy a spirit of love and confidence towards Mary, in order that, in later years, in all necessities, his first thought would be of that amiable Mother, to whom he would then at once apply for help.

She must instruct her children particularly as to the zeal and confidence with which they should approach Mary, when *tempted* by the enemy of souls, who is ever watching to lead them into sin. But should we fall therein, there is no more powerful weapon to gain a glorious victory than a call upon *Mary* for aid.

The mother should direct her children to say daily,

in the morning and evening, one Ave Maria, in honor of the Immaculate Conception, that they may be preserved from temptation; yet, if a temptation approach, let them invoke immediately the name of Mary, and call upon her for aid. Thomas à Kempis asserts: "Even as a man flees when lightning flashes before him, so does Satan flee, if we call with confidence upon Mary. He knows her, and trembles before her, who, through her Immaculate Conception, crushed his infernal head."

She must impress upon her children to call upon Mary, when they have had the misfortune of falling into sin, all the more because she is the Mother of Mercy, the refuge of sinners, and our advocate with Christ.

Let her tell them, therefore, how emphatically, especially in our days, the Church encourages those of her fold to take refuge with Mary; not only to obtain in a miraculous manner, through her intercession, the cure of some corporal ill, but, still more, to be freed from the maladies of the soul.

In spite of all this, however, should her husband or children seem to have forgotten God and His most Blessed Mother, she herself must not forget Mary, but hasten to her to assist those who are so dear to her heart, and implore Mary most instantly and with tears, that through her intercession they may return again to the path of salvation.

Mothers can with the more unlimited confidence approach Mary, and with all the ardor of prayer, im-

plore her to listen to them, because Mary, although the Virgin of virgins was, nevertheless, at the same time a *Mother*; and, therefore, a mother whose heart is torn with doubt as to the salvation of her husband and children, may dare, with the greater confidence, cast herself on her knees and say: "O Mary! thou who most certainly didst also possess a Mother's heart, more clearly than the angelic hosts, dost thou comprehend how much my heart desires that my child and my husband may once more return to God, and walk as a child of God in the way of salvation?"

"Thus, and no sooner, will my soul find rest and a heavenly peace, through which, with greater zeal, I fain would serve and thank my God and Thee."

Listen to the following event, which occurred once in Italy. A mother once bidding her son good-bye and God-speed, beheld him go to war, and he was taken prisoner by the Turks. She, having heard the mournful tidings, went daily to Church, in order to pray before the altar of the Blessed Mother of God, and to pour forth her heart, that she might obtain, by her intercession, the release of her son.

However, he came not.

What did she do? In child-like simplicity she waited until the congregation had left the Church.

Then she got upon the altar and took from the arms of the Blessed Virgin the Infant Jesus, saying: "Now, O Mother, find out what it is to lose a child; for I will not restore your little infant, until you bring back my captive son." Behold the same day, late in

the evening, the bell gave notice that some one desired entrance to the house. The mother went to open, and behold! who stood there? A wanderer, dressed in the garb of the *Turks*, a turban on his head, and the fetters, token of his sad captivity, still upon him—it was her delivered son.

Ah! then, the mother clasped him in her fond embrace, and, overwhelmed with joy, she carried back the little infant to the Church and placed it again in the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The circumstance that Tobias returned under the guidance of an Angel, affords me occasion to recommend to you, besides the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, also the devotion to the Guardian Angels of your husbands and children, in order that they may unite their prayers with yours, to implore the patronage of Mary, for the sanctification and deliverance of those for whose spiritual welfare you are bound to care. Try to make your children, from their tenderest age, foster a great devotion to their Guardian Angel, saying every day a devout short prayer in his honor.

Invoke the intercession of St. Ann, from her glorious throne in heaven. Beg her to obtain grace for you that you may be successful in implanting in the hearts of your husband and children a tender devotion to the Mother of God, and the Angels appointed to be their guide through life. This will preserve them in the state of grace, and win them back to God, if, unfortu-

nately, they listen to the tempter, and offend God by grievous sin.

Say every day, until our next conference, with great devotion, to St. Ann one Ave Maria, to obtain for your children that sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin and their Guardian Angels; and if you secured through your care, that your children are distinguished by this twofold devotion, then I call you indeed, "Blessed amongst women!" Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXX.

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### JUDITH.

AT the time when King Nabuchodonosor seemed determined, as it were, to conquer the whole world and render it subject to him, he sent the General of his troops, who was called Holofernes, with a very great army to Juda. He besieged Bethulia, a fortified city, and, overwhelmed with dismay and despair, the inhabitants determined they would surrender, in case five days would elapse without any help coming to them. Then Judith appeared before the assembled people, and said: "What does this word mean? Will you set a time for the mercy of God and appoint when He shall deliver you? Let us rather fast and do penance; confess that we have sinned and deserved punishment, greater indeed, by far, than the one with which He is pleased to visit us at present."

The people accepted the counsel, and she, putting on hair-cloth, laid ashes on her head, and, falling down prostrate before the Lord, arose again; and, on her knees, she cried to the Lord, saying: "Lord, look down upon the camp of the enemies, crush their power with Thy presence. The proud have not been acceptable to Thee from the beginning; but the prayer

of the meek and humble hath always pleased Thee. O God of the Heavens, hear me, a poor wretch, making supplication to Thee, and presuming upon Thy mercy. Lord, strengthen the resolution in my heart, that all nations may acknowledge that Thou art God, and no other besides Thee. For this will be a glorious monument for Thy Name, when the enemy falls by the hand of a woman."

Thus praying, this valiant woman left the city, and, in a short time, she was in the presence of her people's foe, who was buried in profound slumber.

As she stood beside the sleeping Holofernes, she looked up to Heaven again and cried to the Lord, saying: "Strengthen me, Lord God!" Then, taking the tyrant's own sword, she struck off his head, and Bethulia was saved—the whole army took to flight.

But when Judith returned to the city gates and held up the gory head of Holofernes to the people, she cried out in great joy and exultation: "Praise ye the Lord, because He is good, and His mercy endureth forever!" And the multitude responded with one voice: "The Lord God has blessed thee, Judith; for by thee He has brought our enemies to nought!"

The Holy Church, in her canonical hours, recited in honor of the Blessed Virgin, beholds in Judith an emblem of Mary, and applies the praises which the Priests of God and the people of Israel intoned as thanksgiving for the victory which this heroic woman won, to Mary.

This is because of the victory gained over Lucifer,

the enemy of the people of God, by Mary; who, as the Holy Fathers remark, crushed his head, even in her Immaculate Conception, and whose protection and patronage, whose assistance and prayers, crown the children of God with victory in the combat with hell. Should it, however, unhappily come to pass that we fall into the abyss of sin, there is, in the Church of God, a special Sacrament, by means of which we can be again reconciled to God, and which, if resorted to with proper dispositions, will, at the same time, preserve us from relapsing into sin, and increase sanctifying grace within our souls.

*Therefore, to-day I will speak to you upon the conditions of fighting victoriously against temptation, and upon the care with which, when guilty of sin, you should prepare for confession and preserve yourselves from relapse into sin. To enable me to place this in a manner most clear and distinct before your eyes, I will dwell upon the course pursued by the heroic woman Judith—killing the enemy.*

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That the anger of God might be appeased, Judith admonished the people to do *penance*; and the manner in which she herself prayed and performed penitential works is an excellent model of the manner and mode in which we should use the means transmitted by God to the children of his Church for the forgiveness of sin by the legitimate and frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance. Well, indeed, is it for the



house and family wherein the mother is careful to seek frequent reconciliation with God through confession; and to confess, not only that He may forgive her sins, but also that, through absolution, sanctifying grace may be increased in her heart—and that she may be confirmed in her intention to be faithful and courageous in keeping her resolutions, and at the same time endeavor to influence her husband and children to follow her good example.

Certainly the Catholic wife and mother should live so as to preserve herself unstained by any grievous sin, for it is only such that the Christian is *obliged* to confess. But should she have been so unfortunate as to thus offend, what is, indeed, according to the example of the penitent Judith, the fundamental condition of an effective confession? You will find it pointed out in that prayer wherein she says: “The *proud* have not been acceptable to thee from the beginning, but the prayer of the *humble* and meek hath pleased Thee always.”

If, then, you would receive this Sacrament of Penance with the proper dispositions, *imitate her example* and *humble yourselves*.

That this disposition of the heart is most important in enabling us to confess and obtain forgiveness of our sins, is in itself evident, because we can not confess rightly without the grace of God; and grace, Holy Writ says, is given only to the *humble*. But, besides this, all the requisites on which the efficiency of the Sacrament of Penance depends, point to that

virtue of humility. First, the more humble a soul is, the more ardent is the cry of the heart to God for grace to confess rightly.

The more humble a soul is, the *more easily will she recognize her faults*, accuse, and not excuse herself before God and His representative.

The more humble she is, the more *upright* she will be, and be more ready to acknowledge her sins with the utmost candor and *sincerity*.

The more humble she is, the more carefully she will make her *resolutions*, the more readily she will listen to the counsel which she will receive from her confessor

But too often, alas! in many of your sex, when they kneel before the representative of God to confess the sins of which they have been guilty, this interior disposition is sadly deficient. The human heart is vain and full of self-conceit. This manifests itself often in dress and in your demeanor on the street, in church; yes, indeed, sometimes even in the Confessional. Is such the case with you? If so, correct it, and humble yourselves, and you will find that confession will grow more easy and beneficial to you.

The second point to which I would direct your attention in the example of Judith is, that she cut off the *head of Holofernes*. It would have been of little consequence had she merely cut off the hand or foot of him. She grasps the head of the General, and cuts it off.

Here we have the emblem of a *moral* head which the Christian must cut off in order to crush the infernal foe.

Every one has, in a greater or lesser degree, some favorite passion, against which it is necessary to constantly struggle in order to weaken it and to subdue it in the end.

In one, it is pride and vanity ; in another, covetousness and avarice. Another has to combat with envy or wrath. Enmity or intemperance, impurity or sloth, is the obstacle to virtue in a fourth.

As a preparation for the struggle, I admonish you all to practice daily the *particular examen* ; and, if any fault presents itself to you, impose some penance for it upon yourselves.

To call your attention especially to two faults which are most general among those in your state of life, are a want of *humility* and a lack of *meekness*. Remember : " The prayer of the humble and meek," says Judith, " has always been acceptable to Thee." *Humility* and *meekness* are the two virtues which are, above all others, the most important to preserve peace in the household, and, consequently, to promote happiness in the family. A truly humble and meek soul is also always a patient one. But patience has, as the Holy Ghost assures us, a perfect work.

If, therefore, you are earnestly resolved to walk in the way of perfection, and, for this purpose, to employ the sacrament of penance as a means, then, in order

to confess validly and frequently, make the particular *examen*, especially in regard to the sins of pride, vanity and anger.

If you have subdued these vices, then examine yourselves upon your zeal and fidelity in prayer, in receiving the Holy Sacraments, in fulfilling the duties of your state as wives, as mothers, as members of the congregation which I have already explained to you. In this way you will cut off the heads, one after another, of the seven-headed dragon.

That to do so may not be with you only a meritorious desire, but a perfect work, seize the sword of Judith, that is, form resolutions, cry up to God for strength, and *delay not* in fulfilling what you have determined upon.

Besides, Judith was filled with *courage* and *confidence* in God. What an important disposition! How necessary for those in your state of life, not to become discouraged, even though they would have to contend against a whole army of bodily pains and spiritual afflictions.

Christian mother! if you, in the disposition which I have to-day pointed out to you, approach frequently the Sacrament of Penance, then, indeed, can your family cry out with the inhabitants of the rescued Bethulia: "God has blessed thee, for through thee He has conquered the enemies of salvation; and we, encouraged by the example, have crushed the head of Satan by frequent and valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance."

Invoke St. Ann, for her intercession in heaven, and say daily, in her honor, until the next Conference, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you divine grace, not only that you may *often*, and with due preparation, *confess* your sins, but that your husband and children may also frequently have recourse to this means of gaining Heaven. If so, then in truth, "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XXXI.

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### ESTHER.

AS Holy Scripture relates in the book of Esther, Assuerus, the King of Persia, once prepared a wonderfully great feast, such indeed as no King had ever made before, nor has any one been known to do since. It was given in the royal garden, and, according to Holy Writ, marble pillars held up the precious hangings of different colors, which were fastened with cords of silk, inserted into rings of ivory. The floor was paved with costly marble, and the Scripture speaks of the *wonderful variety of paintings* which embellished it. What beauty must that ornamentation have been that Holy Writ itself wonders at it!

First, the King invited all the mighty of the kingdom to the feast, which, with royal abundance of food and wine, lasted for a hundred and fourscore days.

And when the days of the feast were expired he invited all the people that were found in his capital—Susan—and commanded a feast to be made seven days. The like of this even Solomon, in all his glory, never did.

But, however glorious was the feast which Assuerus

made, how does all its splendor disappear when compared to the *banquet* which *Christ*, the King of kings, more than eighteen centuries ago, prepared over the whole world, for *kings*, princes and rulers, and, at the same time, for all the *nations* of the earth, to continue until the consummation of time, through the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament? The numberless Churches, scattered over the globe, are like so many beautifully decorated gardens; and the altars therein, the tables adorned with a spiritual magnificence, so overwhelming, that it entirely surpasses the most vivid imagination of the human heart.

Myriads of holy angels, in heavenly splendor, hover round them, in the service of their King, Who gives Himself as nourishment to the children of men, with a liberality and plenitude of grace which only He Who is at once God and man, is able to impart.

But God wished that His children should accept His invitation to this celestial banquet with a readiness equal to that with which the princes of the kingdom of Assuerus, and the people of Susan *responded* to the royal summons. For, as the Scripture says: "Neither was there any one who compelled them, but every one could act according to his own pleasure."

Does it not seem difficult to believe that the Church finds herself compelled to issue a command for her children to approach, at least once a year, the Table of the Lord? How many do not even obey this precept, or, if they do, it is, perhaps, in a manner so unworthy as to dishonor this table; or, at least, to derive

so little profit from it, that, in a spiritual sense, they remain without strength and refreshment.

*Judith* reminded you the last time, my dear friends, how you should be disposed when you approach the Confessional.

*But how you should approach the holy table, in order to draw therefrom the greatest profit for your souls, Esther, exalted to a royal throne, shall teach you.*

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In Esther—of whom you have certainly heard when children, or read in Bible history—the Church beholds a type of Mary, and applies to the Queen of Heaven the praises which Holy Scripture awards to Esther, in the Book of the Old Testament which bears her name.

First, there is the privilege through which Esther was excepted from the *decree of punishment*, which was inflicted upon every one who ventured to transgress the orders of the King, and appear before him. “The Law,” said Assuerus to Esther, “is given to all nations, but not to thee.” The Church applies this distinction to the prerogative of Mary, in her Immaculate Conception.

The second point of resemblance is the choice of the humble Esther to be the wife of a King, and *Queen* over all his kingdom, and the many admirable qualities with which she was so resplendently adorned, both in body and soul, that Assuerus determined to place her on a throne; and in this we behold an emblem of



the exaltation of Mary, through Christ, as Queen of heaven and earth.

The people of God groaned under the evils threatening them by the vengeance of the haughty Aman, and *through Esther* they were *rescued* therefrom. The souls of the children of God are endangered through the vengeance of Satan, and through Mary they are rescued therefrom. God, my friends, certainly compels no one to become blessed.

His loving Mother, mindful that from the cross a dying Saviour committed us to her care, assists us, and obtains for us graces from her Son, for our rescue and sanctification; *but we are required to use them.*

The most sublime of these means of grace is that of which the great banquet of Assuerus is an emblem—*Holy Communion*; but, oh! what indifference is too often evinced towards this gift which contains every divine grace! The very qualities which Holy Scripture praises in Esther, are those upon which not only the worthy reception of Holy Communion depends, but also the continually increasing riches of grace in our hearts.

O wives and mothers! you can not too fully estimate the importance of my present subject. It is one which deeply concerns you, that grace may be given to you in an abundant and ever-increasing measure, that you may be enabled to fulfill your many most weighty duties, and that your example may enkindle in the hearts of your husbands and children a holy em-

ulation to imitate you, and approach frequently and worthily this banquet of love.

Take Esther for your emblematic model. She was a soul free from sin, extremely *humble*, detached from all love for the wealth and honors of this world, *obedient, faithful, confiding* in God, and united to Him.

Listen how she poured forth her heart in prayer before God, when her foster-father, Mardochai, informed her, that in order to assist the people of God, she would have to expose herself to the danger of losing her life. She said: "Lord, Thou knowest that Thy handmaid hath never rejoiced since I am here, but in Thee, O Lord and God! I have heard of my father, that Thou, O Lord! didst take our people from among all nations, to possess them as an everlasting inheritance. I thank Thee that I belong to this people; I live indeed here in the midst of plenty and abundance, but Thou knowest that I abominate the glory of the wicked in their abundance, and that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory which is put upon my head, and detest it as a menstruous rag." In this way she spoke of her royal diadem. "O God, who art mighty above all, Thou seest my affliction, and knowest that we have no other hope but Thee; hear our prayer, and deliver us."

These words are as so many rays of light, the brilliant luster of which place the virtues of this heroine of Israel clearly before our eyes, and indicate that condition upon which the reception of the graces, inseparable from a worthy Holy Communion, especially depends.

Esther said: "Lord, Thou knowest that I never rejoiced in any thing but in Thee!"

Behold here what a proof of the *purity* of her heart; free from every stain of sin! I will apply this to a worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and say that the first requisite for it is the *spirit of penance*.

Esther, before she ventured to appear before the King, clothed herself in garments of the deepest mourning, fasted and confessed before God that the sins of her people brought down upon them the woes of captivity, and cried for mercy to the Lord.

Learn from this what is necessary, on your part, before you approach the Table of the Lord, if you feel that you have offended His infinite Majesty by sin, viz.; a *most humble* and *repentant* accusation of your sins in the Sacrament of Penance.

Esther was penetrated with lively *faith*. She thanked God for the happiness of belonging to His chosen people—that people chosen for Himself in order to preserve among nations the treasure of revelation; and this characteristic points to a most important disposition which we must possess when about to approach the Table of the Lord; namely, a faith so vivid that its resplendent rays will illumine the depths of our souls.

The Most Holy Sacrament is distinctly marked by the Church as the Sacrament of Faith, and it is so indeed; for it contains the Founder of faith, the Deliv-

erer of the human race, the glorious Conqueror over death and hell.

The more *active* our faith in the real presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament exists, the more ardent will our *desire* be to receive Jesus ; and the greater the strength and unction of our prayers, through Jesus Christ, Whom we receive, and Who, personally becomes present in our hearts, and prays with us.

“Blessed are those who see not, and yet believe.”

These divine words relate especially to the Christian who is about to receive Holy Communion, and who, because he did not behold the Lord during the time He dwelt upon earth, is now enabled to receive the same Jesus so often into his heart.

“Lord, Thou knowest!”—thus prayed Esther,—“that all the splendor and abundance which surround me I *detest*, and the glory which is put upon my head I behold as a menstruous rag.”

What sentiments for a Jewish virgin to entertain towards a throne to which she was exalted from the deepest poverty! How few, even among the Christian virgins, would speak thus, if they, like Esther, had had the happiness of ascending a royal throne.

I would ask you, wives and mothers, what does conscience say in this regard? Are you entirely free from a desire to possess the *goods* and *honors* of this world? Your lives, I fear, alas! would say that you are *not*; for what is it that prevents you from frequently uniting yourselves to Jesus by a worthy Communion, but

your ever-engrossing *temporal cares*. Through all the busy hours of the day, you are so occupied that you can find no time to prepare for this holy act, and why?

Oh! it is because, generally speaking, you are not so closely united to God in prayer as to arrive at the personal knowledge and love of Christ, by your intercourse with Him in the Most Holy Sacrament.

But only listen to an example: In the Tyrol, in Germany, I was confessor to a widow, who was the mistress of a large farm-house, whose heart was inflamed with a more ardent desire to receive Holy Communion every day than I ever met with in any other soul. As the clergy of the place did not deem it fitting that she should receive daily in the little parish Church, what did she do? When the world was wrapt in slumber—at three, nay, even at two o'clock in the morning—she arose, and traversed a distance of several miles to different Churches, fasting, and thus satisfied the desire of her loving heart. This she did, not only in summer and fair weather, but also when winter storms were fierce and wild, and always with the most intense fervor, ardent thanksgiving, and a careful fulfillment of all the duties of her state. Behold an example of what can be accomplished when a soul has learned how sweet is the Lord to those who know Him.

In conclusion, I especially admonish you, whose state in life is marked with much trouble, to heed the invitation of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament:

“Come to Me, all ye who are full of trouble and heavy laden, and I will refresh you.”

Invoke St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, begging her to obtain for you from Christ the grace to receive Him often, always more worthily, in Communion, and to *live entirely for Him*, and that your husband and your children may follow your good example. If you with them surround frequently the Lord's Table, “Blessed art thou amongst women.” Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXII.

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### SUSANNA.

WHEN the people of God were detained in the Babylonian captivity, it happened that a chaste woman, named Susanna, was accused of adultery by two wicked old men. But her confidence in the Lord was great, and God rewarded her for it; for the Prophet Daniel delivered her from their hateful designs. When she heard these abandoned men accuse her of so dreadful a crime, she looked up to heaven and thus prayed to God: "O eternal God, Who knowest hidden things; Who knowest all things before they come to pass; Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me." And when Daniel had, in presence of the whole assembly, proved that the accusation of those hoary-headed sinners was utterly false, every one who listened cried out in a loud voice, and blessed God.

*This Scripture narrative offers a fitting occasion for me to remind you, as married women, of a most essential virtue, and that is, chastity according to your state of life; and to speak to you of the great care you should take to live so that conscience can not whisper the least reproach in this regard.*

The name Susanna indicates the practice of this virtue ; the meaning of it being in English "a lily." For the same reason Scripture speaks of Mary, the Virginal Mother of the Redeemer, "Purest of the pure, the Virgin of virgins," under the symbol of a lily, as she is, indeed, that lily of which is written : "As the lily among thorns so is my beloved among the daughters of Eve;" and again : "Even as the lily, will the wilderness bloom and rejoice." Certainly, the lily is generally accepted as the emblem of virginal purity ; but it can and should also be the symbol of every Christian wife, not only as regards her own fidelity to the duty of living purely and chastely according to her state, but also in the exercise of every possible care, lest, perhaps, her husband wander from the path of the angelic virtue ; or, in consequence of some fault of hers, her children lose their innocence.

And here I will say, that my first wish to every Catholic wife in this respect is, that she may have the testimony of her conscience that it was as a pure *virgin* she entered upon her married life, and that nothing, in any relation whatever, took place which led to her giving her consent to commit any sin against the virtue of holy purity, before she extended her hand, in token of consent, as wife before the altar of God. There are daughters who form for themselves an entirely false conscience on this point, assuming the position that after they have the intention to be married, freedom in mutual intercourse is not so great a



sin ; and yet, in this regard, every offense against this angelic virtue is equally a *mortal* sin.

Or, they suppose that, if they themselves have no temptation when they are alone with persons of the other sex, that they are not guilty of sin. But they do not consider, or pause to think, that they may be an occasion of temptation to the other party. Some misguided young people think that, at least, after they are *betrothed*, and the bans proclaiming their intended marriage have been published from the pulpit, that sins against holy purity are no longer of so grievous a nature ; and yet the very reverse is the case, as we learn from St. Chrysostom, who justly cries out : “ Shall the Sacrament of Matrimony, which you are about to receive, serve you as a cloak to cover your sins ? ”

Therefore, examine your conscience about it, and if you find yourself guilty, confess sincerely, penitently and fully, lest you, perhaps, make during the rest of your lives sacrilegious confessions, and be doomed by an avenging Judge to the eternal flames of hell.

But even in regard to your conduct *after* marriage, remember, that also among married people modesty and chastity must be observed, that they may lead holy lives in the state of life they have chosen ; and do not be unmindful of the truth that there are, at least, many venial sins which can be committed in that state. In the depths of her innocent heart Susanna said : “ I know that you will accuse me to the whole

extent of your wickedness, that I may be put to death ; but I die rather than sin in the sight of God."

Christian wife, in your intercourse with your husband, walk so that the eye of the Lord may rest with pleasure upon you.

What a heinous sin would it be especially for a wife to live in matrimonial intercourse, and yet be so lost to her sense of duty as to prevent the conception of a child. In the sight of God she would be no less abominable than a woman in a house of ill-fame—nay, much more so ; for, even before the brute she must feel a sense of shame.

Some allege as an excuse : " We have already so many children." In reply to which I ask : " Who gives you the child ? God. Are you wiser than God ? What a blasphemy ! "

Another will urge the weakness of her constitution, and repeat the opinion of the physician that she would lose her life in her next confinement ; in reply to which I answer : You may think so, and the doctor too ; but, in fact, this is often a mistaken idea. And, even if correct, we must all die ; and the fear of death gives no one the privilege of committing a mortal sin to escape it.

If otherwise, there would have been no martyrs.

If you die in fulfilling your matrimonial duties, you are, as it were, a martyr, and will, therefore, all the sooner reach heaven, and gain a higher place therein.

Another will say : " I do not take medicine to destroy the child, or prevent its conception ; " but that is

not the question; for it is all the same if any thing whatsoever is done to attain the desired end.

The only means not to bring forth a child, as long as there is any possibility to conceive one, is to live as brother and sister, separated from the marriage-bed. Make your husband acquainted with what I have just said, if he is not already aware of it; for otherwise no one can absolve you, not even the Pope. God will punish you even in this life with illness and temporary misery, because it is a sin directly opposed to the laws of *nature*.

The Christian wife should live so that her every act will inspire her husband with sincere respect for her, and cause him to live with her in such a manner that his marriage may prove a *mystical* reflection of union of the Church with Christ. The more deeply the husband is influenced by this sentiment of respect toward his wife, the more assured will be his conjugal fidelity.

The Christian wife should, therefore, also endeavor to cultivate, carefully, a love for home and its various duties, to avoid useless visits, and amusements which only tend to dissipate the mind. such as balls, theaters, and all similar amusements; and she should guard against giving herself up to vanity and love of dress.

She should, above all, endeavor to be as amiable, gentle and loving as her heart should prompt her to be toward her husband, and never evince any jealousy in his regard; for that, as experience shows, is especially calculated to lead married men into evil ways.

With equal solicitude is the Christian mother bound to watch over the modest, decent, and chaste conduct of her children.

Her first care, therefore, must be that brother and sister do not sleep together in the same bed, even though they are still children; for Satan, as experience teaches, tempts even the little ones to commit sins of impurity.

Her vigilance must not cease here, for she must watch as far as she can, that brothers and sisters walk, during the entire day, in modesty and decency.

She must not permit her sons and daughters to dress and undress in the same room, and must take care that the closets in the house are so arranged that a due regard for modesty be observed.

But as soon as the children are grown up, new duties devolve upon the mother, who must redouble her vigilance, and see that her sons do not remain out of the house until a late hour, strolling through the streets, lounging in taverns, or paying visits which she knows nothing about.

She must exercise *an equal* watchfulness over her daughters, and never permit them to remain alone with persons of the other sex, even when they are contemplating marriage, nor to walk alone with them, or accept their escort to balls and similar amusements. Should your daughters murmur at what they look upon as unnecessary strictness, and tell you of their companions who enjoy their liberties, although they are Catholics also, say to them: "Dear daugh-

ters, long after I have been laid in the grave, you will thank God for having given you such a mother, and you will never regret having obeyed me in this."

The good mother will also be careful that no picture, which might scandalize or disedify, shall find a place in her house. Sad to say, even religious pictures and statues sometimes are open to censure in this regard!

She must neither suffer romances, nor any books, the burden of whose theme is love, to be brought into the house, or read by her children, nor permit them to visit places where their innocence is exposed to danger.

But what words can I find to express the depth into which a wife has fallen, who has had the misfortune to commit *adultery*? By this sin she embitters her whole life, and can never, never experience perfect happiness as a wife. Ah! truly, when Christ, hanging in agony upon the Cross, cried out in reference to all sinners: "Father, they know not what they do!" He might have applied those words in a special manner to a wife who forgets herself so far as to stain her soul with the heinous crime of adultery; for she commits a sin, which, in some sense, can never be repaired, since adultery severs the marriage tie, on one side, and it can never after be so united, as was once the case, when it symbolized the mystic union of Christ with His Holy Church. Through adultery the wife loses her *rights* as spouse; that is, the husband is no longer bound to live with her or to care and provide

for her, even though her sorrow or remorse would lead her to do penance in sackcloth and ashes.

He can live with her, if he be so inclined; but no one, not even the Pope, could oblige him to do so.

But the worst feature in this sin is the sad truth that those unfortunate creatures, who are guilty of adultery, generally make the worst confessions, indeed too often sacrilegious ones; for, influenced by a fatal feeling of shame, they do not state with sincerity, and in a manner sufficiently clear and detailed and complete, the heinous sin they have committed.

They do not confess, as far as they can recollect the *number* of times they have fallen, nor the *nature* of the sin, and omit to say with *whom* it was committed—not his name,—but whether the guilty accomplice was *married* or *single*, a *brother-in-law* or a *relative*. In the latter case the adulteress, in addition to adultery, would be guilty of *incest*.

The danger to commit such an awful sin lies in the fact, that their intercourse, as relatives, is of a more intimate and familiar nature, and the devil employs all his efforts to cause her fall, especially if she is without children and would like to be a mother.

But whatever should be the case, the unfortunate sinner should humble herself, and ask the Priest to give her assistance to confess *validly*, and be reconciled with God, and to live to the end of her life in *penance* and contrition, a chaste and pious woman, resolved never to offend God any more, but rather to die.

Invoke St. Ann, and say, until the next Conference,

every day, one fervent Ave Maria, to obtain grace, to live unstained in conjugal *fidelity*. I congratulate you, if your conscience bears you witness that neither before nor after your marriage you have any thing to reproach you whatever, in regard to chastity, then: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen.

## CONFERENCE XXXIII.

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### THE MOTHER OF THE MACHABEES.

OF all the women of whom Holy Scripture makes honorable mention, there is not one to whom the Holy Ghost pays a greater tribute of praise than the heroic Mother of the Machabees; that glorious martyr, who not only encouraged her seven children to die martyrs in one day for the love of God, but finally sealed her holy faith with her own blood.

Antiochus, the wicked persecutor of the chosen people of God, determined to force the Jews to eat swine's flesh, and to abandon the observance of those rites and ceremonies, which the Most High, through Moses, had declared to be a law.

This was ordained, that the Jewish people might be distinguished from all other nations; for from this race the Messiah, promised in Paradise, was to come; from this race he was to take flesh and blood and enter into the world. As a sign of apostasy from their ancient faith, and as a token that they had joined the heathen world, Antiochus endeavored to compel the Jews, in violation of their law, to eat the forbidden food.

It came to pass that seven children of one mother (brothers) were brought before the tyrant, who sought,



by threatening them with the most cruel tortments, to make them disobey; and as his efforts were of no avail, the most excruciating tortures were inflicted upon them.

Fiery tongs and iron plates, heated to burning redness, were applied to their flesh; their skin was lacerated and torn off in the most cruel manner; yet, notwithstanding all this, they, one after the other, submitted courageously, and evinced the most admirable firmness.

The heroic mother, who was forced to witness their dreadful agony, never ceased to exhort them bravely unto death, and to inspire them to be firm by reminding them of the Judgment Day. She bade them remember that, at that last dread day, they would arise from the dead, to receive from God the Lord all the different parts of their bodies, transfigured and glorified.

Six of these noble youths had already, in presence of their mother, triumphantly consummated their martyrdom; and there was left but one, the youngest, when Antiochus, desirous that he, at least, should be won to comply with his will, used every effort to persuade him to do so. Failing to shake the youthful martyr's constancy, he even thought to employ the mother's aid.

But when she feigned compliance with the tyrant's will and was permitted to speak with her boy, she thus addressed him in Hebrew, which the King could not understand: "My son, have pity on me and imitate

your brothers in their holy perseverance. Behold heaven and earth, and consider that God made all things out of nothing, and will strengthen you, so that, in His mercy, I may meet you again, with your brothers, in heaven." And this young, this tender child joyfully offered up his life, amid tortures more cruel than had been inflicted upon any of the rest; for, since he had offered more resistance to the tyrant than the others, he selected him as an object of more special vengeance.

Finally, as the last scene in this most painful tragedy, the mother was delivered up to death.

What an example for you, O mothers! What encouragement you may derive from this! It will teach you the importance of instilling into the youthful minds and hearts of your children so great an esteem for their holy faith that they will confess it openly, undeterred by human respect; and deem it an honor, should they be called upon, because they are Catholics, to suffer for the sake of religion.

To-day I will reply to the question:

*How has a mother to train her children in the way that they may give, by their lives, witness to the holy faith?*

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I say: Even with its mother's milk should the child imbibe this love and appreciation of faith, and she, being always near it and watching over its tender years, will have a better opportunity to influence its opening mind than the father himself.

The providence of God placed by the crib of the Divine Infant, the Founder of our holy faith, a woman; Mary, His Mother. This is to remind you, mothers, of the care with which you should endeavor to secure for your children the whole fruit of the redemption—that precious benefit—by so instructing them that, from their earliest years, they may follow the Divine Child, ready, as God's true children, to live and die for Christ and the faith He taught on earth.

What a fatal neglect is in this country too often met with on this point, to the great injury, nay, to the ruin of souls; and to what must we attribute the cause?

Alas! to the mother herself. In many instances she is not sufficiently penetrated with the necessity of faith, and has not so great an appreciation of this precious treasure as to love and esteem it above every thing else in the world. In the fact that she merely believes what she, as a Christian, is bound to believe; fulfills the most ordinary duties of religion merely because it is the custom to do so; and is satisfied if her children are so far instructed that they can receive their first Holy Communion, after which she takes little heed whether they fulfill their religious duties or not, lies the startling explanation of that lack of stern Catholicity in the rising generation.

No wonder if the children of such a mother grow up Catholics in name only, their lives scarcely evincing one distinguishing mark to show that they belong to the Church of God, caring little whether *their* children in turn avail themselves of the means of sal-

vation bequeathed to them by God through His Holy Church.

No wonder if the children of such a mother give themselves but little trouble in regard to observing the Precepts of the Church, and need not a tyrant's command to induce them to gratify their appetite for flesh-meat on forbidden days—even as those who are not of the household of the faith.

I will now direct your attention to a very different picture, and describe for you the ideal I have formed of a wife and mother, as she should be, to exert such a beneficial influence over her children that they become practical Catholics.

That the Catholic mother may be enabled to exert this influence upon her children *as Catholics*, she must be able, as a wife, to make the following assertion:

“Reverend Father, I married because, through the counsel of my Confessor, I understood that it was the will of God.”

Can this find an echo in the hearts of any or all of you?

“I married my husband because I saw that, among all the suitors for my hand, he was the most devoted to his Holy Church. Never would I have united my faith to one in whose soul faith had been permitted to grow lifeless and cold, and of whom I would not have had the conviction to be a good, fervent, practical Catholic.” Was it so, mothers, that hear now these words from me?

“I married, and, in doing so, pondered well upon the

great dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and made due preparation to receive it with all its graces.

“I never had secret intercourse with my betrothed ; but, during my engagement, I was anxious to act always in accordance with Christian modesty. As my wedding day drew near I made a full confession of my whole life, and insisted on the ceremony being performed during Mass at the Altar, where I also, together with my husband, knelt to receive the Bread of Life. From that moment my constant aim has been to sanctify my husband, and to remain ever before him a living example of what he should be.” Mothers, that hear me now, was it thus with you ?

“From my earliest youth I was accustomed to rise at a seasonable hour, and I have ever continued to do so. I have said daily and devoutly my morning and evening prayers ; assisted as often as possible at Mass during the week, and received monthly the Holy Sacraments.” Mothers, was, and is, this your practice ?

“I desired to have children only to bring them up for heaven, and have ever earnestly tried to instill the spirit of prayer into their hearts. I have taken care that they faithfully attended divine service, received monthly the Holy Sacraments, and were thoroughly instructed in their religion, at home as well as at school, so that they might explain its doctrines, both in social converse, and when they take their place in the world.”

Christian wives and mothers, can you tell me that you have done all this ?

“I guarded my children, lest, through unprofitable companionship, they would waste their precious time, or suffer in any way, and insisted that they should observe the regulations of the house. I permitted neither my sons nor daughters to participate in any dangerous amusements, such as balls, theaters, and the like.”

Christian mothers, can you say this? You raised your children to confess Holy Faith by their lives?

“If my children deserved punishment it was not withheld; and even after they left the paternal roof I ceased not daily to offer my fervent prayers for them. When I see them, I never fail to inquire if all is spiritually well with them; and if they are far from me I write and encourage them to be firm and open in professing their faith before God and man.”

Is it so with you? Then, from my inmost heart, I congratulate you; for I hope your children give witness, by their lives, to the Holy Faith you planted and strengthened in their hearts, and you will stand unterrified before the judgment-seat of God.

But if you, at these repeated questions, would have to beat your breast in silence, or cry: “O God! be merciful to me a sinner; I did not act thus, but rather in the reverse,” then, alas! I pity you, and advise you to repair your fault. To accomplish this, let not one single opportunity escape to strengthen Holy Faith in their hearts, and instruct them carefully in the tenets of our holy religion through yourselves and with the aid of the priest and good books, and instill in them this

high esteem for our holy faith, and such a fervor as to practice religion and give witness of it privately and publicly.

Invoke St. Ann, and say daily, until the next conference, in her honor, one fervent Ave Maria, for that intention, that you may raise your children with the zeal of the mothers in the time of the martyrs, and thou shalt be "Blessed amongst women." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXIV.

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### THE WIFE AND MOTHER ON HER DEATH-BED.

YOU have seen how the mother of the Machabees, in the most heroic manner, encouraged her children to go forth to a happy death. She brought them up with the greatest care, and implanted deeply and firmly in their hearts such an esteem for their Holy Faith, that the most excruciating torments and cruel martyrdom could not uproot it.

She stood by and watched their life-blood ebb away, until, with the last drop, they sealed their fidelity to that faith which, around her knee, they first had learned to love; and, oh! what joy beyond compare rushed over her soul when the youngest, also, yielded up his innocent life, and she beheld the eternal salvation of all her children secured.

And then she, herself, gave back her spirit into the hands of the Lord, and thus *died* the "death of the *Saints*," so precious in His sight.

I have now, during three years, preached to you so many conferences, wishing to save and sanctify your souls, and what can I wish more than that you may be strengthened to keep all the resolutions you have made during these three years? But nothing in this



regard will do you more good than the *frequent remembrance of death*, especially of good death. Therefore, I address every one of you to-day with this advice :

*Remember every day your last things, and you will not sin any more, but carefully fulfill all the obligations of your married state.*

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Man dies either the death of the good, or the death of the bad. It is not, however, my intention to depict the anguish and terror which surrounds the latter ; for I fervently trust that you will be faithful to the resolutions which I feel sure you have made.

I prefer, rather, to lead you to the peaceful death-bed of a truly *pious* wife and mother ; and in order to recognize the ineffable consolation which sweetens the last hours of one who has faithfully borne her part in life, we need only consider the individual circumstances which generally accompany *death*. They will specify the sources of that consolation which lessens its pangs, and fills the heart of the dying Christian, the good wife and mother, with celestial peace and joy.

*To die*, means to leave things we have on earth. That may be hard for those that spend many weary years on earth to collect them ; but if the dying mother has never set her heart upon them in a greater degree than duty called for,—if she kept ever in view the sweet hope of beholding the joys of the Lord, and possessing them forever, this separation becomes an

easy task for her. Why? Oh! surely you all know this full well.

The lives of some among you, perhaps, have been marked by toil and tears—weary labor in the struggle to provide for yourselves and the family given you by God. All this will end with death.

Night after night, faint with fatigue, you have sought a hurried rest; and, perhaps, this toil continued even in your advancing years. It all will *end* with *death*. What a consoling reflection! Even though wealthy at present, no one can look into the future and behold what its mysterious depths contain—poverty, perhaps, and want most dire.

But if you leave the earth in the state of grace, to enter into the joy of the Lord, you can exclaim, “Heaven is mine! all is mine!” This thought is especially consoling if the loved ones, from whom the dying mother is about to part, have lived in poverty and want, for she can say, “Weep not, my children; soon we will meet again in Heaven, to enjoy an eternal plenitude of bliss.”

Through death our soul is separated from our *body*; and, in a natural view, we do not like this separation. But to what great *pain* and *anguish* that body is now subjected after the fall of man, none know better than you. Oh, wives and mothers! the sentence of the Lord, in His condemnatory decree, “In pain shalt thou bring forth thy children,” points to it, as you have no doubt often experienced.

And then, what trouble and anxiety are inseparable from the care necessarily to be bestowed upon children! From all this you will be *released* by death. You will leave this world where indeed life for you was passed as in a vale of tears,—through want, perhaps, or toil, or sickness,—to enter now the kingdom of eternal *bliss*.

It is sad, indeed, to leave a loving husband and children, whom you tenderly love. Ah! yes, this is hard for the dying wife and mother. But what heavenly solace will fill your heart when your husband draws near your bed, and, in token of farewell, presses your hand, now growing cold and chill, and, in tones all tremulous with grief but in most affectionate words, pours forth his thanks for your fidelity and love through life. And then, no doubt, you will address him, saying: “My husband, remember me after death; assist me in the other world by constant prayers. Fail not to have Masses said for me, that, before the Throne of God, I may soon be praying that you also may die in the grace of the Lord, and come to my embrace in heaven.” And you will raise your dying eyes towards heaven, and he will understand the silent prayer which your pallid lips can speak no more; but he and you shall feel consoled.

All this applies equally to a mother’s separation from her children.

Death will have no terrors for her, who has spared no pains to bring up those children well, and thus train their tender souls for heaven. And if God has

blessed these efforts; if all as faithful, zealous children of His Church gather round her dying bed, what untold happiness will she feel! Then, indeed, can she say to them: "A little while, my dearest ones, and my eyes will close in death, but my firm hope is that, when I am gone, you will never forget how I have tried to fill your hearts with love for the faith and fidelity in professing it. Remember my instructions on every point of our holy religion, and be especially mindful of the example which I have always endeavored to place before you of a faithful practice of all its duties. Come nearer, now, and receive your dying mother's farewell blessing."

Oh! how often do we Priests experience, in the Confessional, how the memory of a mother is most blessed and effective for the salvation of her children, remaining fresh in their hearts long after she has passed from earth. During one of my missions I was called to the death-bed of an aged lady, whose numerous children and grandchildren had come to be present in her dying moments. One of her sons went to the bedside and said: "Dear mother, we are all here; children and children's children. The doctor tells us that you will not see the dawn of another day, therefore please give us your blessing." All knelt, while the venerable servant of God said: "My dear children, I am ready to go to my God. May His Holy Will be done. I leave you now; but I thank Him that He has blessed my care for you, and trust that He will bring you all to heaven. Do not forget

me in your prayers, and receive my blessing." Then she blessed them, and all present sobbed aloud, while the sweetest peace filled the heart of the dying Christian.

And when death is approaching, how sweet, if the fervent good Catholic wife and mother can look back upon a truly zealous Catholic life spent in that state to which God called her long years ago; if you can, recollect duties faithfully fulfilled, actions united with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, good works performed for God's honor and glory alone! All, all are now transformed into merits for which the Lord reserves for you a great and eternal reward.

Besides, the means of the Holy Church will come to your aid and consolation. Happy will it then be for you, if you have always confessed with perfect sincerity; for if so, the efforts of Satan to torture you with doubts as to whether you have confessed properly or not will fall harmless upon your souls. You may rest assured that God has forgiven you.

Well will it be with you, then, if you have often and worthily received Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament, and often, too, availed yourself of His presence here on earth, by daily hearing Mass, and frequent visits to the Churches where He remains "waiting for the children of men." It will be for you the sweetest solace when, as *Viaticum*, the Priest administers the Blessed Sacrament to you before you leave the world forever.

I most fervently hope that the death-bed of each

one here may be like unto this! Think often—yes, each night as you retire to rest—of your last hour, and try to realize vividly all the attendant circumstances of death. Think of the consoling power of the “last anointing,” administered by the “Priest of the Church,” to destroy all the relics of sin in your soul, and replenish it with the full power of “holy hope,” to overcome happily the struggle of death.

Reflect also, O wife and mother, upon what follows immediately after you have yielded up your spirit to Him, Who gave it. Imagine yourself lying in the “silent majesty of death,” the image of the Crucified clasped in your hands, while, twined around your lifeless fingers, is the rosary you loved so well. Still and pale you lie there, yet resting in the peace of the Lord, which leaves its impress on your cold, white face.

Ah! how that holy look of peace will edify the members of your confraternity who come to pray for you, and sprinkle Holy-water around your corpse; and when the tidings of your death go forth in the congregation, many will say: “Ah! she is in a better world. Would that I were as good as she was during life.”

Think of your coffin, of the moment when your lifeless form will be placed in it, when your weeping children and sorrowing husband will be summoned to take the last fond look, ere yet 't is closed forever.

O mother! can you not almost see how those stricken ones fall upon their knees, and kiss once more, with tender thankfulness, your loving hand?

And when the coffin-lid is pressed down, hiding you forever from view, and the last strokes of the hammer resound through the silent house, what solace will there be in the thought that she, who lies within that coffin, was, during life, a good Christian, a fervent Catholic, a good wife and mother! This will be even greater if her life was marked by trials and crosses, patiently endured.

Over, the trouble and toil; over, the sorrows that clouded that heart; over, the sharp presence of want; over, all illness and pain; over, the ingratitude that darkened that life—*past, gone!*

And when the coffin rests upon the brink of the grave, when the Priest utters the words of the benediction of the Church, as the last sound dies away amid the echoes of the quiet city of the dead, and your body is lowered into its mother earth, oh! can you not, *even now*, in fancy hear the sand and gravel as they fall upon your coffin-lid; and hear in spirit those impressive words of the Holy Ghost: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works follow them?"

Mothers! do not these reflections upon the last moments of a wife and mother, who faithfully bore her part in life, touch your hearts to their very depths? Do they not tell you how sweet and precious that death must be?

Look in spirit at the Cross, whose shadow will one day fall upon your grave; and although years have passed since you were laid therein, behold how your children still visit, and adorn that little mound with

fragrant tokens of fond filial love. Ah, yes! they still cherish, in sweet remembrance, that example which encouraged them to lead a truly Catholic life.

Pray devoutly, and every day, to St. Ann, as the special patroness of a happy death, even more especially for those in your state of life. Say daily, in her honor, until the next conference, one Ave Maria, to beg her assistance in perpetually remembering your last hour, and that she may obtain for you from God the grace of a happy death.

If the remembrance of it constantly remains before your mind, and you spend every day as if it were the last of your life; no doubt I have the right to say of you: "Blessed art thou amongst the living, and blessed thou wilt be once amongst the dead." Amen!



## CONFERENCE XXXV.

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### ELIZABETH,

THE WIFE AND MOTHER BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF  
GOD.

THUS far I have considered with you the married women of the Old Law, who, by their virtues, were typical of Mary, in whom every one of these virtues shone forth as in a mirror, in all their perfection, for your special instruction. Only one of these Scripture heroines did not hold the rank of a married woman—the daughter of Jephthé. But she deserves a particular mention among those selected as types of the Mother of God, because she was the only one of all the daughters of Eve in the Old Testament who was not permitted to marry. She remained a virgin, that a vow of her father might be fulfilled; and, therefore, in a special manner, became a prototype of Mary, the Queen of heaven, who chose the state of virginity of her own free will.

I told you yesterday that finishing the series of my conferences of three years, I had reviewed the example of the married women of the Law, to which praise is given in Holy Writ. Now I am anxious that you may keep with consistency all the resolutions you

have made. I said nothing can strengthen our will more than the remembrance of those truths of faith which refer to the end of an earthly life, and to our destiny in approaching eternity. In my last conference I recommended to you a continual remembrance of approaching death.

To-day *I recommend to you a continual remembrance of approaching judgment.*

I will glance at Elizabeth, the Mother of the Precursor of Jesus Christ, and the first who, in her salutation to Mary, acknowledged the dignity of her maternity as Mother of the Son of God.

*Christian mother! her example should admonish you to prepare the way of the Lord in the hearts of your family; what you certainly will do if you continually hear in spirit "the last dread trumpet's awful sound," calling upon the dead to arise and come to judgment.*

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"Whosoever will confess me on earth, I will also confess him before my Father who is in Heaven, and His angels."

These are the words of Christ Himself. The remembrance of the last judgment is certainly calculated to inspire us with feelings of the deepest awe. St. Paul himself exclaims: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, who found 'wickedness in the angels,' and for it meted out to them a fearful and eternal punishment."

St. Peter says: "And if the just man scarcely is saved, where shall the sinner appear?" If every thing which the Holy Scriptures relate in regard to that last judgment, which is to come upon the world, has so great an effect upon every faithful heart, that of a good wife and mother will certainly be moved thereby in a more than ordinary degree, and thus those for whom she is bound to care for, will by it also be benefited; for, as has been frequently indicated in the course of these Conferences, her life exercises a great influence for good or evil upon the lives of her husband and children.

Let us consider, first, the call of the trumpet, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment," and the assurance of the Lord: "And then he shall send His Angels with a trumpet, and they shall separate the good from the wicked, placing the good at the right hand, the bad at the left."

Surely the feelings which must arise within us as we reflect on the happy reunion of the good at the last day can scarcely be described. Oh! in what glory they will arise from the dead, for "the just shall shine like the sun," as we are told by Christ Himself.

We read in the Book of Genesis of the great consolation which filled the heart of Jacob when he embraced his son Joseph, although, being stricken with blindness, he could not behold his face. "Now I am willing to die," he exclaimed, "since I can once more

embrace you as my son, and press you to my paternal heart.”

How overjoyed would he have been could he have looked upon his son dressed in his robes of royal grandeur.

It will be different on the day of judgment. When the Angels of God fulfill the divine command, and place the millions and millions of human beings in accordance with their merits at the right hand or the left, what joy it will be for a whole family,—mother, father and children,—after their painful separation by death, to be reunited for all eternity in heaven!

I know well that anxiety for the welfare and salvation of husband and children have entailed upon the faithful wife and mother many and painful sacrifices, but she will be more than repaid for them all when she beholds the cross, all glorious with a brilliant light, appear in the heavens. The words of Christ: “And then they will see the Son of man coming with great power and majesty” are verified—for the judgment begins.

A supernatural light will illumine the heart of all mankind, and your whole interior will be revealed.

Oh, faithful, pious wife and mother! On earth you were, perhaps, a silent sufferer. God alone knew all that you endured without a murmur, while surrounded by your family, for you offered your griefs to Him, and thought no more of them. Now, behold! there suddenly flash before you and the entire world, luminous and bright, the merits gained by

every trial offered up for the deliverance and sanctification of those for whose salvation you labored day and night. Then, too, all those good works which you performed upon earth for love of God and your neighbor will shine gloriously before you, not only to your surprise and exultation, but for your glorification before all the Angels and Saints !

And not alone those good works which you have *actually* performed, but, as I have already told you in the course of these Conferences, all the good you have done in leading your husband to the practice of a virtuous life, and bringing up your children in the fear of the Lord, will have won for you many a glorious gem for your heavenly crown and apparel.

Every thing, also, which you ever have accomplished through zeal in practicing works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, towards your neighbor, of which you thought so little that it had long ago faded from your memory, will become gloriously manifest to the whole world, and weigh down your merits as they rest in the scale of divine justice.

With what triumphant joy you will then cry out : " O Lord ! did I do, think, speak, and suffer all this ? Did I do this all for love of Thee ? " " Yea, verily, these are the merits thou hast gained during life ; enter into the kingdom which My Father has prepared for thee from the beginning of the world . "

Happy mother ! calling to your husband and children, you will say : " Come with me, let us haste to the kingdom of eternal delight, never more to feel

sorrow, or want, or separation, or the pain of death, where amid exultation and joy we will rejoice forever in God."

This joy will be increased in the heart by *contrast*; by the thought of the terror and woe which will overwhelm those wretched creatures, such wives and mothers especially, who, having been faithless in the fulfillment of their duties as wives and mothers, must arise from the dead, and stand "with empty and guilty hands" before the Judge.

When such an unfortunate lost soul confronts her husband and children upon the last dread day, how terrible will it be! She, through her negligence and bad example, has been the wretched cause of their eternal damnation! And as the final sentence of the Lord and Judge is passed, they, as so many millstones, will drag this sinful, despairing mother *down, down*, into the deep abyss of hell!

What terror will overwhelm the faithless mother on the Resurrection day, when her children, hideous and horrible, approach; and in tones which ring with hell's eternal discord, cry out to her: "You are our mother; you bore us, and, then, oh! nameless cruelty, *you* plunged our souls in fire which never will be quenched." "Oh! what horrid monsters are these! Can it be that you are mine?" "Yes; we are yours." "These bodies now so horrible and frightful we received from you, who never taught us to follow the example of those who now arise before us in such celestial glory. You cared more to please the world

than God ; you lived after the manner of the children of the world in pride and sensual delights, and *we*—yes, *we*—walked in *your* footsteps. We sought to gratify every sinful inclination of the heart ; in name, Catholics ; in life, children of the world and darkness ; and now the devils draw us together with you to the left hand of our avenging Judge.”

While upon earth, no doubt this mother thought that her life was good enough, and that she fulfilled her maternal duties well enough. But now, when the light of the Lord flashes through every conscience, she beholds—and the entire world with her—how she, first during her engagement, and then in her married life, lived in a state of sin, and trampled upon the means of reconciliation offered her by a merciful God, by making sacrilegious confessions.

She recognizes now how apathetic she was in trying to win her husband from the path of sin, and lead him to a life of Christian zeal.

And her terror deepens into the most agonizing horror and despair, when now all her children come forward to the judgment-seat of Christ, and in accusing tones cry out : “ Most just Judge ! just are all your sentences ! *We are damned* ; but here stands she, our cursed mother. If this monster, who calls herself our mother, had been faithful in fulfilling her duties towards us, we would have been saved, and would now be ranked among the saints. Now we are lost ; throw her to the bottom of hell ! ”

And should the mother seek to excuse herself, and

say: "How can you thus accuse me?" her children, in loud and terrible tones, will demand from God her eternal condemnation, and say to her: "Dare you indeed defend yourself?" Behold, your conscience revealed before God and the whole world.

"You did not require us to pray; you offered up no prayer yourself; but instead, curses were ever on your lips, so that we, alas! learned from you to blaspheme.

"No proper religious instruction did we ever receive; for, while unable to impart it yourself, you failed to procure it from other sources. Through your fault we neglected to go ahead; nay, you never did send us to the Catholic school, but to a school of the infidels, to save some dollars to spend them foolishly; never did you teach us to love to go to Church; never did you provide for us books wherein we could learn to give an account of our faith, and foster piety in our hearts.

"Ah! no; dangerous amusements, worldly-minded associates, and books wherein faith and morality found no place, were the paths by which you led us here.

"You frowned not when we remained alone with persons of the other sex; you prevented us from marrying good Christians, and chose for us worthless or vicious men, because they were *rich*; and *to you alone* we owe our wretched fate to burn in hell forever; to you we owe our eternal damnation and endless woe! Just Judge! sentence *her* to dwell forever amid flames and darkness, and horror without end!"

Then, ah! then, come the terrible words: "Depart,



depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels;" and Christ will say to the good Angels: "Bind them together in bundles, mother and children, and cast them into eternal fire."

What, think you, will be the greatest torment of a mother in those devouring flames? The terrible pain of that fire which can never be quenched? Ah! no; the curses of her husband and children, which will pierce her heart forever like fiery darts.

God forbid that any one should have the misfortune of standing at Christ's left hand,—of hearing from His divine lips that terrible "Depart." Therefore, let not a day pass without thinking, with St. Jerome, and having in spirit the sound of the trumpet of that judgment: "Dead! rise up, and come to the judgment!"

May the thought serve as a constant reminder of your duties as wife and mother, and urge you to fulfill them, and then God will be merciful to you on that dread day when you "arise and come to judgment."

Invoke St. Ann, and, until the next conference, say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the grace to examine your conscience each day in such a manner as if you would already stand before His judgment-seat at the last day. If you heed this advice, then, indeed, "Blessed will you be amongst women on earth, and on the day of the last judgment." Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXVI.

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### ST. ANN.

WITH St. Ann closes the circle of the venerable women to whom Holy Scripture awards a prominent place in the books of the Old Testament, and who, in the varied events of their lives, are worthy types of Mary, the *Mirror* of Justice, wherein you may behold the portrait of those virtues, the practice of which is especially necessary for you, as wives and mothers, to fulfill the obligations imposed upon those in your state of life.

St. Ann was the one chosen to be mother of the Mother of Grace, the one only mother who bore under her heart a child conceived without the stain of original sin; and since Mary, according to the teachings of the fathers and doctors of the Church, had, even in her mother's womb, the full use of reason, we can easily imagine in what an ever-increasing measure she obtained for St. Ann, her mother, from God new graces, that she might grow in every virtue as was most fitting for the mother of the Queen of Saints and Angels.

If I say of St. Joseph that, as foster-father of Christ, he arrived at such an exalted degree of grace as was

fitting for the representative of the Eternal Father, the same is true of St. Ann, as the mother of her whom the Church herself styles Mirror of Justice!

St. Ann is generally represented with Mary, as a child, by her side, and holding the Holy Scriptures in token of her great solicitude in fulfilling her duty towards this Child of Grace from her earliest youth.

Thus should a mother care for the religious education of her children, and be especially mindful to have them thoroughly instructed in those truths of faith to which I will direct your attention to-day.

She should impress it upon them to consider them so deeply as to have them, during their whole lives, ever present before their eyes, and then all will be well as to the zeal with which they will open their hearts for the reception of active *graces*, and, through good *works*, render their eternal salvation secure.

*Therefore, O mothers! teach your children with especial pains the Christian multiplication table, by which you will, with them also, one day have to give an account of your whole lives before the judgment-seat of God, and get your recompensation in heaven.*

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Those truths of our Holy Faith which should penetrate our hearts most deeply with the vital importance of living only for God and the great affair of salvation, are as follows: There is only one God and *Creator*, one *Redeemer*, one *soul*, one *Church*, one *life*, one *death*, one *judgment*, one *eternity*. *Either—Or.*

Either to be forever *blessed*, or to burn in *torture* that will never, never end!

*One God.* Mother, lead your child, although still in its tender infancy, to that point, that, when you recite with your family the Angelical Salutation, or pray before and after meals, it will make the sign of the Cross, fold its little hands, and look towards heaven with love.

Pray yourself in its presence, and always with the most profound reverence. Never utter the name of God in a light and trifling manner; much less ever let it hear you profane your lips with a curse.

The smallest children, even, are impressed by the fervent devotion of a mother at prayer, and feel urged to imitate her example.

As your children advance to maturer years, you can the more easily instill into their hearts the maxim: "All for the greater glory of God."

Endeavor to impart to them a clear understanding of the truth, that we are only created to honor God and to fulfill His most Holy Will, as was so beautifully exemplified in the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, who so emphatically styled herself the "Handmaid of the Lord."

Happy, indeed, will be that mother who beholds her children thoroughly penetrated with this salutary fear of the Lord. As soon as they are a little more advanced in age try to awake in their hearts the devotion to Jesus, our Redeemer, and to Mary, His Blessed Mother. Have a Crucifix in the room of

your children, and an amiable picture of the Blessed Virgin. Point out to them, devoutly, and look even before the babies at them, and then at heaven, and instruct them, as soon as they are capable, to pronounce the two sweet names of Jesus and Mary.

*One soul.* Mother, let not even the earliest years of your children glide by without your having taught them to form a just appreciation of the price of their souls.

They are immortal spirits, created according to the image of God, and redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Often and earnestly, then, remind them of those words of terrible moment enunciated by Christ our Lord: "*What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*"

It is well known what an impression these words, when spoken by St. Ignatius, made upon the ardent soul of St. Francis Xavier; and may *your* children, long after they have been deprived of your maternal care by death, remember still the impression made upon them by words of similar import from your lips.

You should often say to them: "My dear little ones, you have but one soul; that soul *saved*, all is gained; that soul *lost*, all is lost forever.

Admonish them to consider well the nothingness of all that the world, the flesh, and the devil can place before the eyes of man, to tempt him to prefer the creature to the Creator, and to lure him away from God.

Often remind them of the truth: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to serve God and keep

His commandments." Instruct them, therefore, to avoid, with constant care, not only sin itself, but the faintest shadow of sin; and, to aid them in this, they should, at the earliest possible age, be instructed as to the manner of making a good confession.

If you implanted in their hearts this abiding horror of sin, O mother, you have indeed brought your children up for heaven, where they will one day dwell in never-ending bliss.

*One Church.* The Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Suffer no opportunity to pass of reminding your children of the happiness they enjoy in belonging to the one true Church of Christ. This will aid in awakening and strengthening the Catholic spirit within them, so that, if they are thrown in contact with men who are worldly-minded and without religion, it will be a safeguard against their growing cold and indifferent therein.

*One life.* Be untiring in your care to teach your children a proper appreciation of that treasure whose value is infinite—*time*—as the essential requisite to earn merits for eternal life.

Tell them how important it is to make the "good intention," immediately on awakening in the morning, "All for God." Beware, lest they contract a habit of frittering away this precious time in idle visits, gambling, or a perpetual round of amusements; for you will be happier far, if, by early forming your children to *industrious habits*, you enable them to combat victoriously in the battle of life.

Be especially zealous in your efforts that they, through this "good intention," by a careful fulfillment of the duties called forth by their state of life, may transform them into brilliant gems of merits for that bright crown which awaits them in heaven.

But for this, you must have them *thoroughly* instructed in their religion; and, above all, fail not to provide for them such books as will render valuable assistance in this regard, as I have already repeatedly admonished you during the course of these Conferences.

Encourage them to have frequent recourse to the sources through which, as children of the one true Church, all graces flow to us. These are prayer, holy mass, divine service, spiritual reading, frequent confession and holy communion. If your children need no admonition, or require no command to practice prayer—if they love to be present at the services of the Church, and find their greatest delight in the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments, then you are blessed indeed—you have brought them up for heaven. But to produce this happy result you must, by your own zealous, fervent life of true piety, be to your family a living example of Christian virtue.

*One death.* It is appointed for all men once to die. Nothing is more certain for us in the future than death, which each flying moment brings nearer and nearer—and upon this death depends the eternity which follows.

Then, seize every opportunity to impress vividly

upon the hearts of your children the certainty and rapid approach of that moment which will wrest from man every thing, the brightest and fairest, that earth can give, and in return promise him—what? Ah, that can only be answered by reminding you that as man has lived, so will he die.

Accustom your children to visit the cemetery from time to time; and when the hour comes for them to seek repose, bid them think, ere they close their eyes in sleep, of death, the coffin and the grave, and thus be ready each moment to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of their whole lives. Happy, indeed, is the mother who succeeds in implanting the thought of death in the hearts of those intrusted to her maternal care, while they are still young, and easily influenced, so that they will spend each day, and perform each act, as if God would summon them from life before the morrow's dawn. Is it so with you? Then, you need not tremble at the thought of death and judgment, for you have reared your children for heaven.

Admonish them repeatedly to think of their last hour, and to live as they would wish to have lived, when death appears. Delay not, for to-morrow you may be no more.

*One judgment.* Remind your children, also, that during their examination of conscience each night, they should reflect upon what Christ has revealed to us of the coming judgment and its awful terrors.

First in regard to the particular judgment, say



to them, "Oh! my children, what think, you, will be your fate when your souls, leaving their mortal bodies, will instantly appear before the eternal Judge?"

And on that dreadful day when God shall judge the world by fire, and all the nations of the earth being assembled, the Judge of the living and the dead will cry to you in presence of the multitudes, "Give an account of thy every thought, desire and word; of every act; of every omission; of every example; of every scandal given by thee." You will then be placed *either* at the *right* hand *or* at the *left*. Take your choice now for yourselves and for your children, Then it would be too late. Can you grasp the awful solemnity of the thought and this duty? If so, you have indeed placed them on the way to heaven, and the sweetest joy will be yours when the Angels of God will, on the last day, lead you, with all your family, happily reunited, into the ranks of God's glorious Saints.

Mother, there are two little words which I would most earnestly advise you often to place before your children, and bid them reflect thereon,—the words *either, or*; there is no third chance.

Say to them: My children, *either* you will one day hear from the lips of Christ those welcome words: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; *or*, you will be doomed to listen to the dread

decree: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

Children! *either* we will ascend together to the kingdom of light; *or*, descend to that drear abode where darkness and everlasting horror dwell.

*Either* we will be led to the company of Saints and Angels to share their glory and beatitude forever; *or*, be hurled to the fathomless depths of hell, with Satan and his infernal hosts, to endure those terrible pains for which there is no name.

*Either* we will, in tones of sweetest music, forever chant the *Alleluia* of the blessed; *or*, in fierce and bitter anguish shriek aloud: "Woe to us, we suffer torments in these flames, and pains which have no end."

Do you understand now what is required, to bring up your children, according to your duty, as *Catholic mothers*?

Alas! that so many mothers unceasingly speak to their children only of earthly possessions and honors, of worldly pleasures and enjoyment, and seem to think it of little moment whether they are thoroughly penetrated with the importance of the great affair of salvation, as I have illustrated it to you.

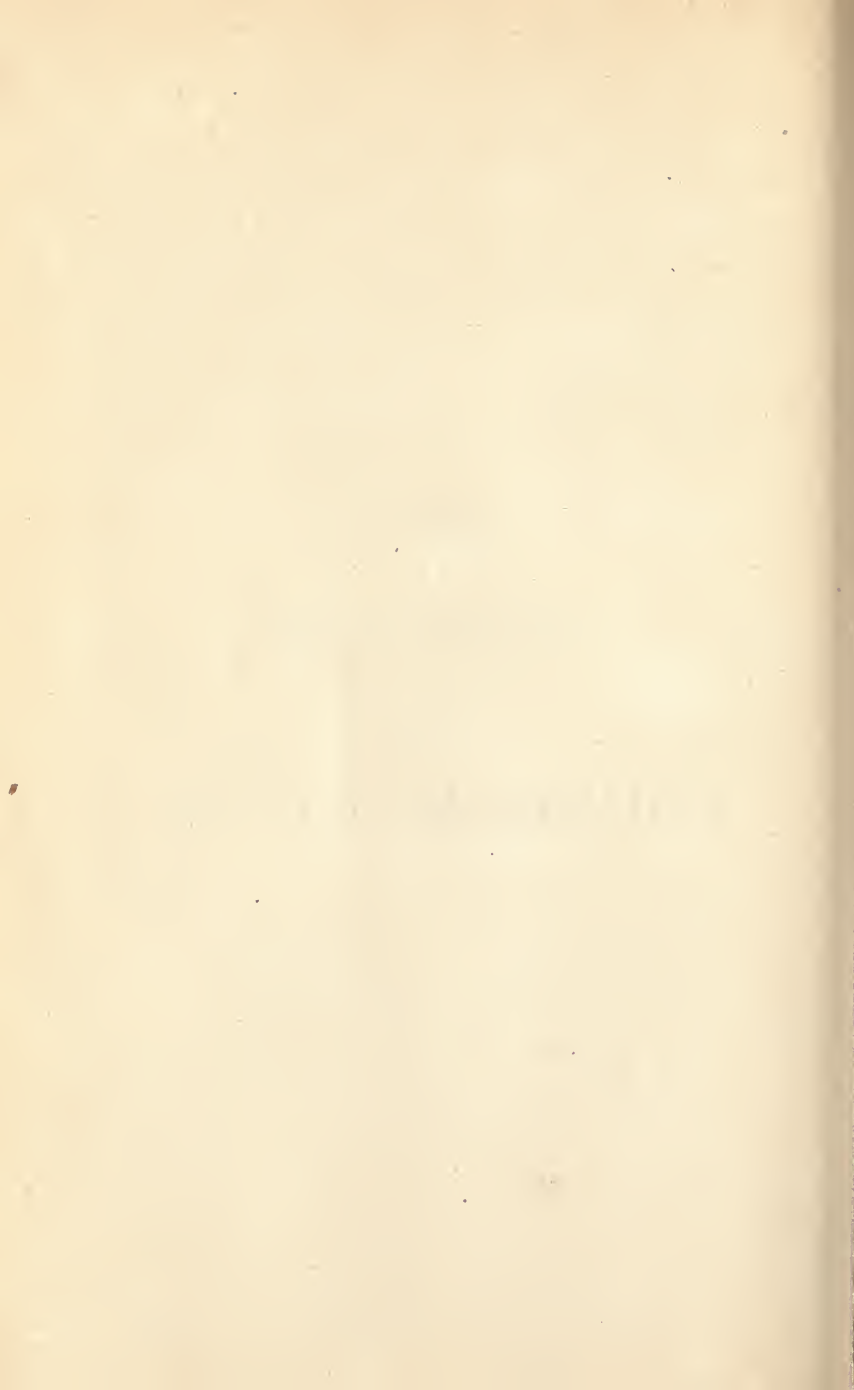
And now, holy St. Ann! manifest thyself to all these wives and mothers a powerful and gracious protectress, and obtain for them the grace that, while living amid the cares and troubles of this world, they may so assist their husbands and children, that they will one day embrace them as children of the one great family

of God, together with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in that bright home where parting is unknown.

Wives and mothers! in the course of these conferences, I have, in order, placed before you the principal duties of your state of life. Live in accordance with what I have told you; and the salutation with which the angel of God greeted the Immaculate Virgin Mary, will be merited also by you: "Blessed art thou amongst women." Amen!



XXXVI  
CONFERENCES  
FOR  
YOUNG MAIDENS.



MARY,  
THE MOTHER OF GOOD  
COUNSEL.





## CONFERENCE I.

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### THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

(*The emblem of a sinless heart.*)

**I**F we are in earnest about serving God in the manner He requires of us, it is necessary not only to *make* resolutions with a firm will, and sincerity of purpose, but to *keep* them as well.

Of these resolutions, the first which should receive our attention is the determination never to offend God, but to serve Him with hearts free from sin; therefore, Christian maiden, listen to the admonition of your Queen and Mother:

*“My daughter, do you wish to be a servant of Jesus, and to appear pleasing to Him and to me, His Mother? Try, then, to preserve your innocence, to serve Him zealously, and never wound His Sacred Heart by sin.”*

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The counsel which the blessed Mother thus gives her children, bears reference to the first *prerogative* through which *Mary* was distinguished, even in entering upon existence above the entire human race, viz. ; her *Immaculate Conception*. This is certainly a prerogative which, among all the children of men, no

one but the Blessed Virgin ever enjoyed. She, as the one chosen from all eternity to be the Mother of God, was so highly favored by Him as to be permitted to enter into existence entirely free from the stain of original *sin*.

It was fitting, indeed, that she, the *Mother* of the Incarnate *Son* of God, the Queen of Angels, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Eve of the New Law, should never have had even a shadow of sin to dim the resplendent whiteness of her soul,—should never have been even for one moment the slave of Satan, but should, in her very conception, *crush* his infernal head.

In this regard, it is true, Mary can not be a *model* for us; since God, after our first parents' sin, in His all-wise decrees, has not so ordained our entrance into existence, but we, nevertheless, rejoice as souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and children of His Holy Church, in one prerogative which is intimately connected with that of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*We are baptized*, and baptism effaced from our souls every stain of *sin*. Soon after our birth—nay, perhaps, even upon the very day we entered the world—the happiness of becoming children of God was imparted to us; and now arises the question, whether we preserve *unstained* the white robe of our baptismal innocence, by abstaining from every willful sin until the end of life?

That this may, indeed, take place, we must hate sin with that abhorrence which filled the heart of

Mary, and not only remove the smallest fault from our souls, but resolutely turn away from every *occasion* which might cause us to offend God. If, notwithstanding all this care, the hour of temptation comes, and the old serpent approaches, we must not delay a single moment, but crush him effectually and at once.

That our hearts may be so disposed it is necessary to consider the motives which not only filled the sweet heart of Mary with the most utter abhorrence towards sin, but even made St. Catherine of Sienna cry out: "Rather would I plunge myself voluntarily into the flames of hell's eternal fire, than offend my God by one entirely willful sin." What thoughts filled the mind of this great Saint, that her heart was penetrated with such an intense horror for sin? I will tell you. She pondered well upon the dreadful evil which sin is in itself, and the fearful consequences it entails, not for time alone, but for that eternity which is approaching every second, and which will never, never end. Indeed, the very idea of sin should demonstrate its intrinsic deformity and hideousness to the great dread and horror of every human soul.

For what is sin? It is a willful *transgression* of the *divine law*. It is consequently a contempt of God, a kind of derision of the Supreme Being, a realization of the words of Holy Writ. "I will not serve," says the sinner; "I will not obey."

Nay, more; in his heart practically he says: "There is no God;" for he wishes that it were so, that he might,

with deliberate malice, indulge to commit sin, and rejoice in those words of the sinner in Holy Scripture: "I have sinned, and what harm did befall me?"

Therefore he would prefer that there was no God. Oh, what *malice!* What contempt of the Lord of the Universe is here evinced!

Christian maiden, if you ponder well thereupon, can you refrain from crying out in terror: "O God! preserve me from the evil and the *crime* of sin!"

But that is not all. Dwell for a few moments upon the base *ingratitude* which characterizes the sinner. Every quality of soul and body which man possesses he has received from God as a gift. With every breath he draws, this munificent Creator multiplies these gifts, in the order of nature, as his *Creator* and *Preserver*, and to a much greater extent, in the order of grace, as his *Redeemer*.

Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, sacrificed for every human soul His entire life. He suffered for every one His bitter passion and ignominious death to save them from eternal woe.

Let me ask: If He had done this for Lucifer and the rebel angels who followed in his train, would they have ever committed another sin? I think not!

Consider this well, O Christian maiden! and say within yourself: "O my God! assist me that in Thy sight I may not act with more ingratitude than a devil."

Oh! how ungrateful is the sinner, especially when he has the happiness to belong to the one true

Church, the only Church wherein salvation can be found!

You can realize that ingratitude when you think of the many precious graces so constantly bestowed upon the Catholic by God, through the religious instruction he receives, the use of the Holy Sacraments, the assistance of prayer, the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, and the Real Presence of Christ on our Altar in the Blessed Sacrament.

And all these graces he abuses with a recklessness which almost surpasses belief.

Either by neglect, or by an unworthy reception of the Sacraments, he tramples upon them, and is often enough guilty of sin which a heathen would blush to commit.

What malice, and, at the same time, what incredible *blindness* if he, as a well instructed Christian, thinks of the *temporal* and *eternal consequences* of sin!

Of what happiness does he not deprive himself when casting aside the peace and quiet of an approving conscience, he accepts, instead, a remorse of conscience which will eat into his very heart, and embitter every thing which he might otherwise innocently enjoy in life.

And then, what terror must overwhelm him when, in the silent hours of the night, the awakened conscience reminds him of his last hour, the horror of dying an enemy of God, and his appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ.

What an eternity of pain will await him after he

has heard that terrible sentence from the lips of his Lord and Judge : “ Depart from me into everlasting fire, where there is hunger and gnashing of teeth, lamentations and groaning—eternal, never-ending despair.

Christian maiden, think daily of all these truths, particularly in the hour of *temptation*, and examine yourself, seriously, as to whether, in your heart, is not, perhaps, resting the serpent of mortal sin.

It may come from your not having confessed every thing with perfect candor and sincere repentance ; or, perhaps, after confession you were not careful in avoiding the *occasions* of sin, *especially* in regard to the treasure of virginal *purity*. Perhaps you have remained alone with persons of the other sex, and thus ventured into the proximate danger of being tempted yourself, or of being the occasion of such temptations to others.

You surely know that every sin of impurity is a *grievous* offense. It is necessary, therefore, to combat with perfect resoluteness against temptations to this sin and its occasions. Fly from them, and *conquer*, even at the cost of all that life holds dear.

In this month—January—the Church celebrates the feast of *St. Genevieve*. She was born in the year 422, at Paris, in France, and, while yet a child, her every act was surrounded with such a splendor of piety in the service of God that when St. Germain saw her he said to her parents, “ Happy parents, upon whom God has bestowed so favored a child ! ” The next

day he spoke to Genevieve herself, and encouraged the little maiden to dedicate herself entirely to the service of God, and to have no other bridegroom than Jesus Christ. Genevieve replied that this had always been the ardent desire of her heart.

Thereupon the Holy Bishop placed round her neck a little cross, as a souvenir, to remind her of this resolution, which Genevieve faithfully kept until her blessed death.

Christian maiden! you, also, would do well to wear round your neck a little cross, as a perpetual reminder of the resolution you have made to-day, viz: That whatever may be the state of life which, in accordance with the will of God, you eventually embrace, you are firmly determined to serve not the *world*, but *Him*, from this moment until He calls you to Himself, with the zeal and fidelity of St. Genevieve, that original spouse of Christ. .

Until the next Conference, say daily, in honor of St. Genevieve, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the grace to avoid every shadow of sin, and give yourself wholly and entirely to the service of the Lord, and to live only for that end for which you were created, viz: to fulfill His most holy will on earth in that state of life to which He will call you, in imitation of Mary, and to die in God's Holy Grace. Amen!

## CONFERENCE II.

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### THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

(*The Mirror of Justice*)

IN the preceding Conference we considered the good counsel of Mary, the Queen of Virgins: "If you wish to be my child, the condition, above all others necessary, is that you are a child of God, and in the state of sanctifying grace," which is the case only when your heart is free from every *grievous sin*.

With this condition is naturally connected the admonition to avoid, with the utmost care, every occasion of sin, *especially* of those sins for which there is no venial transgression, but where every thing, when really consented to, is a mortal sin.

With this, however, you should not be satisfied, for the Immaculate Virgin thus further admonishes you:

*"My daughter, if you desire to be pleasing in My sight—if you wish me to guide and protect you, then you must not only avoid grievous sin, but as far as possible, venial sins also, and every willful imperfection."*

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It is certainly, generally speaking, impossible for man to presume himself entirely free from sin; and



not only has it never been so without the aid of a very special grace, but very few have been thus favored.

The Holy Fathers are of the opinion that St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, and a small number of Saints, whom God was pleased so to favor, thus walked before the Lord. "Even the just man," says Holy Scripture, "falls seven times."

We frequently hear it quoted "seven times *a day*;" that, however, is not in the Scripture, it is simply said "seven times," which implies often. It frequently happens, indeed, that even the Christian who is zealously striving to walk in the way of perfection gives, in some degree, way to temptations of venial sin, but, in an instant reflecting and summoning up courage, he resists heroically, and valiantly conquers the temptation which gradually ceases to annoy him—and why? Because Satan perceives that the soul derives only advantage from the combat by becoming more and more strengthened in virtue, and gaining a store of merits which in heaven will be transformed into brilliant gems to glitter in his crown.

Even a holy person may, for example, momentarily give way to *impatience*, or evince a disposition the reverse of charitable, or give utterance to words which sting the listener; but she quickly perceives and subdues the agitation. Thus her mind soon is soothed to its accustomed tranquil state, and she becomes again "meek and humble of heart." One may be surprised into a word of *exaggeration* and untruth, which is at

once regretted, and not allowed to occur again. Such defects tend to humble the soul, and consequently are not without a good effect.

If the Blessed Virgin encourages you to live so that you, as her own true child, merit that tribute of praise: "Thou art all fair, and in thee there is no spot," it is only an evidence that you must not regard venial sins and imperfections as light and indifferent things; but be aware that, after mortal sin, there is nothing for which you should entertain so great a detestation and horror. And, indeed, with the exception of mortal sin, the mind can conceive no *greater* evil.

If you have a clear perception of this, you will surely make it your aim to avoid, as far as you possibly can, whatever is for you an occasion of temptation to offend God.

That this horror in regard to venial sin and imperfection may, indeed, possess your heart, consider often and seriously, what an evil venial sin is with regard to God, and also in relation to yourself; not for time alone, but also for eternity.

*First*, with regard to *God*, venial sin is a transgression of the divine law, therefore an outrage against the Lord of heaven and earth. It is an object of the divine *displeasure*, and hence a much greater evil than any other exterior evil of which the mind can think; since there is an infinite glorification due to God, and even the slightest deviation from serving Him, or fulfilling His Holy Will, is so deeply tinged with malice that all the temporal punishment of this world, apart

from the merits of Christ, would not suffice before God for the expiation of even *one* venial fault. From this you will understand that it is not, nor has it ever been, permitted to commit such a sin, even though, by so transgressing the divine law, the offender would come into the possession of wealth in such abundance that he could brighten the lives of all the poor and afflicted in the whole world; or would be enabled to preach to all heathen nations, to impart to them the light of faith, and to convert innumerable souls to join the Church.

Do you understand, now, what an enormous evil venial sin is with regard to God?

Think, too, of the great evil it is in relation to *yourself*. If you truly love God, and endeavor, as His child, to become daily more pleasing in His sight, what can you more ardently desire than that you should become daily more perfect, daily more like unto Him? Yet, by the commission of venial sin, the beauty of that "Temple of God," your soul, is defaced, and in the sight of the Lord it is more disfigured than your body could possibly be, even though it would be the victim of cancer, leprosy, or any other loathsome disease.

Even more repulsive and odious than vermin upon a human body, are venial sins and imperfections upon an immortal soul.

Oh! then, free yourself from what will render you so displeasing in the sight of God.

And if you, as Mary's devoted child, wish to advance each day in virtue, what more can you desire

than an increase of grace? Yet if you easily yield to the tempter, and think but little of committing venial sins, you go farther away from God, and He withdraws from you.

Your prayer no longer comes from the depths of a fervent heart, for divine love waxes cold within you, temptations multiply and grow more serious. Each day beholds you an object of greater displeasure to God, and you live in imminent danger of committing mortal sin.

Could Christ have expressed Himself with greater emphasis and solemnity in confirmation of this, than when in the Apocalypse He says through St. John: "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will vomit thee out of My mouth." Woe to you should this terrible fate be yours!

That great sinners have been sincerely converted to God, and spent the remainder of their lives in His devoted service, experience often teaches. Witness St. Augustine! But we very seldom find that those who lose their fervor, grow *tepid*, and fall into grievous sin after having once led pious lives, rise again to a new life of grace, and strive after Christian perfection with their former zeal. And even though a girl who stains her soul carelessly with numberless venial sins may possibly die in the grace of God, what a painful death-bed will be hers!

And, if saved, what sufferings must she not endure in Purgatory! What a loss of merits for eternal life! What a decrease of celestial glory!

Christian maiden! meditate often upon these various points, and consider how all those holy virgins, whom the Church places on her altars for the veneration of the faithful, knew no other aim than to preserve their hearts pure from the smallest willful *venial* fault, the most trivial *imperfection*.

The Church celebrates this month, on the sixth of February, the feast of the holy virgin and martyr *St. Agatha*, who was born during the reign of the tyrant Decius, in Palermo. She was a most zealous Christian, a lady of noble birth, distinguished alike by her beauty and virtue.

Quintinianus, the judge or consul of the emperor, made the mightiest efforts to induce her to give up her faith, and his first vile plan was to tempt her to sin against holy purity.

As his base designs irrevocably failed, he employed the most fearful tortures to shake her heroic constancy, but in vain. He caused her teeth to be broken out, ordered her to be stretched on the rack, and her breasts to be torn away with red-hot iron hooks. But, amid these dreadful torments, the noble virgin cried out: "Neither persecution nor torture will ever be able to separate me from my God." Oh! there was evinced the horror for sin which filled her heart; for nothing but sin can separate us from our divine Lord.

Then when *St. Agatha* was taken back to prison, and the narrow walls of her cell once more inclosed her, she poured forth her soul in prayer, saying: "O

Lord! from my infant years Thou hast vouchsafed to protect me from overmuch love towards this vain world, and in all my agony and pain didst lend Thy gracious aid. Oh! now receive my soul!" With these words she gave back her pure spirit to Him Whom she so ardently loved.

During this month, then, say daily, one Ave Maria, in honor of St. Agatha, that she may obtain for you from God the grace to confess with perfect sincerity; and from this moment to resolve rather to suffer martyrdom itself than to offend Him by any mortal sin, and beg her aid also in keeping your soul more and more free from *willful* venial sin and imperfections. Amen!

## CONFERENCE III.

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### THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

NEXT to the birth of our Saviour Himself, no nativity of a child caused to mankind more joy and exultation than that of the Blessed Virgin. In order to please her you must not be content with merely avoiding every stain of sin, or imperfection. No! you must try to do every thing solely and entirely to serve God, and to promote His greater honor and glory.

That this disposition may *show* forth in your actions, nothing can be more effective than to watch and keep always in mind to do all for the greater glory of God.

Make this intention in the early morning; often renew it through the day; and, before you close your eyes in sleep, make it again with new vigor, that you may be enabled to begin your duties on the following day. Listen, therefore, to the admonition of Mary, the mother of good counsel.

*My child, if you desire to serve God with an ever-growing zeal, then follow my advice, and, during the day renew often, at certain times, the good intention—“All for Jesus;—in union with Jesus, for the greater honor of God.”*

To form a just idea of the importance of making this good intention each morning, and often renewing it throughout the day, in order to multiply our good works in the service of God, to understand the Divine will, and perfectly to fulfill it, we need only consider the influence which its frequent repetition has upon recognizing this *Divine will* in a clear and distinct manner, and complying with it as perfectly and faithfully as we can.

The first requisite for fulfilling the "Divine will," is that *interior* disposition of our heart, which leads us, when we undertake any good work, to lay aside all motives of caprice, self-love, or desire to advance our own interests,—to act solely in union with that most Holy Will of God, and to guard against the illusion which would fain persuade us, that we are working for God, whereas we are only satisfying our own *self-will*.

No doubt a servant of God, who, upon first awaking in the morning; and also when about to enter upon the duties of the day, earnestly makes the good intention, to try to know and to do the most Holy Will of God, shall be protected from that frequent illusion born of *self-love*, which would make us believe that we have only the honor and glory of God in view, while, so far from this being true, we are working, heart and soul, for our own *interests*.

There is, in reality, but one impediment in the way of our fulfilling the Divine Will, and that is an excessive love and care for *our own dear self*.



It is this solicitude which prompts that question so often, and seriously asked: "What temporal advantage will I gain by doing this—or acting so to-day? Will it tend to my honor, or enhance the value of my property? Will it afford me any pleasure?" How seldom do we hear it asked: "How will this promote the honor and glory of God, or increase my merits for the other world? Ah, how different would it be if the thought—"God sees me; All for God," would wholly and entirely pervade our every act.

"All for God." This thought also wonderfully increases and intensifies, in our hearts, the desire to multiply, as far as we can, the *number* of our good works, and to perform them in as *perfect* a manner as possible.

This frequent renewal of the good intention naturally, and of itself, leads to *recollection* of spirit, whereby we—because our thoughts are constantly fixed upon God—walk ever in His presence and consequently those *inspirations*, by which the Holy Spirit so often seeks to touch our wayward hearts, are heard more easily and more readily received.

Yes; we respond to the inspiration of that Divine Spirit which invites and encourages us not only to seize every opportunity to perform good works, but even to go *in quest* of the same.

The good intention causes the light in the lamp of our hearts to burn with such a brilliant glow, that we can easily recognize the Holy Will of God in the dark pathway of life, and it increases within us the wish to

do that which we discover to be this Divine Will, in a manner as *perfect* as possible.

All that we undertake for the honor of God, enables us to accomplish it without dust of sin clinging thereto; and, above all, assists us to so purify our daily actions that they will become, by regularly practicing the *particular examen*, more and more free from the imperfections which would otherwise dim their luster.

These are: impatience, vanity, inconstancy, eagerness, disorder, want of charity, and inattention to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

If the sincere desire, "All for God" and for His greater honor, would continually pervade our hearts, there would be *little* danger that such blemishes would stain the dress of our daily deeds,—those good works which St. John compares to fine linens, glittering and white.

But it is the *renewal* of the good intention which exercises the most powerful influence in verifying within us this strength and unction of zeal in *prayer*; for, as an inflammable substance, when placed near a fire, becomes quickly ignited, so nothing acts more speedily in enkindling and increasing Divine *love* in our hearts than frequent *remembrance* of God and His holy presence.

In like manner, as the fire of Divine love burns with a more ardent glow through union with God, we attain nearer and nearer to the state of *abiding* prayer, which is indicated by the admonition of Christ to "pray always."

Happy those with whom such is the case. They will be filled with a supernatural strength to conquer every impediment which may arise to prevent their progress in virtue, and can truly exclaim: "With my God I shall step over a wall."

Although it may happen that we are prevented from performing some good work for the honor of God, before *Him*, our intention is invested with the same value as the work itself; nay, it even may be that our resignation in humbly submitting to the designs of Providence is more pleasing yet in His sight, than the act fulfilled itself would be.

The divine virtues of faith, hope, charity, and of humility, beautifully illumine this submission to the will of God.

Christian maiden! place your hand on your heart and question your soul upon this point. How is it with you in this regard? When your eyes first unclose to the light of another day, do you at once think of making the good *intention*—"All for God"—and uniting your will to His? Do you resolve to accept every thing that may befall you during the day precisely as He wills?

Be your state of life what it may, say to yourself: "Not for earthly reward will I act thus, but only because it is the most holy will of God."

Alas! how small is the number of Christians who thus begin the day! Too often the heart of man is wholly taken up with things of the world—with thoughts of earthly gain. Too often the principle

which guides the many is: "How can I derive the greatest temporal gain from this?"

O Christian maiden! what weighty and powerful motives are here placed before you, that you, with a zeal that knows no backward step, may resolve to review daily this good *intention*, and never let the first moments of the new-born day glide by without offering all your thoughts, words, desires and actions, in union with the intention of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Renew this often during the day, and, when you seek repose at night, make once more the good intention that your every thought and action may gain for you new merits for eternity.

The Church in this month of *March*, celebrates the Feast of *St. Catherine of Bologna*. The story of her life, which has been handed down to us, is for every Christian virgin a mirror in whose clear reflex she may behold all that I have here enumerated to be performed by one, who is thoroughly in earnest to free her heart from every stain of sin and imperfection, and to make daily progress in virtue.

St. Catherine was the daughter of noble and wealthy parents; and, when only eleven years of age, she was, according to the earnest wish of her father, sent to remain for some time with the Princess of Ferrara.

Amid all the allurements of a brilliant court, however, she preserved her heart free from every worldly desire; and immediately after the death of her father she retired to a convent, and with her whole soul

gave herself up to love and serve God as Her chosen spouse.

There she was favored with a vision in which she was permitted to behold the awful terrors of the last Judgment, and from that moment she made even more fervent resolutions to resist every temptation, and banish it at once. These resolutions could not fail to lead to a Holy life, which she happily terminated with the sweet names of Jesus and Mary upon her lips.

She expired in the year 1163 in the peace of the Lord, who summoned her to dwell in never-ending bliss.

During this month say daily, in honor of St. Catherine, one Ave Maria, that through the continual remembrance of the *judgments* of the Lord, you may preserve your soul free from the slightest *willful* sin or fault, and renew often the good *intention*: "All for the greater honor of God." To aid you in this, fail not to make daily the *particular examen* on your besetting sin. Amen!

## CONFERENCE IV.

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### THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

THE first question generally asked, after the birth of a child is, "What name will we give it?" So when that angelic messenger, radiant with heavenly glory, appeared to Mary to announce the Incarnation of the Son of God, he mentioned that Holy Name which had been already bestowed in Heaven, ere yet it was given to the Divine Child, at His circumcision, on earth.

From this let us learn that, after having glanced at the Immaculate Virgin in her birth, we should think of her holy *Name*, and not only reflect upon the sweet consolation which should fill our hearts as often as it passes our lips, but consider the encouragement it contains for all, who devoutly seek refuge in her protection, to become truly zealous in the service of God, and strengthened to walk in the footsteps of this glorious model.

Even the literal meaning of the name *Mary* is, in this regard, full of a brilliant significance. Mary, according to the Hebrew interpretation, means *Princess*, *Lady*, and also *Star* of the sea, as St. Bernard remarks.

Each one of these significations should teach and encourage us, as children of the Church, to honor Mary with the most profound veneration, to pay her the most devoted homage, and to fly to her protection with unbounded confidence as do little children to a tender mother.

Therefore, Christian maiden, listen to and ponder well upon the counsel which your mother, the Queen of Virgins, gives you from her celestial throne :

*“ My daughter, in every necessity of soul and body, hasten to me ; invoke me, and never fail to utter my name with love and confidence. Then all will be well with you, and with ever-growing fervor you will securely walk the narrow road which leads to heavenly bliss.”*

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Child of Mary! Virgin of Christ! consider the first signification of the name of your Immaculate model, “ *Princess,*” “ *Lady.*” Such indeed she is, and O! in what an eminent degree. First, as Mother of Jesus, where is she to-day? Ah, you know full well!

Direct your gaze to Heaven! There, Queen of that fair realm, she sits by her Divine Son, enthroned at His right hand. Yes, in a degree of glory to which may be justly applied those words with which St. Paul speaks of the exaltation of Christ in His celestial home : “ He gave her a name before which every knee should bend, of all creatures in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth.”

Jesus, her Son, is certainly the Lord and Ruler of

the world, which owes its creation to Him ; and Mary, as its mistress, is *Queen* of the Universe. Queen of the angelic choirs, and of all the crowned Saints in Heaven ! Oh ! what reverence should penetrate our inmost hearts as often as we utter her sweet, her holy *Name*, and reflect upon the dignity, glory and majesty which surround this heavenly Queen !

As *Mother of Jesus* she can bountifully extend her gracious aid ; for is she not almighty, as it were, through Christ Himself, the almighty one, who honors her, and is ready to fulfill her every wish ?

This sentiment of profound *respect* for Mary, which, whenever our thoughts dwell upon her, springs up within us, is the first characteristic of that true veneration for her which conduces to the sanctification of our lives.

The most important question, therefore, is not how many rosaries you recite, whether you say some special prayer or litanies in her honor, wear the scapular, or belong to some one of her Sodalties ; *but what kind of veneration penetrates your hearts* towards Mary ?

Three times a day does the Church remind us how important it is to approach Mary with sentiments of the deepest reverence, to look up to her, to fly to her, and implore her with that perfect confidence which knows no fear.

Question your own soul, O maiden ! as to the manner in which you respond to this call to say the *Angelus* at the warning peal of the Church bell. Is it with real heartfelt devotion ? And if it so happen



that, being in service, your time is constantly occupied, and yet you find time in the midst of your daily work to recite this prayer, it speaks very well for your piety and devotion.

It seems that Satan looks with special envy upon this homage which, three times a day, all Christendom unites, by means of the Angelus Domini in offering at Mary's shrine, but there is indeed no other prayer which is omitted with so little scruple, or recited with such tepidity and distraction.

Let it be your care, therefore, to make reparation to the Blessed Virgin for this want of respect, and, with special devotion and reverence, recite the Angelus. She will, to reward you for it, lend a more gracious ear to your other prayers.

This applies to whatever prayers we say in honor of Mary during the day.

Oh, could you realize how important it is to guard against a mere habitual recitation, where the heart is open to every distraction, and the lips pronounce the words with unseemly *haste*!

Still greater influence upon the sanctification of our lives, in a zealous *imitation* of the *virtues* of Mary, has the second signification of her name: "Star of the Sea." "But we are Pilgrims before the Lord," as St. Peter admonishes us. Our lives upon earth, as they tend towards heaven, may be compared to a voyage across the *ocean* of time to the port of eternity.

During the passage many perils and imminent

dangers arise whithersoever we turn ; yet, be they ever so many or great, we may steer safely amid the tempests which threaten to destroy our frail barque, if we look up to Mary, the Star of the Ocean, invoke her, and take refuge with her.

A name is also indicative of the prerogatives which distinguishes the person who bears it above others, and therefore it is not only a reminder of the individual, but marks also his *power, fame, knowledge, deeds, virtues, and qualities* of heart.

Of all the qualities and prerogatives of Mary, we are reminded by the Church, in every salutation which she places on the lips of her children in the litany of the Blessed Virgin.

They are as brilliant and luminous rays which surround her most holy name, and are most fitting, indeed, to inspire you with unlimited confidence in her powerful intercession.

Listen to what St. Bernard so urgently recommends in his homilies on the Annunciation, when he exclaims : “ If in your temporal affairs *troubles* arise, and, like tumultuous waves, impetuously rush on, and threaten to lay waste and overwhelm every thing within their path, be not discouraged ; glance up to heaven, call upon the help of Christians.”

Look at the Star, and call upon Mary !

If your troubles arise from the violent *temptations* with which Satan would fain ensnare your soul, do not despond, but invoke her who will never fail. Look at the Star, and call upon Mary !

As the barque of your soul is tossed on the sea of life, what are those waves which dash wildly around? Whether they be the waves of pride or presumption, of avarice, hatred or anger, hasten to the Mother of Mercy, the refuge of sinners. Look at the Star, and call upon Mary!

In the *desolation* and dryness which you may often experience at prayer, invoke her, the Comfortress of the afflicted, the most prudent Virgin, the singular vessel of devotion! Under her patronage and protection you can not err, you never can perish. Therefore, keep ever on your lips the sweet, the virtuous *name* of *Mary*.

If it be so with you, then, indeed, it will be for you a pledge that you will worthily and meritoriously wear your baptismal name, as you are called on by your state of life. Like Mary's true child, imitating her virtues with the fervor of the Saints, especially of those who as Virgins served the Lord.

In this month the Church celebrates the Feast of *St. Mechtilde*. She was a sister of *St. Gertrude*. These two chosen handmaids of the Lord entered the Benedictine Order, and each attained the dignity of Abbess—*St. Mechtilde* at *Diessen*, in *Bavaria*. Both were favored with revelations of which I will here relate two as being especially instructive and edifying.

*St. Mechtilde* once begged our Lord to teach her how she should particularly honor the Blessed Virgin during Advent; in reply to which Christ said to her,

“ Salute the virginal heart of My mother, because it was the *purest* which ever beat on earth.

“ She it was who, of all the human race, first made the vow of virginity. Salute it, because it was the most humble and patient heart, and more than all other hearts, was consumed with *love* towards God and man.”

On the feast of the Epiphany Christ appeared to her, and said: “ My daughter, I herewith endow you with the *gold* of my divine *love*, the *frankincense* of my prayer, and the *myrrh* of my *passion*. These gifts I unconditionally give you as your own, that you may again give them to Me.” Invoke St. Mechtilde during this month, and say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, begging her to obtain for you from Jesus the grace to do and to *suffer* every thing for His dear love, in union with the affections of His most sweet heart, and that of Mary. Amen!

## CONFERENCE V.

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### MARY IS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE.

AFTER Mary had reached her *third* year, there came to her the Word of the Lord, which He had spoken through the lips of her royal ancestor David, when in prophetic spirit he cried out: "Listen, O daughter! and look and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and the house of thy father." Mary even then, a child of three years, heard in spirit the call of the Holy Ghost, which was spoken by Solomon in the "Canticle of Canticles:" "Arise, my beloved, my spouse;" and, as divine tradition informs us, she knew that her parents had made a vow, that if the Lord would graciously vouchsafe to hear their prayers, and bless them with a child, they would dedicate it to His holy service in the *Temple*; she reminded them of what they had vowed.

As we learn from the Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius. there was connected with the Temple at Jerusalem a building where virgins, dedicated to the Lord, dwelt before they were married, remaining in little cells set apart for their use.

There they devoted themselves to prayer; the principle object of their petitions being the advent of the

promised Messiah. Thus far Josephus, and his statement is confirmed by St. John Damascene, St. Gregory of Nicomedia, and other Holy Fathers.

Mary reminded her parents of this vow, since she, as Queen of Prophets, was well aware of it, having had the full use of reason from the very moment of her entrance into the world. St. Joachim and St. Ann were perfectly willing to immediately fulfill their vow, and conducted the Holy Child to Jerusalem, while whole choirs of angelic spirits followed her, chanting in her praise those words of the "Canticle of Canticles:" "How beautiful are thy steps, O Prince's daughter!"

When this holy family arrived at the Temple *Mary* turned, fell on her knees before her parents, asked for their blessing, kissed their hands, and, then, ascending the fifteen steps of the sanctified edifice, prostrated herself, and offered herself to the Lord, as a *Virgin* forever.

The Priest who received her was, as St. Germain informs us, St. Zachary

After her entrance, the lofty temple resounded with canticles of praise which the Priests intoned with the little *Virgin*, and soon the solemn ceremony of her dedication to the Lord was ended.

The example which *Mary* in this event of her life places before you, should admonish you to listen to the counsel which she bestows upon you to-day:

*"My daughter, if you are in earnest in your desire to follow me in the way of Christian perfection, then open*

*your heart attentively to the inspirations of grace, that you may evermore readily understand what is your true vocation, and what God requires of you therein, that you may become always more pleasing in His sight."*

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That it may indeed be so, you must entertain the highest esteem for the *inspirations* of grace, listen to them, receive them into your heart, and co-operate with them. Consider seriously, therefore, the following truths which are intimately connected with the wish and care to live as a true *child* of Mary.

As I said, you must, *above all*, have a very high appreciation of the heavenly gift of *grace*.

A little reflection upon the immense good which is contained in the essence of grace, will render it easy for you to entertain the highest esteem for it.

You have already learned in your catechism that a difference exists between the *sanctifying* grace and the *actual* grace.

What is meant by *sanctifying* grace? It is the *supernatural* union of our soul with God, by which we become His children; and from that moment, what a privilege is ours! We have a right to heaven; we are entitled even to enjoy the beatific vision of God, and to be happy in His possession for all eternity. But for this it is necessary to fulfill the most holy will of the Lord here on earth, that we may prove ourselves worthy of this union with Him; and, to this end He assists us by *actual* grace.

This is the *enlightening* of our intellect, by which we perceive what God requires of us. It is at the same time the *strengthening* of the *will*, through which we not only sincerely wish to comply with it, *but are enabled to do so*, and can prove by our actions that we really desire nothing but to fulfill the divine will.

Every thing, therefore, depends upon this—that the *heart* be disposed to make use of this influence of grace, which Holy Scripture compares to the voice of God speaking to the heart of man, and that we hold the precious treasure of grace in the highest esteem.

Through the inspiration of active grace the Lord knocks at the door of our hearts, as Jesus Himself tells us in the Apocalypse: “Behold, I stand at the door of thy heart and knock. Open it unto Me.”

How is it when we are looking forward to the arrival of a distinguished guest? Do we not stand at the door and await his coming with the greatest eagerness?

How great should be our solicitude to recognize the gracious voice of God! how frequently should we think: “He Who approaches me through this inspiration is *God Himself!*”

Yes! God Himself speaks to us. If a King or an Emperor were to address us, or the Sovereign Pontiff deign to speak some words to us, what earnest attention would we pay! And daily experience proves that more deference will be paid to the words of a person



in high station, if it is known that an immense good for us depends upon them, and the manner in which we make use of them; or the immense loss we are threatened with, if we neglect them.

This is precisely the case with the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. They certainly make known to us the most holy will of God, that we may do what He requires of us; for He will reward nothing but what is done according to His Most Divine Will. And not only this, but if we have recognized what is required of us by the Lord, and how we should walk, in whatever state of life He has pointed out to us, we must perform all our works therein in a manner at once pleasing to God, and meritorious for ourselves.

Now St. Paul asserts in the most explicit terms, that of ourselves, unassisted by divine grace, we are not even capable to pronounce meritoriously the name of Jesus,

Christ expresses Himself still more positively on this point: "Without Me, you can do nothing." "I am the vine, you are the branches."

Very often does our Lord connect the bestowal of grace with these, His "Inspirations," which fall like seed into our hearts, and, if they take root, will grow up into a towering tree of merits.

But here every thing depends upon this: That nothing is considered trivial; for, the various graces being connected one with another, like links in a chain, if one link break the whole chain may fall useless to the ground.

What an important consideration, and one which we find verified in a remarkable degree in the Lives of the Saints!

Many events transpired with them which were apparently of very little moment, and yet *grace* was imparted with each, and thus one grace was linked with another, and through all of them the Saints became so holy, and did such wonderful things for God.

Let us now see what are the chief *impediments* that prevent man from understanding the inspirations of grace—at least perfectly—and why they do so often produce but little effect.

Let us glance at the life of Mary in the temple, and there will be found a satisfactory answer to the question, as I will clearly illustrate in my next conference.

The Church in this month, May, commemorates the Festival of St. *Walburga*, so renowned for her sanctity, and sister of those two servants of God, St. Willibald Bishop of Eichstädt, and St. Wunnibald Bishop of Hildesheim. She was also, on her mother's side, related to St. Boniface, the great Apostle of Germany.

When she, together with *thirty* devoted companions, braved the perils of a voyage across the ocean that in a strangers' land they might, by the sanctity of their lives and uninterrupted prayer, obtain from heaven the grace of conversion for the German nation to the true faith, and thus aid her brothers and their heroic assistants, there arose a fearful storm.

The sky became overcast, the waves rose in wild tumult around them, and all were overwhelmed with

terror. But, behold, when there seemed to be no escape from instantaneous death, St. Walburga, full of confidence in Mary, courageously ascended the deck of the vessel, and commanded the tempest to cease.

In a moment the raging waters grew calm and peaceable, and the voyage happily terminating, she landed with her companions at Mainz, and entered the convent which her brother had founded in Hildesheim. She was elected abbess, and governed the community for seventeen years, when God called her to Himself, and she died in the peace of the Lord.

Later on her holy remains were translated to Eichstädt, and for over eight hundred years there has issued from her grave a miracoulous oil which has, throughout all that time, effected the most wonderful cures.

During this month say daily, in honor of St. Walburga, one Ave Maria, and beg that, through her intercession, the remembrance of Mary may become, through your devotion to the Blessed Virgin, for you a never-failing source whence you will obtain the oil of grace, to relieve you in every corporal and spiritual ill. Amen!

## CONFERENCE VI.

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### MARY

WITHIN THE PRECINCTS OF THE TEMPLE.

IN the last conference we beheld how Mary, following the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, went, at the tender age of three years, with her parents to Jerusalem, where she was to remain during her childhood to fit her for a holy calling in life. There was, within the precincts of the temple, a place wherein subsequently the Christians of Jerusalem erected an Oratory, and, later on, those warriors who had served with Godfrey de Bouillon built a Church, under the patronage of the Mother of God, whose glittering spire, as it flashed in the golden sunlight, was often adorned by the valiant templars, with trophies of victory wrested in some hard-won battles with the Turks.

Here formerly stood, within the walls of the ancient temple, that place assigned to those virgins who, dedicated to the Lord, were to lead a life of particular devotion; and hither Zachary led the Child so recently offered to God.

A number of pious widows watched over the education, and directed the conduct of the young girls.

Mary submitted with the deepest *humility* and most perfect *obedience* to all they required and was, through

her piety, industry and general virtue, a brilliant example to the rest.

Through St. Jerome we are favored with some account of her hidden life, and the manner in which she passed the years of her retirement. From early dawn until nine o'clock she poured forth her fervent prayers to God; from nine until three the time was devoted to domestic duties, after which she again prayed, previous to partaking of some nourishment. Towards evening some time was also devoted to prayer, before retiring to a rest which lasted but for a few brief hours; for shortly after midnight she arose from sleep and watched in prayer. Such was the life of Mary! A life of *solitude*, *work* and *prayer*—a life passed in continual *longing* for the advent of the "Redeemer" of the world. Only God knows with what inspirations of grace, as year after year went by in that holy solitude, the heart of the Blessed Virgin was illumined and sanctified.

The *Presentation* of Mary in the temple afforded me an occasion to speak to you of the dispositions with which we should listen to the *Inspirations* of the Holy Ghost if we really feel an earnest desire to recognize and fulfill the Most Holy will of God. Her hidden life within the sacred walls of the Temple furnishes me with the opportunity of pointing out those circumstances which especially stand in the way of the Christian maiden, who does not pay sufficient attention to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost! Listen to the counsel of your mother, the Queen of Virgins:

“ My daughter, if you desire to feel the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and profit by them, you must, with the greatest fervor and fidelity, practice silence and prayer, and cherish a love of solitude, that to you also may be applied the tribute awarded by the Church to me : “ Singular vessel of devotion.”

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In solitude and silence Mary dwelt in the temple. From this we can learn what principally stifles the voice of God in the heart and prevents it from being heard.

It is, first, that passion for *society*, that love of being always in the *company* of others, that universal fondness for being frequently present at some vain *amusement*, and indulging in idle *talk* while there.

I ask you, therefore, in the holy presence of Mary, Do you love solitude?—silence? Alas, this is not a characteristic of girls. Question your own heart on this point. Recall the experience of your life, and you will acknowledge that even as a *little* girl you loved to *chatter*, and that even yet you are conscious of the same inclination.

Yes, this passion for *talking* and *laughing* and *amusing* themselves with their young companions the live-long day, is so universal, even among the smallest girls, that it is not to be wondered at, if but little heed is paid to the inspirations of the Divine Spirit—to the voice of grace which fain would make itself heard in their hearts. Mary lived in *solitude* and *retirement*. No thought of noisy amusements ever en-

tered her mind. Oh! what a contrast to the life of by far the greater number of young girls, whose sole thought seems to be to fritter away their precious time with others, who are similarly inclined; and, as soon as they are old enough to do so, to go out evening after evening, visiting their friends or acquaintances in the neighborhood.

Yes; they wish to participate in one constant round of *amusement*, which nothing is permitted to interrupt, for neither the blessed day of the Lord, nor the Festivals of His faithful servants, the Saints, are held sacred by them, and even the holy seasons of Lent and Advent find some of them still devotees of the ball, the theater and the dance. Oh! when life is filled up with such vain pleasures and sensual delights *how* can the heart be disposed to *hear* readily the soft whispers of divine grace, and to *comply* with the will of the Lord?

Mary devoted whole hours to prayer, as St. Jerome tells us.

Alas! there are many girls who even let the *morning* hours pass without a thought of prayer, or at least consider that they have acquitted themselves of their duty in this regard by a few carelessly recited "Our Fathers."

They do not pray *during* the day; perhaps they never think of uttering a few words of grace before and after *meals*. They do not walk in the *presence* of God, by lifting their hearts to Heaven through pious ejaculations, as the day glides by, and very often they

close their eyes in *sleep* without a thought of evening prayer.

Ah! what wonder, then, that they do not perceive the inspirations of grace, for certainly the Holy Ghost says: "I will lead them into *solitude*, and there speak to their hearts." The importance of a sincere love of *prayer*, and an unwavering fidelity in the practice thereof, can not be too highly estimated.

If it can be said, *truthfully* of a young girl, that she loves to pray, that she is truly pious, and finds her greatest satisfaction in acts of devotion, what will be naturally inferred? That she is thoroughly good and virtuous, all that could be desired of a daughter and sister; while her example is such as might well be followed by many of those of her age in the congregation, who are acquainted with her.

That you may acquire a proper and lasting appreciation of *prayer*, often reflect upon what an essential, consolatory and glorious act it is. Prayer is the *elevation* of the soul to God, whereby you approach God.

Prayer is a *conversation* with God Himself—you are permitted to speak with Him; and, if you pray aright, His answer will penetrate your heart.

Prayer is a *union* with God, and permits us, while yet on earth, to anticipate the joys of Heaven.

Think of all that we read on this subject, in the Lives of the Saints; and, in the same way, what has been, and what *is*, the life of the Angels since their creation, and at this very moment? I say *prayer*.



Holy! holy! holy! Thus it resounds throughout the vast expanse of Heaven, from the whole celestial choir—a never-ending strain—thus will it sound for all eternity.

Prayer is the life of Mary in heaven.

And united to the person of the Son of God upon earth, and now in heaven and on earth at the same time through His Presence in the most Blessed Sacrament. What is the life of Christ? Prayer.

But, above all, it is the means instituted by God to obtain from Him *graces* to fulfill His holy will in our vocation in the kingdom of His Church.

Then do you practice and *love* prayer more than every other occupation on earth, and all will be well with you; for, with Mary, you will be quick to perceive the *inspirations* of grace, and, with her, you will execute them with zeal.

The Blessed Virgin had also her appointed hours for *work*. But while thus engaged her heart remained united to God, and His voice was never unheeded, for she prayed before and after her tasks, and often through fervent ejaculations, but still more by her ardent sighs for the coming of the Divine Redeemer.

What a lesson for you! Christ certainly has already come to consummate the work of redemption, but we know that He will come *again* to demand from us an account of how we have received its fruits, and profited by them in our hearts. If we have availed ourselves of them, He will lead us to the

throne of Glory which He has prepared for us in heaven.

If we do not keep our thoughts fixed upon the world with its riches and pleasures, but meditate often upon heaven and that eternity which draws nearer every moment, oh, surely the Lord will not withhold from us His divine inspirations; and we, perceiving them, will act in accordance therewith.

During this month the feast of the Holy Virgin St. *Luitgard* is celebrated by the Church. She was born at Tongres, in Brabant, and was for awhile so penetrated with the spirit of the world, as even to cherish a friendship which threatened to be most dangerous to her soul.

But Jesus Christ appearing to her, admonished and warned her, to relinquish an intimacy so perilous to her eternal salvation, and henceforward to live only for Him.

Luitgard accepted the divine counsel, took it deeply to heart, and obeyed it without delay.

From that moment she opened her heart without reserve to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, who urged her to constant *self-denial* and penitential works, that she might rapidly advance in Christian perfection.

Among the many inspirations to perform acts of heroic virtue with which she was favored, she was prompted to fast seven years for the conversion of sinners; and after that period had elapsed she again fasted with the same intention twice seven years.

Christian maiden! until the next conference say daily, in honor of St. Luitgard, one Ave Maria, to beg that you may be strengthened to place no impediment to the *inspirations* of grace in your heart, and be, therefore, faithfully devoted to the exercise of prayer and self-abnegation. Amen.

## CONFERENCE VII.

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### MARY.

#### HER CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

AFTER the presentation of Mary in the temple, her venerable parents returned to their home; nevertheless, they still enjoyed the consolation of occasionally seeing their child at once so holy and so tenderly loved.

St. Joachim, as a faithful Israelite, went, in accordance with the law of Moses, on all great festival days, to Jerusalem, and St. Ann accompanied him thither.

Even as Ann, the mother of Samuel, never failed on such occasions to see her son, whom she had dedicated to the Lord in Sila; so, undoubtedly, St. Joachim and St. Ann were, for several years, permitted from time to time to behold their beloved child in Jerusalem, and to remain with her for some days, until the Lord called them to Himself. Christian maiden, listen to the good counsel which Mary will give you to-day:

*“ My daughter, if you wish to be pleasing to me, to earn the most abundant merits before God, and to obtain His gracious benediction, be zealous in complying with the Fourth Commandment, ‘Honor thy father*

*and thy mother;’ manifest the same disposition of heart which therein I have always shown.”*

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As we are informed by tradition, St. Joachim died when the Blessed Virgin was but nine years old. He became ill, and, feeling his end approach, most ardently longed to behold his beloved, holy little daughter, and bless her once more before he died, for he felt that her most amiable presence would give him strength to yield up his spirit to God.

Mary came, and as she drew near the bed on which her dying father lay, as Saints, enlightened from above, relate to us, and he was placing his hand in paternal benediction upon her head, God permitted him to behold in her the chosen Mother of the Messiah and Saviour of the world Whom they had so long and so ardently desired. It was certainly fitting that to him also should be given the privilege enjoyed by holy Simeon, who at once recognized the Infant Jesus as the Saviour of the world.

Under this aspect the beatitude of the pre-elected Virgin cast its splendor over the venerable face of him, who was about to sleep in the Lord, as blessed father of the future Mother of the Son of God, Who was to become Man!

His holy spouse, St. Ann, the mother of Mary, did not long survive him, and she, too, as she lay upon her death-bed, blessed with the most tender maternal love her only daughter, the child of many prayers, and sweetly passed away in the death of the just.

Mary in tears and grief bent over the beloved face of her mother now growing pale and cold, and closed these eyes full of resignation to the Most Holy Will of God.

Mary was thus early deprived of her holy parents that her heart might be perfectly detached from every creature.

Accordingly she already stands forth while a child as a mirror for all, especially for you, young maidens, to place before your eyes the duties which, as children, you owe to your parents. Oh! take them deeply to heart!

These duties are: *Reverence, love, obedience, readiness* to serve, and *support* them and to *pray* for them.

Scarcely is there to be found another commandment announced by the Holy Ghost, through the Sacred Scripture, which is accompanied with such promises and threats as are attached to the fulfillment or neglect of the duties which children owe to their parents. "Honor thy parents," says Holy Writ. "Do it with word and deed, in all patience."

They are the representatives of God on earth, Who gave you existence and life through them. Honor them, therefore, interiorly in your heart; but also exteriorly as well by your deferential demeanor and respectful manner of speech, as by never-failing *politeness*, and *patient* bearing with their weakness. *Love* them with an affection which is at once sincere and cordial, active and faithful.

God himself has implanted this filial love in the hearts

of children, and the more justly do parents deserve it in proportion as they have patiently suffered and *labored* for their eternal and temporal weal.

Oh! how solicitous, therefore, should good children ever be lest they grieve the hearts of their parents, especially when advancing years in many respects render life weary for them.

Besides reverence and love children owe their parents obedience in every thing pertaining to the regulations of the house, and whatever elsewhere concerns their own conduct; an *obedience* manifested on the part of children, especially by the willingness, alacrity and fidelity with which they obey the slightest commands of their parents in all that is not sin, and through the humility with which they accept whatever counsel and *admonition* they deem proper to give. Children can surely find sufficient reason for this filial conduct if they consider that their parents, who are more experienced than they can possibly be, can better recognize what is more conducive to their temporal and eternal good.

“Children, obey your parents,” cries out St. Paul, “for that is pleasing to the Lord.”

Far otherwise would it be, however, if parents should require something which conscience could not permit; for then you would be obliged to reply with the Apostles: “We must obey God more than men.”

In regard to the *support* which children owe to their parents it is twofold, corporal and spiritual. *Corporal*, if they live to an advanced age, and, falling into

poverty, are no longer able to provide for themselves; but *spiritual* support is also due to the parents. Efforts must be made to enable them to assist frequently at Mass, to read spiritual books at home, frequently to receive the Holy Sacraments, and, above all, they must not be permitted to die without the assistance of the Priest of God.

And, *after* they have left the world, the good child will take care that the Holy Sacrifice of Mass is frequently offered up for them that their souls, being released from Purgatory, may enter soon the bliss of heaven to offer up before the throne of God their fervent prayers, that their children and children's children may also enter into the bliss of eternal life.

The great importance which the Lord attaches to the fulfillment of these duties towards parents is best shown by the blessings which he holds out as a reward for the fulfillment of the fourth commandment when he added to it the words: "That thy days may be long upon earth." And again we read in Ecclesiasticus: "Whosoever honors his father, his prayer will be heard; and whosoever honors his mother, is like one who gathers treasures." And again: "Honor thy parents, that the blessing of God may come upon thee, and His blessing may remain over thee until the end."

But what a terrible curse, on the other hand, is pronounced upon those children who are remiss in their filial duties! Solomon says: "The eye which despises his father and contemneth his mother, shall be



plucked out by ravens, and the young eagles shall devour it." And, according to the law of Moses: "Who-soever striketh or curseth father and mother, shall die the death."

With what earnest solicitude, therefore, should children watch themselves, lest they sin against their parents, And how is this most generally done?

Listen to my words, and let each one present here examine herself silently while I enumerate the various sins against the fourth commandment, and see if her conscience does not accuse her on one or another of these points.

Children sin against their parents when they *despise* them in their hearts, misconstrue their actions, and murmur against their just commands.

They sin against them by a rude and *disrespectful* demeanor, which is frequently to be observed even in very little girls. Children sin against them if they are *ashamed* of them before other people, either on account of their poverty, or because they are not highly educated.

They sin against the fourth commandment if they raise their *hand* against their parents, abuse them, and think ill of them.

They sin against it by neglecting to *relieve* the necessities of their parents, to clothe them in their poverty, or to do every thing in their power for their comfort, when God is pleased to visit them with illness.

Ah! yes; what complaints are often poured into the confessor's ear by heart-broken parents, in regard

to the heartless and cruel manner in which they are treated by unloving children!

But should it happen that parents are remiss in the fulfillment of their duties, that they do not walk in the path of virtue, and are even negligent in practicing their holy faith, then let the dutiful child be all the more earnest in her efforts to win them back to God, through the assistance of others, especially Priests, through books, and the encouragement which her own good example can not fail to give.

And when they have been summoned to render an account of their whole lives, do not forget them in your *prayers*, and often have the Holy Sacrifice offered during the year for their eternal repose.

To-day I will present for your imitation a virgin, whose festival the Church celebrates, in the month of July, the holy virgin and martyr *St. Margaret*.

She was born of heathen parents, but was so favored as to receive a Christian education; for her mother, dying when the little Margaret was very young, she was placed by her father under the care of a nurse, who proved to be a good and faithful Christian.

In the retirement of her home, the pious attendant failed not to avail herself of the opportunity afforded her to instruct her charge in the true faith. When she grew up to maidenhood she was baptized, and immediately resolved to be the spouse of Jesus Christ. Her father, learning all this, was transported with rage, and, ordering her to leave his presence, commanded

her to descend to the menial task of tending his flocks.

The work of persecution was consummated by the Prefect of Pisidia, who accidentally saw her, and demanded her in marriage, but all his persuasions to induce her to abandon the faith having proved vain, he sought to compel her obedience by the most cruel tortures, but she stood firm.

When, finally, the head of this young and tender virgin fell by the sword, the sweetest music floated on the air, and angel voices lovingly called out: "O Spouse of Christ! enter the communion of Saints, and receive the crown of glory!" Thus, amid the most fervent prayers she yielded up her pure soul to her heavenly Spouse.

During this month implore St. Margaret to intercede for you. Say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you grace to fulfill, with the greatest care, all the duties of a good child in regard to your parents, alive or dead. Amen!

## CONFERENCE VIII.

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MARY,

THE VIRGIN DEDICATED TO GOD.

DIVINE Providence had chosen Mary from among all others to be the Mother of the Son of God; and, therefore, the Spirit of the Lord, when she presented herself at the Temple to dedicate herself to His service, inspired her to offer herself to God as a *Virgin* forever. Divine Wisdom, however, ordained that she should be espoused, in order that Christ might enter the world without any suspicion being cast upon His Immaculate Mother, yet live in a state of virginity with her spouse and husband.

Christian maiden! let the counsel which you will receive from Mary to-day sink deeply into your heart.

*“My daughter, be extremely careful in your choice of a state of life. Act in accordance with the advice of your confessor, and fervently thank God if He gives you the grace and vocation to enter the religious state.”*

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That Mary might fulfill her vow of virginity, and yet appear in the eyes of the world as any other married woman, Providence failed not to provide the means.

God ordained that a youth, who also wished to preserve his virginal purity before the Lord, should be chosen from among all others, to be the spouse of the young and holy maiden, and pointed him out by a miraculous occurrence, which transpired when Mary had attained the age at which it was deemed proper for the Hebrew maiden to marry.

Years passed away, and when Mary was fifteen many a youth wished to be chosen as her spouse.

Each aspirant for her hand was given an olive branch, withered and dry, and he, in whose possession, the sterile rod should, by the blessing of God, blossom and put forth green leaves, was to be the favored one—the bridegroom of the Ever-Blessed Virgin.

When the day arrived, behold! the rod of Joseph, the son of Matthew, of the tribe of Jacob, was adorned with the most beautiful blossoms, and the prize was awarded to him.

Through this union the genealogy of Mary was placed in security.

Joseph was descended from the house of David; and, as the law prohibited the intermarriage of different tribes, so Mary was of the same descent as the spouse appointed for her by the Lord. But a brief space of time elapsed when her marriage took place, and she went with him to Nazareth, there to dwell as his virginal spouse.

The first part of what I have here related is intended to direct your thoughts to the choice of a state

of life, and to remind you of the sacred duty incumbent upon you to ponder deeply as to what calling the Lord wishes you to embrace.

Matrimony is a holy one, it is true; but, as the Church, in the Council of Trent, teaches and defines, virginity is an infinitely happier, infinitely more elevated, infinitely more holy, and one, in reference to which Christ Himself has said: "He, who can, let him understand it."

In regard to the dignity of marriage, the Christian must look upon it with veneration; nevertheless, virginity is so immeasurably superior that our Lord even compares it to the state of the "Angels" in Heaven: "They will neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but will be like the Angels of God." St. Paul, in a manner most clear and explicit, lays down the law to all Christendom upon this point, when he says: "He that marrieth doth well; but he that marrieth not, doth better;" and gives the reason in the following words: "She that is married thinketh on the things of the world, and how she may please her husband; but the unmarried woman thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in spirit and body."

The holy Fathers, in their writings, are unanimous in expressing the same opinion, and can scarcely find words to express adequately the glory and dignity of chastity. "Let us understand its glory," cries out St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, "its perfection is super-terrestrial;" and "its splendor is more brilliant than the sun," says St. Jerome; while St. Ephrem asserts that

“Both soul and body are perfumed by its most fragrant odor.” “Wonder not that virgins are compared to the Angels, because they are espoused to the Lord of Angels,” exclaims St. Ambrose.

Yes; and if we consider the subject more attentively, we will discover that, in some degree, the state of Virginity is even *more* to be admired than that of the Angels, for those pure spirits live only in conformity to their spiritual nature, while, on earth, all who enter the more perfect state do so of their own free *choice*, conquering *human* nature.

The Church, in the Council of Trent, has decided upon the excellence of this state, pronouncing the dogma in the following words: “Whosoever denies that the state of Virginity is more noble and blissful than that of marriage, let him be anathema.”

Yes, even in Nature may be found the most honorable testimony to the truth of this, and in favor of this sublime state.

Look up to the deep blue vault of Heaven, see the thousands of brilliant stars which fill the sky, and you will learn that each glittering gem stands separate and alone.

Look down into the depths of the globe, where gold and sparkling jewels lie, and you will see those precious treasures, each shining all alone. Nay, even the very elements are virginal, that is, unmixed in their nature. Rejoice, therefore, O maiden! if you feel the desire to embrace this perfect state, for, not to speak of its great dignity, it affords innumerable

*opportunities* to advance in the way of Christian sanctity; and to it, more than to any other state refer those words of Holy Writ, in the Book of Wisdom: "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and men."

St. Paul has already given the reason for this in the words before quoted: "For the virgin careth only for the things belonging to the Lord, that she may be holy in spirit and body,"—the state of virginity permitting her to walk undisturbed, in perfect recollection of spirit before God.

This condition is particularly conducive to the practice of *prayer*—"In spirit and in truth,"—and prayer is the source through which all graces flow to us, enabling us to do all things, and without which we can do nothing.

"I will lead thee into solitude, and speak to thy heart," says the Holy Ghost. It is easy for her who is unmarried to thus retire when she wills; but for the married woman, who lives continually surrounded by her family, it is difficult indeed.

The Virgin need care only for herself, while the wife and mother must constantly attend to her husband and children, and is thereby exposed to temptations without end.

She is tempted to anger and impatience, to neglect prayer, and to remain away from divine service. And then, living with her husband, she has many causes for anxiety; for he, perhaps, does not realize



the fond hopes she placed in him, but degenerates and falls into evil ways.

The same—and, indeed, in a greater degree—is true in regard to *children*, who are a never-ceasing cause of anxiety to a mother—not to speak of sickness which may often occur, of poverty which may embitter their lives, or of discord and strife with relations and friends.

Ah! yes; St. Paul is right when he tells you that if you marry you will have *tribulation* of the flesh.

In conclusion, I will repeat the opinion of St. Paul, and the decision of the Church herself: “It is more perfect and blessed to be alone than to marry.”

As often as I have occasion to witness the entrance into the Church of a joyous wedding party, and see the bride and groom approach the nuptial altar with every prospect of a bright and happy life, I think, as I look upon the former: “Ah! yes; to-day you are full of joy, and fancy that your future in this world is secure; but you will learn what it is to be a *married* woman.” A confessor has occasion to listen to their lamentations when hearing confessions.

Eve was the first to transgress the divine command, and bitterly have her successors, as married women, ever since had to atone for her fault.

From the scene of her former happiness,—the Garden of Eden,—the word of the Lord went forth to our first mother, that it should be so.

Oh! how different is it with the state of *Virginity*! What sublimity environs it! What happiness is to be

found therein, especially if therewith is connected a vocation to the *religious* life.

What joy for a young maiden to be called to enter a *convent!* She is provided for not only spiritually, but temporally as well, and she treads with assurance the path which leads to Heaven.

There a special crown awaits her, and all who have chosen the "*better part.*" There she will enjoy that wonderful bliss and glory upon which St. John dilates in the Apocalypse as surrounding the virginal Saints who, nearest to the throne of the Lamb, entone that canticle of joy which, among all the celestial choir, is theirs alone to sing.

Listen to the teaching of St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, and the Holy Fathers in general; they all speak in the highest terms of the exalted state of Virginity in the Church of God.

Besides, the greater number of your sex who have become Saints did not belong to the married state. Indeed, except the Martyrs, very few of those belonging to the married state are raised on the altars of the Church.

Therefore, consider well whether God has not destined you for that life so full of praise and glory, for this world and the next. Think well upon this important affair, and seek counsel with your confessor and spiritual director as to whether you have a vocation for the religious state.

I said that the greater number of Saints, belonging

to the female sex, were unmarried. I will go still further, and say that the most glorious and renowned of them gave up their lives to preserve the precious treasure of Virginity, and freely let their life-blood flow to prove their love for it.

In this month the Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Virgin and Martyr, *St. Susanna*. She was of noble birth, and was blessed with good and pious Christian parents, although it was at a time when the darkness of heathenism enshrouded the land. At that time the cruel Emperor Diocletian was in power, and determined to give Susanna in marriage to his co-regent, Maximus Galerius; but, with the consent of her virtuous father, the Holy Maiden preferred to become the virginal spouse of Christ, by martyrdom, than to attain to the most brilliant position through the renunciation of her faith, and of her Virginity.

Invoke St. Susanna during this month, and say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God grace to recognize your vocation, and strength to overcome every impediment which might present itself to your entering the religious life, should you be so happy as to be called to it. Amen!

## CONFERENCE IX.

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### THE PURITY OF MARY.

MARY, the *Virgin of virgins*, entered the married state without violating her vow of perpetual chastity; for she knew that St. Joseph, like herself, had vowed to dedicate himself to God in a similar manner.

That you, however, may have the right to call yourself her child, and to belong to the glorious train of virgins whom the Holy Ghost has eulogized as blessed, because they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and entone with Mary the hymn which none but virginal souls can sing in Heaven, then you must hasten to fulfill the counsel of their Queen :

*“My dear daughter, if I am to call you my child, you must be pleasing to Jesus and to me, Therefore, not only when in company with persons of the other sex must you watch with vigilant care to preserve intact your purity, but on all occasions you must look with horror on aught that could dim the luster of this angelic virtue.”*

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This is a most important counsel, and an admoni-

tion which can not be too forcibly impressed on your mind, since, alas ! many young girls can be found who, in various ways, either with themselves or in associating with those of their own sex, sin against holy purity, and, ere yet their earliest youth has passed, have permitted this terrible vice to take deep root in their hearts.

Habitual sinners as they become, their confessions are made merely through custom, or routine ; and, although, by these worthless confessions, the communions which follow are sacrilegious, they, forsooth, will nevertheless, be looked upon as virgins—sodalists of the Blessed Virgin,—children of Mary ! What a blindness !

This much-to-be-lamented state of affairs arises, it would seem, from ignorance of the fact that every sin against chastity is *mortal*, whether it be in thought, word, desire, or act,—whether it be committed alone or with another, even with a person of the same sex. Take the greatest care, therefore, to avoid every thing that wears the faintest semblance of this dreadful sin ; yes, even in your earliest youth. Therefore, in dressing in the morning you must already be careful not to uncover your person more than is absolutely necessary ; and, when it is necessary, you should close your eyes. And this regard for modesty must be even more particularly observed if others occupy the same room with you, although they are girls, and even your own sisters.

On no account must you permit others to touch

you immodestly, although in *play*; neither must you do so yourselves when alone, except it be for some necessary attention to the body.

You must also guard against that curiosity which would lead you to look at pictures of men or animals,—and, indeed, as far as it depends upon you, let the walls of your apartments, especially those of your own room, be adorned with none but pictures of a devotional character.

Be circumspect in your *speech*, that you may never give utterance to any thing contrary to modesty, nor permit others to say improper words in your presence.

As soon as you perceive a tendency in any of your companions, or in the remarks of any young girl, that her whole conversation turns upon wanton persons with whom she associates, and the places of amusement she frequents, it is time to withdraw from her acquaintance. And if a young girl perceives her companion to be very fond of pleasure and dress, and anxious to induce others to imitate her example, to sing profane songs, and the like, there is ample reason for avoiding all association with her.

It is necessary to be very guarded in company with girls who have clandestine association with persons of the other sex; for experience teaches that it is often even more dangerous to be intimate with them, than with young men, precisely because it is generally taken for granted, that there is less precaution required in the company of the former than with the latter.

There should be no association whatever with girls who do not, in their whole demeanor, show that they are modest and fear God, love to attend Church, belong to a Sodality, and are zealous in receiving the Holy Sacraments.

Let it be your aim to show forth the modesty that is within by your *dress*. Do not be extravagant nor seek to have every new fashion which you see, and do not dress merely to *please* others.

There is certainly nothing wrong in a neat and becoming attire, but *moderation* and *discretion* must be observed, and you must not expend more upon your wardrobe than your means will allow.

Do not, on the other hand, go about in the house in a slovenly and half-dressed condition; but even when at home adopt a neat and proper attire, which will not only edify those with whom you live, but win you the respect of your visitors, besides tending to preserve your health.

“Piety,” says the Holy Ghost, “is useful for all things;” and here we see this exemplified; for those who do not dress themselves modestly or wear sufficient clothing at home and abroad, expose themselves to the danger of taking cold, which may settle on the lungs or chest, and consign them, in the bloom of youth, to an early grave.

As to a certain mode of dress in the street, believe me, it tends to produce an effect the very opposite of what young girls hope and expect—viz: To attract the notice of others, especially young men, that by

making an impression they may marry early, and so achieve a settlement for life. This is a mistaken idea. A neat and simple attire is far more becoming to a young girl than an excess of finery; and many a young man, when he meets an overdressed and frivolous creature, thinks within himself: "I might have thought of you to be my wife, but as you evince so extravagant a disposition, I dare not entertain the idea, for my income could not furnish you with so costly a dress."

If you desire to preserve purity of heart you must love work and avoid *idleness*, which so often opens the way to temptations against the angelic virtue.

Rise quickly and cheerfully in the morning. I do not think much of the purity of a girl who is slow about leaving her bed, and indulges in the vice of sloth by sleeping to a late hour, by way of compensation, for remaining up late at night. This is entirely wrong, for one hour's sleep before midnight is far more beneficial to the health than three, after midnight has passed.

Moreover, late rising is often the cause of morning prayer being neglected, and the week-day mass being given up; and when that takes place I do not think much of the purity of a girl, as, generally speaking, there is a want of fervor and devotion, in her behavior, and a lack of love of work.

If a girl, immediately after her morning devotions, instead of making up the beds, sweeping the rooms



and putting them in order, sits idly down, reading newspapers or novels, it speaks badly for her indeed.

Every girl should be so proficient in all kinds of domestic work, as to surpass even a servant in performing it. When she is thoroughly versed in every branch of domestic economy, she can, when called upon, meet any emergency without fear. Even if she marries one whose wealth would enable him to provide her with servants to come at her call, who knows in what circumstances she may eventually be placed?

Perhaps her husband's means will become so limited that she will be obliged to do *all* the house-work, not having wherewith to pay an attendant.

The Holy Ghost awards special praise to the "valiant woman," and calls her "blessed," because her house was well ordered, and she could direct her maids herself—a highly important qualification in a house-keeper. Servants will look with more deference upon a mistress if they perceive that she understands the domestic department better than they, and she will rise in the esteem of her husband also.

It will please him to see that he is not called upon to pay for every thing, since the taste and skill of his wife and daughter can supply the want. Even if the sum thus saved is but trifling, it will have a most beneficial effect on a husband, and, besides, prevent idleness in the house.

A young girl should, above all, be well instructed

in the culinary art, so that she herself can meet all exigencies when a well prepared meal is required, by which is not necessarily understood one which requires great outlay ; for very plain food, if properly cooked, can be made palatable.

How to do this can be learned from your own experiments, or from a skillful mother.

But woe to the daughter ! who, instead of assisting in the work of the house, and bearing her share of the burdens of the kitchen, sits down and amuses herself at the piano ; and who, if she be asked : “ Do you know how to cook well ? ” must answer, “ No ! ” “ Who does the cooking, then ? ” “ My mother or grand mother ! ” If such a girl marries, and her husband has not means to keep a servant, how soon he will find, to his cost, what it is to have a wife perfectly ignorant of domestic affairs, and who, in consequence, incurs many additional expenses. This will engender discontent ; he will acquire a distaste for home, and much of his time, especially in the evening, will be spent at some hotel.

I once heard the following of a good Catholic young man, who happened to select for a wife, one who understood nothing whatever of house-keeping. When Friday was at hand he reminded her that next day she must not prepare any meat. “ Yes ; I know,” she replied. “ But what shall I cook ? ” “ Did not your mother teach you to prepare food for such days ? ” “ No.” “ Well, you can at least cook me some eggs.” “ Yes ; that I can do.”

At dinner-time the eggs were placed on the table. The young husband took an egg, and opened it, but it was as hard as a stone. He tried another, which was equally so. "What is the matter with the eggs?" said he. "They are as hard as adamant." "Yes," she replied. "I can not imagine what kind of eggs they are. I cooked them for two hours, and it seems they are not soft yet." How disappointed a man is he who marries such a wife! That may be a simple story, but it points out the condition of numberless girls not educated for house-keeping.

Finally, if a young girl wishes to preserve her purity, she must, in general, walk in the spirit of self-denial. It is not well to be always feasting one's self, or to keep something in the mouth—gum for instance—that she may chew. Yes; like a *calif*! It is not good to sit idle at the window or by the door, and gaze at the passers by. It does not look well to slide on the ice, to speak in a loud tone, or to cry out. All this is immodest and bold in a girl, and opens the way to sins against chastity. It is also contrary to the spirit of modesty for girls to play and take part in boisterous amusements with boys.

If a girl wishes earnestly to avoid temptation against the virtue of purity, she has also to be very cautious in regard to reading worldly papers and such like books. It would be a bad sign, concerning purity of heart, to see a girl fond of reading novels, illustrated papers, romances; while she evinces but little taste for the Lives of the Saints, and

other devotional books which would instruct her in her holy religion.

When a girl, growing up to womanhood, feels inclined to take great pleasure in boisterous out-door amusements, let her pause, and take heed, for therein lies great danger to purity of heart, and she will surely be tempted to sin.

If your conscience should reproach you with any thing I recalled to your mind in this most important instruction, and you have not yet sincerely accused yourselves of it in confession, do it at once, in order to give perfect peace to your conscience, and from this time go monthly or weekly to confession. This practice will preserve your purity of heart unstained.

The Church celebrates in this month the memory of *St. Sabina*.

She lived in community with other virgins, when, during the reign of the Emperor Adrian, a persecution burst over the land.

Beryllus, the governor of the province, wished to persuade her to deny her faith, and, failing in this, he consigned her to the hands of two profligate young men. But Sabina prayed: "O Jesus! who wast born of a pure Virgin, protect my virginal purity, which I have dedicated to Thee;" whereupon, stricken by the hand of the Lord, the youths fell lifeless to the ground, and Beryllus, on that account, caused her to be beheaded.

Her pure soul then winged its flight to heaven, to entone canticles of praise and gratitude to God for-

ever and ever with the virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

During this month, say daily, one Ave Maria, in her honor, to beg her obtain for you from God the grace to serve Him in innocence and purity of heart, a true and spotless virgin. Amen!

## CONFERENCE X.

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### THE CHOICE OF A SPOUSE.

AS I already remarked, several of the Israelite youths aspired to the honor of espousing the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a miracle decided her choice. Olive branches, withered and dry, were brought, and distributed among the suitors; and, behold! whilst in the other branches no change appeared, the staff of St. Joseph bloomed forth until it was beautiful to behold. The lily is emblematic of his original purity; first, requisite for becoming the spouse of a virginal wife, while the staff, which in his hand alone grew fresh and green, reminds us of those other virtues which, in such abundance, adorned his heart.

Christian maiden! listen to the good counsel which Mary bestows on you to-day :

*“My daughter, if you have learned that God has called you to the married state, then take heed that you choose a Catholic spouse, with whom you can have reason to hope for a life, happy while still on earth, and rich in merits for eternal life.”*

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Christian maiden! to-day I will consider with you

the qualifications to be desired in a spouse, in order to give you salutary information, that you may be guided by them in your choice. Whether your hand is sought by a number, or whether but one aspires to win it, these circumstances alone should influence you, viz., contentment and happiness, and, above all, that you may be sanctified in your wedded life.

The first qualification was signified in St. Joseph by a lily, which is the symbol of *chastity*.

If a young man never on any account allows himself to offend against the rules of *modesty* by undue liberty, then he possesses the first quality which tends to recommend a suitor in an eminent degree.

However, chastity is not the only quality which should be taken into consideration in the selection of a spouse. Holy Scripture says, secondly: "Joseph was just," that is, virtuous.

He was distinguished for his tender piety. Yes, all theologians are unanimous in declaring him to be the greatest Saint among the children of men, always excepting the Blessed Virgin.

Mary understood, that in determining where to bestow her hand in marriage, a maiden dare not be influenced merely by the charms of his exterior.

Indeed, how many there are who, while distinguished in this regard, conceal within their interior a soul whose deformity would be fearful to behold. Absalom, who of all the children of men in Israel was the most beautiful to view, was a fratricide, a rebel against his own royal father.

Certainly a prepossessing exterior may for awhile charm and infatuate the heart, and natural inclination may merge into love towards the other party; but if subsequent developments prove that a man is morally bad, perhaps after marriage sacrificing his principles for the sake of another woman, and treating his own wife with contempt, or, giving himself up to vice, to the utter neglect of his family, oh! then, what anguish will fill the heart of her from whose eyes the scales so soon have fallen! What bitter regret, that she did pay so much regard to mere personal beauty in her choice of a husband, will haunt her day and night!

Yes, she will have every reason to envy those women of her acquaintance who, although married to men with little to recommend them in appearance, are happy in the love of husbands whose nobility of soul, true virtue, and devoted care for wife and children may well atone for any personal imperfections.

What the Holy Ghost says of the beauty of a woman,—that “it is vain,” while all praise is meted out to her who fears God—is equally applicable to men.

Therefore, before a young lady resolves to give the word of consent to her favored suitor, let her make careful inquiries to discover how it is with the religion of the young man,—whether he is a child of the true Church, a sincerely faithful, pious Christian,—whether he is devotionally inclined, zealously attends Divine service, and is regular in receiving the Holy Sacraments.



Let her also observe his expressions, when he is in company with others, and mark whether he is fond of the pleasures of the world, goes in quest of them, and spends his evenings roving about the streets or saloons,—whether he entertains suspicious intercourse, is prone to anger, or, perhaps, even addicted to those vices so fatal to domestic happiness, gambling and drunkenness.

It is certain that young men often assume a piety which they by no means possess, if they wish to win the favor of a maiden distinguished by piety and wealth. Be on your guard, or else—what will be the consequence? *Before* the wedding *so*—after it *so*—as one turns the hand. Let her make careful inquiries especially with regard to the kind of companions he prefers among the young men, and ascertain whether he is a member of any secret society. For never, never should a young girl permit herself to be persuaded to choose one of the latter as her spouse.

Thirdly: St. Joseph was *poor*. This is testified by the birth of Christ in a stable; for His foster-father had no means to procure a better shelter; he was poor. This is evident from the *offering* which he made at the presentation of the Infant Jesus in the temple.

He was poor. The poverty of that little house at Loretto, which once he inhabited with Mary, indicates it. This circumstance deserves also a particular consideration in the choice of a spouse.

The maiden, who intends to marry, would wish to be provided for as well as possible in temporal matters;

but what avails all the wealth with which her husband is endowed to promote her happiness if he, to whom she owes it, is one with whom it is hard, indeed, to live? Had such an unhappy wife chosen one who, although poor, was truly pious, kind and loving, she would have been a thousand times happier and contented even during her life on earth.

Christian maiden, I hope you have not failed to perceive the deep importance of the advice I have given you, that you may know what course to pursue before entering the married state.

Still greater care must be observed if he whom you have chosen as your spouse does not even belong to the *true* Church. Listen to what I would, in general, say in this regard.

Generally speaking, I have to say *never marry one* who is not a Catholic, if in the married life you would enjoy peace of heart, and true domestic happiness.

Reasons: The first, and principally to be considered is, that the union of husband and wife is to symbolize the union of Christ with the Church; but how can this be when the husband is not even a child of that Church?

The second. Christian maiden! if the true Catholic blood flows in your veins, how *can* you be happy with one, of whom you must say within your heart: "He is not in the state of grace, and he does not tread with me the way to heaven." Oh! how repugnant to every feeling of one, who truly loves God!

Among the many who do not belong to the true faith, certainly a difference exists. Some—and, con-

cerning America, in fact the greater number—are Protestants merely because they have been brought up so; but they are inclined to learn the truth.

If you have a Protestant suitor who is thus disposed, say to him firmly and decidedly :

“Every one who walks in sincerity before God, and really wishes to know the truth, can easily arrive at it.” Tell him that you will give him a book, which you wish him to peruse with attention, adding earnest prayers, that the Lord may enlighten his heart.

Among my works there is one which treats of conversion to the true faith, which you will find appropriate for the purpose. The title of it is: “*Catholicity, Protestantism and Infidelity.*”

Say to him that it would be well to speak upon the subject with some priest, who can answer him more explicitly than you; and say to him finally: “Never will I be your wife unless I at least have your solemn oath, which nothing in the world could tempt you to break, that all our children shall be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.

Make inquiries, too, in regard to the relatives of the young man, and his place of residence, that you may know whether you will have an opportunity to fulfill your duties as a Catholic, and to send your children to a Catholic school.

Then, if you have well founded hopes, or if he promises you faithfully to examine into our holy faith,—and, in case he recognizes its truth, to become one of its children before very long,—then, *per-*

*haps*, it might be permitted for you to become his wife, if your *confessor* is willing to sanction such a step.

Understand, however, that I only say this much, when you are convinced that the young man is sincere in his promise, and that circumstances prevent his *immediate* reception into the Church, and that you have every assurance that he will soon be a good member thereof.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the memory of *St. Ositha*, a Princess who was born in England in the seventh century.

Her pious parents caused her to be brought up in a convent, whose Abbess was *St. Elhita*, sister to the King of Saxony. Thus secluded from the world in this holy retreat, it was only natural that the pious maiden felt an ardent desire to dedicate herself entirely to God, as His chosen spouse.

Meanwhile, her parents promised her in marriage to a Saxon Prince, who, however, when he perceived the earnestness with which *Ositha* persisted in her resolution to acknowledge no other spouse but Jesus Christ, renounced the hope of having her for his wife, and erected a magnificent convent for her.

But the Danes succeeded in penetrating into the country, and their heathen leader endeavored to gain *Ositha* as his wife by force; threatening her with death, if she refused. When she replied that she preferred to die rather than to break her vow, he beheaded her; and thus, in her virginal purity, she

earned the crown of martyrdom, entering as "virgin and martyr" into the realm of eternal bliss.

During this month invoke St. Ositha, and say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may assist you to trample under foot all human respect whenever there is question of saving your soul. Amen.

## CONFERENCE XI.

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MARY,

THE BETROTHED OF ST. JOSEPH.

MARY, with her companions, spent the years of her youth in quiet solitude in the peaceful inclosure, near the temple, which was set apart for those maidens dedicated to the service of God. When, therefore, according to the Divine Will, she gave her hand to St. Joseph in marriage, with the—to God—known resolution and mutual consent that each was to remain in a state of virginity, she did so without having had any previous association with him.

It was by no means customary in the Old Law, among the chosen people of God, for the betrothed couple to be much in each other's company, as is, unfortunately the custom at the present time, so often productive of the sad fact, that of those who go forward to the nuptial altar to receive the sacerdotal benediction, many, alas! do not kneel there as pure and spotless maidens.

Perhaps, previous to the wedding day, they sinned

against the angelic virtue in thoughts, words, desires, or actions; or, it may be, that while becoming the occasion of sin to their betrothed, they failed to accuse themselves of it with heartfelt sorrow in an humble and candid confession.

Thus the graces contained in the Sacrament of Matrimony are squandered.

In order to guard against this, listen, Christian maiden, to the good counsel which Mary gives you to-day:

*“My daughter, if you would preserve your virginity pure and unstained until you kneel to receive the nuptial benediction, be especially careful never to remain alone with persons of the other sex, even though it be your promised spouse. Avoid all dangerous intercourse as becomes a child of Mary.”*

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I have, in a preceding conference, already enlightened you as to the grievous nature of every sin against the virtue of purity, and pointed out the special manner in which, from early childhood, a maiden should constantly try to keep her purity of heart unstained.

This hour shall be devoted to the consideration of two points, which are of most *special* importance, as serious evil may result if you neglect to follow my advice.

First, then, I would warn you against being *alone* with young men,—permitting them to visit you that

you may converse together unrestrained by the presence of others.

The reason why a young maiden, although engaged to be married, should not remain *alone* with her betrothed—that is, receive a visit from him, unless in presence of her friends—is contained in the fact, that, being thus alone, is one of the most dangerous occasions of *temptations* against purity.

These may be in *thoughts, desires, or words*; or it may be that the other party unfortunately consents to sin by some liberties injuring chastity.

Holy Scripture says, that when persons of different *sex* are together, it is even as if *fire and straw* came in contact. That this is true, every one who sits before me now, if she has received visits from young men, when alone, knows very well. If the young girl is not at first troubled by such temptations, she can easily perceive by the looks and words, nay, by the whole demeanor of her companion, that sensual and impure feelings have begun to disturb his heart.

Who knows how soon the devil will induce a reciprocity on her part, and then what will follow? He will allow himself still further liberties.

There will be caresses, and, behold! grievous sins are already committed, especially if a feeling of mutual love has arisen, and an engagement, which they hope will end in marriage, has been entered into between them.

How many a pure-hearted girl, who, during her whole life never sullied her soul with the least sin



against chastity, even in thought, loses her innocence before the wedding-day—a misfortune which must be to her a subject of the most bitter regret for her whole life until her dying day.

And precisely because she formerly lived thus innocent and pure, the more agonizing will be her shame in confessing such sins, and so the nuptial morn may dawn upon a heart torn with the stings of an upbraiding conscience for the sacrilegious confession which formed her preparation for this auspicious day.

And wherefore, I ask, should the betrothed couple thus meet alone during their engagement? It may be attributed to the necessity of gaining a knowledge of each other's character.

But, believe me, it is easier far to gain such an insight by watching the demeanor of another in the midst of the family or of friends; for there are then more opportunities to display affability, humility, modesty, patience, self-denial, and a disposition to oblige.

Yes; and can not a better knowledge of the bride's or bridegroom's character be acquired by inquiries among friends or acquaintances, than if they would sit alone, and this, perhaps, for hours?

While a maiden is still in her own home, either with parents or relatives, it is easy to appoint an hour when she can see and speak with her betrothed in presence of the family.

With servant girls it may be a little more difficult, still it can also be managed. They, too, have friends and acquaintances, from whom they receive visits, and

if these take place in day-time things can be arranged that they may have an occasion to see one another.

The young man will have some friend—a married man, perhaps—who would be present when he visits the girl he intends to marry.

It is by no means necessary, much less advisable, to *prolong* a visit, for whatever is really essential can be said in a very short time.

This is also applicable to mere friendly visits.

So far from a well-bred, pious, and virtuous young man taking offense at a proper reserve, on the part of the young maiden, to whom his attentions are directed, he will honor her the more, and his love will be more constant and sincere, from the assurance thus given him in advance, that she will be to him a faithful wife, and to their children a watchful mother. On the contrary, the bold, thoughtless, and even offensive demeanor which unfortunately characterizes too many young girls, can not fail to inspire distrust and disgust.

All that I have said of receiving visits from young men, when alone, applies with equal force to the custom of attending those public *amusements* which are carried to such an excess in our present day, such as picnics, balls, and dances, which are continued until a late hour, moonlight excursions, and theaters.

And even regarding young girls in general, although they have no special friend of the other sex to accompany them thither, what danger lurks hidden in all these entertainments where Satan has so many

facilities for entering the hearts of the children of men—as it were through the windows of the soul—by means of the eyes and ears!

Besides this, in a spiritual sense, they exert a most pernicious influence,—destroying the spirit of *devotion* and prayer; weakening the zeal which leads to the frequent reception of the *sacraments*, and creating a fatal *indifference* to attending the services of the Church.

All this is true, but in a more dangerous degree, if one participates in such things in company with a young man who has spoken words of love to her. For, will not the flames burst forth with glow if oil be poured upon the embers?

It is, also, not permitted to take *walks* with, or to accept the escort of a young man home in the evening, unless there are several in company together.

Being dangerous, it certainly can not be allowed.

Then, too, at *parties* given in your own home, circumspection must be observed; for sin can be committed even there by an improper style of dress, or by taking part in dances, in which embraces entirely foreign to the spirit of Christian modesty bear a prominent part.

Those who take part in them flatter themselves that it is all by way of amusement; but let them beware. St. Peter Chrysologus justly remarks, that “no one can jest with Satan here on earth, and, later on, rejoice with Christ in heaven.”

As I have heretofore remarked, there is no necessity whatever for all this.

If you carefully guard your virginal purity you will be much more pleasing in the eyes of your friends. You will be not only earlier, but much more advantageously married, than if you are known as a girl without stability of character, whose vanity, love of dress, and coquettish manner render her odious in the eyes of all good and virtuous young men.

A young man may, it is true, seek for awhile, the society of such a girl, and even seem to admire her, but he will despise her in his heart.

I can not close this conference without again earnestly reminding you how deeply important it is that you neither remain *alone*, not even with your betrothed, nor attend any places of noisy *amusement* after night-fall, whether they are carried on in the house, or in the open air.

It is, however, a truth which can not be too deeply deplored, that by far the smallest number of ladies act in accordance with what I have said, and avoid these dangers entirely.

But who can sufficiently felicitate the bride who approaches the altar and kneels to receive the nuptial benediction with a heart pure and unstained, because she never exposed her innocence to any of the above-mentioned dangers? How happy will she feel that, not only during the time of her engagement, she was never guilty of the slightest sin against the angelic virtue, but was ever careful not to be the least occasion of sin to him who now kneels by her side at the altar as her chosen spouse.

Make a fervent resolution that you, from this moment, will be most careful in this regard, and follow all my advices, and your heart will be then so disposed that upon the day of your marriage you will receive the most abundant graces from God to enable you to spend your married life in a manner not only happy but full of merits for eternal life.

And, oh! what joy will fill your heart, though sorrow's cloud should cast its shadow on your wedded life, to know that you did not enter thereupon with the dreadful guilt of sacrilege.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Gertrude*, a virgin whom the Lord favored in a most wonderful manner, and around whom a brilliant halo is cast by her loving mother, the Church.

This is on account of the many revelations, which were vouchsafed to her, and the splendor of her virtues, which illumines with special glory her admirable and holy life.

At the early age of five years she entered a convent of the Benedictine Order, at Ruderhof, and in after life became Abbess of two houses in that order. Not bodily illness, but an excessive love toward Jesus, dissolved the ties which bound her to this life, and united her forever in celestial bliss with Christ, the Spouse of her soul. Our Lord once appeared to her, and told her that He would be especially merciful to all who would thank Him for the graces bestowed upon her.

Fail not, then, to do so. During this month invoke

her particularly, and say daily in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you, from God, the grace to honor, with special devotion and ardent zeal, the sacred *Heart of Jesus*; and may you, for love of this Sweet heart, never falter in the resolution you have made to-day—to avoid being *alone* with persons of the other sex, and to refrain from all noisy and sensual *amusements*, which might ruin your immortal soul. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XII.

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### MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

HAVING spoken to you upon the great care necessary to be exercised by a maiden in the selection of a husband, I deem it well to devote the present hour to some special words of instruction as to how she should regulate her conduct on every point, during the time which precedes her marriage, that with a heart well prepared she may approach the altar, to receive not *one* grace alone, but *all* the graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony in their full plenitude.

Listen, therefore, O maiden! to the good counsel which Mary, your Immaculate Mother, bestows upon you to-day in this regard :

*“ My daughter, before you go forward to the marriage altar, and kneel to receive the nuptial benediction, prepare your heart in a fitting manner, as you will learn from the Priest, who, in my name, will instruct you thereupon to-day.”*

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I will first direct your attention to a very important point which should be considered, not only before the

reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony, but before receiving any other Sacrament. They impart, if worthily received, all the graces connected with them, by the mercy of God, at their reception, but whether this is done in a greater or less degree, depends upon the preparation with which the recipient of such favors has previously adorned her heart. This you will perceive from the following illustration :

Suppose twenty persons take their empty vessels to the well to fill them with water ; certainly as each one draws the fresh, cool liquid, it does not refuse to come, but all do not receive an equal share, for those who provided themselves with larger vessels will take home with them a more plentiful supply.

Now, if twenty persons approach the Tribunal of Penance with due preparation—if they call upon God to enlighten their minds, make sincere acts of regret and contrition, and confess sincerely, most assuredly, through the Sacramental absolution, they will all obtain forgiveness ;—yes, but their hearts will not be alike purified and sanctified.

If, for example, a penitent confesses, and is really sorry for all his known mortal sins, yet pays no regard to the venial faults he has committed, his soul remains stained with them, and his heart will not be so thoroughly purified as that of him who, with sincere regret, confesses also his venial sins.

This is not all. If two persons who, since their last confession, having been guilty of no sin whatever, would accuse themselves anew of some sins com-



mitted in former years. The one who takes to the Sacred Tribunal the more lively faith, the greater humility and the deepest sorrow, will receive a more abundant measure of sanctifying grace, through his confession, than the other who does not approach with such resoluteness, fervor and fidelity.

The same is true of Confirmation. Whoever carefully cleanses his soul by a good confession, desires ardently to receive the Holy Ghost, and opens his heart for the reception of that Divine Spirit's strengthening power, will obtain, through this Sacrament more abundant graces, enabling him to confess his faith with greater firmness and to live in accordance with its divine precepts. This is still more strikingly verified in Holy Communion. Oh! what a difference exists between the Communion of an every-day Christian and that of a St. Theresa, or a St. Rose, of Lima.

St. Theresa had such a longing for this Divine Banquet, that at one period of her life it was necessary to administer the Blessed Sacrament to her immediately after midnight, because it was to be feared that, in her ardent desire for Jesus, her soul would leave her body.

But, regarding the special preparation which should be made by a young girl, who has a sincere desire to enter upon the married life with such interior dispositions, that she will receive the full plenitude of the graces and blessings which the Sacrament contains, the first requisite is to frequently renew her intention to embrace this state solely because, from mo-

tives with which holy faith inspires her, she is convinced that such is the Will of God.

That she marries him, whom she has chosen with the consent and *approbation* not only of her parents, but also of her confessor, to whom she has given her entire confidence.

That she can say before God that, should he intrust her with children, she will not fail to do all in her power to bring them up for a heavenly home.

And, with regard to him she intends to marry, she must resolve, as far as possible, to sanctify him in her intercourse with him.

Her next care must be, during the period of her engagement, to make a good *general confession*.

To make general confessions repeatedly is not advisable at all; but there is good reason to make such a confession at *this* time, so that the maiden who is contemplating marriage may have reason to hope that she is in the state of grace, and that she may increase sanctifying grace in her heart, as much as she is able to do. Let her tell to her spouse openly and decidedly that she is firmly resolved to make a fitting *preparation* for the Holy State of Matrimony.

She should also encourage him to prepare with similar fervor and zeal of spirit for the state of life they have chosen, and advise him, too, to make a general confession.

Lastly, she should arrange every thing so that, in accordance with the desire of the Church, the ceremony will take place at the Altar during *Mass*, and be hal-

lowed by the nuptial benediction; *not* at an hour when evening shadows have cast their dark pall over the world, but in the clear light of day, when, by the reception of Holy Communion, Jesus Christ will also be one of the wedding guests.

An evening wedding shows that the participants are very slightly penetrated with the spirit of faith and the great responsibility which they assume when they enter the married state.

The bride must be very careful that, through the course of the day, God will have no cause to be offended on her account. It is most certainly to be considered a day of rejoicing; but that does not necessitate unseemingly revelry—dancing, and the like; and the more quietly the day passes off the better.

During her whole subsequent life the bride will look back with satisfaction at the thought, that it is no empty title which distinguishes the day of her nuptials as the happiest day of her life.

After the ceremony the bride should, if possible, remain for a few days at home, and spend a good deal of her time in prayer to obtain the blessing of heaven. Thus, fortified with good resolutions, and in the state of grace, she will begin her married life.

In this month the Church celebrates the feast of St. *Barbara*, virgin and martyr, who was born in Nicomedia. Gifted with talents of the highest order, her heathen father was solicitous to procure for her teachers capable of cultivating them to the best advantage; and, as she loved to study the wonders of nature, she thus

grew to admire the works of God, and sought opportunities to speak with well-instructed Christians.

She eventually recognized the truth of our holy faith, and entered the fold of Christ, perfectly willing to seal her belief therein with her blood.

Her father urged her to marry a rich heathen youth, but she steadfastly refused, notwithstanding the frantic rage of her infuriated parent, when made acquainted with the fact of his daughter being a Christian. He himself accused her of the fact; and not only this, but as soon as the sentence of death was pronounced, and she was condemned to be beheaded, this inhuman father begged, as a particular favor from the judge, to be permitted to cut off the head of his own daughter.

The request was granted, and the cruel deed perpetrated upon the public square.

St. Barbara is, as you well know, the special patroness of a happy death. Invoke her during your whole life, and say daily one Ave Maria in her honor, that, through her intercession, our Lord will grant you the grace to die in His peace and love, receiving Holy Communion. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XIII.

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### THE ANNUNCIATION.

TWO months passed away, and the Immaculate Virgin lived with her holy spouse, St. Joseph, in the peace of Paradise at Nazareth; when, finally, there dawned the auspicious day chosen by God from all eternity for the exterior fulfillment of the most gracious of all divine acts.

This was the *Incarnation of the Son of God*, mercifully permitted for the Redemption of the human race, and the personal union of the spiritual and corporal world in Christ, with the person of the Son of God as its Creator.

Oh! thrice and forever blessed hour when the glory of God's chosen messenger filled, with a heavenly light, that humble room, and brought unto her, the pre-elected Spouse of God, the message of salvation.

Christian maiden! listen to the counsel which Mary will give you to-day:

*"My daughter, if you wish to please me and my Divine Son, endeavor to resign yourself in every event in life, with heroic courage, to the Most Holy Will of God."*

It was the twenty-fifth of March. Day was waning, and as the shades of evening fell, Mary, Immaculate Virgin and Queen of Angels, knelt to pour forth her soul in prayer for the speedy arrival of the coming Messiah.

At that moment Gabriel, one of the seven princes of the celestial kingdom, radiant with heavenly glory, appeared before her.

With head bent low in reverential awe, he saluted her: "Hail, Mary, full of grace! - the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women."

The humble Virgin, as we are informed by Holy Writ, was troubled to hear such words addressed to her, and also by the vision of the Angel. Gabriel, however, in tones that brought to earth heaven's sweetest music, resumed: "Fear not, Mary! Behold, thou shalt conceive, and shalt bring forth a Son; and His Name shall be Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: He shall reign forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary, still more astonished and unable to reconcile the state of motherhood with the vow of virginity she had made, said to the Angel: "How shall this be done? because I know not man." And, answering, Gabriel said: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and, therefore, also the Holy, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." In

proof of the truth of his words the Angel pointed to the marvel which the power of God had effected on Elizabeth, who, having been barren, had now in her old age conceived a child; for, with Him, nothing is impossible. Mary bowed before the counsel of the Eternal, and with deep humility uttered the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it done to me according to Thy Word." Then the Angel departed, and the Word was made flesh.

The Most Holy Trinity created in the womb of Mary the sacred humanity of Christ, to which, in the first moment of its existence, the Person of the Son of God was indissolubly united. This is the mystery in the life of Mary, which I will present to you for meditation to-day. I point especially to the final words of Mary: "See, I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to Thy word."

"My child!" the Immaculate Virgin cries out to you: "Would you possess the right to call me Mother? And am I to acknowledge you as my child? Would you, in every act of life, be indeed a child of God, aiming at living meritoriously on earth, yet happy and contented in this vale of tears? Would you sweetly and peacefully die in the grace of the Lord, and enter with little or no delay the kingdom of the blessed? then let your constant motto, during your whole life, be this and no other: "May the holy Will of God be done. I am the handmaid of the Lord."

Yes; whether you enter a convent or remain in the world, lead a single life or marry, there is noth-

ing so important as this entire submission to the Divine Will. There is no disposition of the heart of so much moment, for time and eternity, as that in which you can say with truth: "I am the handmaid of the Lord; I desire nothing but to know and fulfill His Most Holy Will, to bow with perfect submission to all decrees of Providence." Often and often consider the motives which should call forth such sentiments in your heart.

First, the actual *end* and *aim* for which man was called into existence, you understand. We have been placed upon earth solely for God's exterior glorification and honor; and by fulfilling His most Holy Will, to promote His greater honor and glory.

All that we behold on earth necessarily fulfills the divine intention by the *unwavering* effect of the powers of *Nature*, which, in fact, constantly operate in the manner which the Lord designed for them.

Therefore, the order, the beauty, the harmony, the grandeur, the majesty of the starry heavens arise from this: The glorious sun; the moon, with her soft luster, and the thousands of glittering stars, never abandon the orbits to which God assigned them.

It is this which produces the change of seasons, and clothes our earth with a beauty, even after the curse pronounced on her in punishment of the first sin of man.

It is through this that all creatures, according to their manner and kind, live and thrive for our special use and benefit. If they would rebelliously refuse to



walk in the path designed for them by God, what would be the consequence? Confusion, destruction, death!

In regard to man and the spiritual creation, gifted with reason and free will, this glorification of God must be accomplished through our *free action*, that it may *become meritorious for us also*.

Understand, however, that what is done, according to the Divine Will, *and that only*, will one day be *rewarded* by the Lord. Even a man, in his temporal affairs, feels called upon to recompense only such labor as is done for him, and in the manner he wishes.

This declaration, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; I am His servant," should, in a more intensified degree, become the rule of our lives, if we dwell for a few moments upon the truth that all the motives which, in the daily walk of life, induce us to prefer the will of another to our own, call upon us with infinitely greater power to acknowledge the will of God as the only guide of our life.

For example, we prefer the will of another to our own, if we are convinced that that other *understands*, far better than we can possibly do, what tends to our welfare—if he has *power* to assist us,—if he *loves* us,—if we are so situated that he has the *right* to command us; and if we know that this submission alone can bring us *happiness*.

Now, who can fail to perceive, at a glance, that each of these motives relates, with irresistible force, to God and His most Holy Will?

He is God—the Lord of Heaven and earth; our *Creator*, our King, our Sovereign, Who called us into existence; to Whom we are indebted for every thing we have. Who *redeemed* us with His precious blood, when, through sin, we had lost the right to enter Heaven, and Who, accepting us again as children, gave us the right to call Him by the endearing name of *Father*.

Have you not every reason, therefore, to exclaim before Him, as Mary did: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Oh, my God and Creator, my Redeemer, my Lord and Father, my only aim and end, what wilt Thou have me do? With all submission I will do it, and say ‘Thy Will be done.’”

He is, at the same time, the *Omniscient*, the Highest, the Most Holy, the Infinite Goodness; how just is it, therefore, that I cast myself, without reserve, into His paternal arms, and sigh forth, “Lord, as Thou wilt, Thou knowest best! Thou wilt do all things for the best, Who lovest me more than I am able to love myself!”

This entire submission, come what will, is for me the pledge of my *peace* while here on earth. No power of earth or hell, even, could hurt one hair upon my head without Thy Divine permission; therefore, let joy or sorrow come, if I accept it from Thy hand in union with Thy merits, O my Jesus! all will be well. It will tend to my greater peace and solace here below, and increase my *merits* for the bright home of

Heaven. If, O Lord, I live thus, I can look forward to the tranquil, precious *death* of Thy Saints.

Then I will accept the chalice from thy hand, resigned to die, because it is Thy most Holy Will.

This disposition is the surest pledge of a happy death, and will, perhaps, win me even entire exemption from the pains of Purgatory.

It happened once in Germany that a young girl, withering under the blight of the mortal disease consumption, was told by her physician that her days were numbered, and that the early flowers of Spring would bloom upon her grave.

The lingering maiden asked me to give her such counsel as would enable her to die a Holy death.

I bade her often, during the day, call up to view her dying moment, and to make this act of resignation not only to *resign* to die, but to *want* to die that way and moment, as it may happen, because so being the Will of God; and, therefore, that she may give vent to the following aspiration, often repeated: "O Jesus, my love, entirely the Will of God." And, in fact, with this aspiration on her lips, she yielded her virginal soul into the hands of her Heavenly Spouse, and expired.

Also a young American girl, an invalid, awaiting the summons of death, on hearing the above from my lips, was so deeply impressed thereby that she had the words traced in large and graceful characters on the door of her sick room: "Here the will of God is

done." And she, too, no doubt, died the Holy death of a Saint.

In this month the Church celebrates the feast of *St. Julian* and *St. Basilissa*.

Julian would not have married at all, because he made the vow to preserve his virginity inviolate. His consent to enter the married state was only given after he had been assured, by Divine revelation, that Basilissa was similarly inclined, and would live with him a virginal bride.

When the bride and bridegroom entered their home after the ceremony, they were greeted with the odor of lilies, so delightful that it could only have come from Paradise. St. Julian then spoke of the vow he had made, and his bride, encouraged to open her heart to him, said that she, too, would fain make the same offering to the Lord.

Entering in this Holy manner upon their wedded life, became for them the surest pledge that they would endeavor to sanctify one the other, wedded together, and so it was done.

St. Basilissa died in the sweet odor of every virtue at Antioch. St. Julian was so favored as to wear the Martyr's crown.

During this month invoke this saintly couple. Say daily, in their honor, one Ave Maria, and beg their intercession that, whether married or single, you may walk in innocence of heart as a faithful child of Mary, in the fear of God, and according to His most Holy Will. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XIV.

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### MARY

VISITS HER COUSIN, ST. ELIZABETH.

ENLIGHTENED by the message of the Angel in regard to the marvelous blessing vouchsafed to St. Elizabeth, Mary instantly set out to visit and assist her, and, through her presence, to sanctify the precursor of Christ, already in the womb of her saintly relative.

Christian maiden! listen to the counsel which, in the consideration of this event of her life, Mary will give you to-day :

*“My daughter, wouldst thou please God, and Me, His Immaculate Mother? Wouldst thou insure thy progress in the way of virtue? Then be most careful in regard to visits, and follow the advice which to-day the Priest will give thee in my name.”*

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Mary arose, and soon her light footsteps were speeding up Judea's steep ascent, pausing not in her way, until she reached the abode of the venerable Zachary.

Neither the forbidding aspect of the road, nor the weary distance over which she had to pass, deterred her from obeying this inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Justly, indeed, does St. Ambrose, in speaking of Mary's visit to her cousin, exclaim: "The grace of the Holy Spirit knows no idle waiting."

When Mary entered the house and saluted Elizabeth, the latter was instantly filled with the Holy Ghost, and endowed with the spirit of prophecy. Over her soul there rushed a feeling of awe and respect, and she perceived the grandeur and majesty of the Mother of the Redeemer.

She, at the same instance, recognized the wonderful prodigy which at that moment happened to the child, which she bore under her heart.

Full of an exultation and joy which she never before had known, as the Mother of Jesus stood before her, she cried out: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is it to me, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? Blessed art thou who hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

What Elizabeth, in the intense joy of her heart, thus announced, Mary herself beheld in a far clearer light, unveiled before her spirit. As a confirmation thereof, she intoned that canticle which far surpasses in beauty all other hymns, which a desire to praise the workings of Divine Providence has ever called forth. She broke forth into the "Magnificat:"

“My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

“Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call Me blessed.

“For He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and Holy is His name.

“And His mercy is from generation to generation of them that fear Him.

“He hath showed might in His arm, He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

“He hath deposed the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

“He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away.

“He hath received Israel, His servant, being mindful of His mercy: as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever.”

This event, in the life of Mary, affords me an occasion to administer a very important counsel to you, O Christian maiden! which, I trust, you will take deeply to heart, for the sanctification of your life.

Indeed, if you do not wish to render fruitless all those efforts by which your parents, teachers, and the Priests of the Lord have ever sought to lead you on in the way of salvation, and to guide you on its path, you must be particularly circumspect in regard to the *friendships* you form, and the *visits* you make or receive.

Very important results may arise from a word of

admonition upon this point ; for, as experience shows, this passion for being in the *company* of others is, with those of your sex, so universal, so powerful, and so deeply rooted, that it even manifests itself in children at the earliest age.

What, then, should be the principle of action to guide you in regard to this?

I answer: According to the example of Mary, the motive for making or receiving visits should be a well-regulated love for *ourselves* and for our *neighbor*.

As this well-regulated love of our neighbor is proved by a perfect willingness to assist others to the full extent of our ability in their corporal and spiritual needs ; so it indicates, also, the *persons* whom we should visit, and enlightens us as to the *kind* of visits which should be made.

First, as to *persons*, a well ordered love requires visits to be made from time to time to those whom Divine Providence has placed near to us by the bonds of friendship or family ties, that we may give evidence of the love which we entertain for them in our hearts. This is not all, however.

We owe occasional visits to others besides our relatives and those connected with us by marriage, for whom we entertain a special regard,—those, for instance, who live in our vicinity, or to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for the bestowal of some great benefit.

Next to them, the poor and suffering, who are unable to help themselves, and who, perhaps, have not a



relative or friend in the world, have a particular claim on our assistance and help.

Ah, then, indeed you can, by visiting those unhappy creatures, perform a work of mercy which will increase your merits for eternal life, for such visits, we are told by St. James, are a distinguishing mark of true religion.

It might also be possible that, during the course of a visit, an opportunity occurs to make a salutary impression upon those who are not of the true *faith*, who are, perhaps, prejudiced, or given to vice, and to change them entirely.

The example of St. Francis Xavier, and many other Saints, prove that, in making visits, they were always influenced by a motive not so much of amusing than of *benefiting* those with whom they conversed.

The *mode*, *manner* and *quality* of your visits, their *duration* and *frequency*, must correspond to these motives, which are inspired by a high and holy fraternal charity.

Such visits should be animated by that spirit which manifested itself in the Blessed Virgin and St. Elizabeth, when they beheld and saluted one another; that is, they should do their part in promoting the *service* of God and His love, in increasing an esteem for our holy *Church*, and causing our hearts to glow with ardent *gratitude*, that we have been called to become its children.

During these visits, some effort should be made, in love and kindness, to assist one another to a more

perfect knowledge of the truths of our Holy Religion, and to *strengthen* all who are present in the resolution that its influence shall be visible in every act of their lives. Your visits should also tend to increase a feeling of *gratitude* to God for His infinite mercy towards us in delivering us from so many dangers which daily imperil our eternal salvation.

In making visits, you should not only endeavor to promote the love and service of God, but to diffuse a knowledge of Him and His divine perfections, and a readiness to fulfill His Holy Will, so that His kingdom may extend over the whole world, and His most Holy Name be glorified until the end of time. How easily, during a visit, might the conversation be led to what could be successfully effected in the place, for the honor of God and the welfare of souls, by relying, with full confidence, in His Divine assistance.

Such visits, however, although praiseworthy and meritorious, but seldom take place, for the motive which generally prompts this interchange of civility, is the longing to be in *company*; the desire to be with friends, to whom the visitor is attracted merely by natural affection, or a wish to spend some time in useless talk, gratifying curiosity by asking idle questions, and giving the like information in return.

And oh! how fond of talking are those of your age and sex, as your own experience on this point can tell you far better than I. Hours and hours are thus frittered away!

And what is, generally speaking, the subject of conversation? The spirit of the world penetrates every word, and nothing is spoken of but the things of this earth; what one has heard; the wonders they have seen and taken part in, varied, perhaps, by a discussion of the personal qualifications of those who were present at some previous visit.

But as to the subjects which I have just enumerated, as edifying and conducive to our eternal salvation, there is scarcely a word ever said.

And then, taken abstractedly, what a loss of *time* such visits entail!

In addition to all this, too often is witnessed a literal verification of the sentence: "In the multitude of words sin shall not be wanting," for much talk certainly affords an occasion to deviate from the truth, or to indulge in *slandorous* and *calumnious* remarks. Yes; and, perhaps, even *scandalous* conversation is carried on; and the words, falling like seed from the lips of one into the heart of another, too often become, alas! the first occasion for falling into mortal sin. To guard against such a deplorable evil, visits should neither be too *frequent* nor too *long*, and thus, too, you will escape being troublesome, and committing sins.

Christian maiden! if you are in earnest in your desire to sanctify yourself, in imitation of Mary, then regulate your visits in accordance with the advice I have just given you.

In regard to visits from persons of the other sex, I

have already remarked, in the proper place, that you are positively prohibited from ever being *alone* with them. This also applies to receiving visits from girls, who are noted for giddiness, vanity and love of the world, or who are, perhaps, even already corrupt at heart. It is incredible, how soon the virtue of a young girl, who was formerly known for her tender piety and sterling worth, becomes entirely changed by associating with girls, who are infected with the spirit of the world. Their word and example is like the sword of a sword-fish, which, with but one visit, cuts into a net full of the most earnest resolutions, and makes them idle.

The Church celebrates, in this month, February, the feast of *St. Dorothea*, virgin and martyr. She lived and died a devoted handmaid of the Lord, going forth willingly and with a joyous heart,—a glorious martyr to confess her faith according to the most Holy Will of God.

As she was led to the place of execution, a youth from among the flower of heathen nobility, thus addressed her: “O Spouse of Christ! send me, I entreat thee, from the garden of thy heavenly Bridegroom, whose praises are ever on thy lips, some of the fruits and some fair roses that grow therein.”

Dorothea replied: “Thou shalt have them.” As she knelt to receive the crown of martyrdom, a radiant Angel stood before her and presented her with three apples and three roses from Paradise. Dorothea bade him go and give them to Theophilus, who

thus recognized the truth of our Holy Faith, confessed it, and was instantly beheaded.

Until the next Conference, say daily, in honor of St. Dorothea, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the grace from God to regulate your visits well. Amen.

## CONFERENCE XV.

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MARY,

AFTER HER ESPOUSAL.

WHEN MARY returned from her visit to St. Elizabeth, she again took up her abode in Nazareth, under the same roof with St. Joseph, her virginal spouse. The Blessed Virgin did not reveal to him the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in her womb, because the Spirit of God did not encourage her to do so, and because the Lord was pleased to permit that the sanctity of him who merited to be called "just," should shine forth in a splendor which would glorify his name throughout all ages and times.

Unable to explain the condition of Mary in a natural manner, St. Joseph generously resolved upon making what would be indeed for him the greatest sacrifice—namely, to become an exile from his country, and, leaving his home, to part from her for whom he felt the most profound respect—the tenderest love.

This he determined to do rather than question Mary; for since he had lived in such intimate union with her, he had gained such an impression of her sanctity, that he deemed himself unworthy to remain by her side.

He experienced the same sentiments as, later on, did St. Peter, when, gazing in wondering awe at the miracles of Christ, he exclaimed: "Depart from me, O Lord! because I am a sinner."

At the same time, St. Joseph wished to secure Mary from the faintest shadow of persecution from the law. He preferred rather to suffer alone all the contempt and indignation of her relatives than that she should be in any way hurt by their wrath.

Christian maiden! listen to the counsel which you will to-day receive from Mary, the most pure Virgin and Mother. Its observance is most important for the preservation of *peace* in the house.

*"My child! wouldst thou please me, and walk before God and man as an Angel of Peace amid the family circle? Then prefer all in the house before thyself, and crush down all feelings of distrust and suspicion towards others."*

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St. John Chrysostom, who can scarcely find words in which to extol high enough the admirable conduct of St. Joseph, exclaims: "Even as the coming of the sun, ere yet his brilliant rays illumine the earth, transfigures the eastern sky, so did Jesus illumine the world before He left the Virgin's womb and unclosed His eyes upon its light through the splendor of His virtues which shone forth in a supernatural manner in the life of St. Joseph," and that of his Bride.

Then the Father in heaven cast a pitying and merci-

ful glance at the just man who was appointed to take His place on earth, and whom His Divine Will was pleased to try in a manner most painful before He permitted him to attain a dignity beyond the comprehension of man.

But, finally, our Lord sent an Angel to him, who thus spoke: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to remain with your spouse; for that which she carries in her womb she has conceived of the Holy Ghost. She will bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name *Jesus*; for He shall deliver the people from their sins."

You may feel the sweet consolation with which so unexpected a transition from a grief, the depths of which no one could fathom, to a joy the most exquisite, filled the heart of St. Joseph.

Contemplate with the eyes of your soul the rapture, the wondering adoration, the reverence ever growing deeper, with which he now walked by the side of the Virgin so highly favored by God.

Behold the two admirable examples of humility! How brilliantly the pure gold of this virtue shines forth for your imitation in this conduct of Mary and Joseph! But one word from the lips of the Immaculate Virgin to explain the mystery of grace announced to her by the Angel, and she would have been justified in the eyes of her chaste spouse! She, however, remained *silent*.

St. Joseph preferred to bear the whole burden of reproach, parting from her rather than wound the tender heart of Mary. O admirable example! How



earnestly does it not call upon you to *humble* yourself to the very depths of your hearts !

That the beauty, the necessity, the sublimity of this virtue may be ever present to your mind, meditate frequently upon that on which I have decided to speak to you to-day. It will be an incentive to you to cultivate, in the garden of your heart, the beautiful flower of this virtue.

First, call to your attention the dignity and grandeur of this disposition of heart ; and that you may realize it, know that a virtue is the more sublime and exalted the more nearly it is connected to the end and aim of the creation of the world, and of our existence.

Now the end and aim of our existence is solely the glorification of God, to Whom alone belongs all honor.

“ To Thee alone, O Lord ! belongs, and is due, all the glory,” the psalmist sings. These words of David express the very essence of humility, and its very element. Why ? Because they give all the glory to God, and appropriate none to himself.

If, therefore, we have no humility, although we may seem to possess every other virtue, we can not be holy nor pleasing to God ; for to appropriate the honor due to them to ourselves, and not to God, would make of them rather sacrileges.

Very justly, then, do the Holy Fathers, with St. Gregory the Great, style humility the *foundation* upon which all other virtues rest.

Therefore, St. Augustine was right in saying : “ Ask

me what is virtue? I answer, Humility; ask me a second time, and again will I cry out, *Humility.*"

Humility! This disposition of mind is the requisite condition for that influx of grace through which we are enabled to do every thing what God requires from us, and without which we can do nothing in serving God, and practicing *meritorious* virtues in His sight.

But now, as we are assured by him who was deemed worthy to be intrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, "God gives His grace to the humble," humility preserves us also from a multitude of temptations, and drives far from us the enemy of our souls, who, being a demon of *pride*, can not endure the sweet odor of this most beautiful virtue.

It preserves us, also, against temptations, because an humble soul does not trust presumptuously in herself, but flees the occasions of sin; and, when attacked, at once seeks refuge with God in prayer, which renders her invincible in the combat with the enemy of our souls.

The more humble a soul is, the surer she eradicates from her heart the very root of every vice. Holy Scripture itself teaches us: "The root of all vices is pride;" for every sin is a disobedience to the divine law—a rebellion against it.

And when, alas! a soul has, in fact, listened to the tempter's voice, and consented to offend against the law of God, it is *humility* which leads her back to make amends, and be again reconciled with God.

David, the royal penitent, humbles himself, and his sins are forgiven him. Nineveh humbles itself before God, and is pardoned.

The publican stands at the portal of the temple, strikes his breast, and crying out from the depths of his heart, says: "O God! be merciful to me, a sinner!" and, see, he departs justified. The returning prodigal falls at the feet of his father. Mary Magdalen in the hall where Christ dined, and on Golgotha, and on that glorious Easter morn, always prostrated herself to the feet of Christ. Moreover, every condition for a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance points out this disposition of heart.

The earnest cry for the Divine assistance to make a good confession; the sincere examination of conscience; the profound sorrow to have sinned; and, finally, the candid accusation of sins, and the faithful performance of the Penance prescribed. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance for the *Christian maiden* to esteem and practice the virtue of humility, since the temptations to vanity are so numerous and powerful with those of her sex. Often ponder upon what I have just said in regard to its dignity, excellence, and necessity; and take care to show by your conduct—whether at home or abroad—that you really esteem it in your heart.

As to your demeanor at home, your dearest aim should be to live with your parents, amid the family circle, in *peace* and holy love; and to bring about this

happy result practice a ready obedience to those whom God has placed over you.

*Be humble*, and obedience will be delightful; but if you are unwilling to give up your own *opinion*, if you seek ever to act according to the dictates of a capricious *fancy*, it will be difficult indeed.

Be ever ready to oblige, and shrink not from performing the most menial household tasks; for true humility of heart will make them light and sweet. Let your intercourse with your brothers, sisters, and the servants of the house be marked by this disposition,—one essential requisite for which is to avoid *quarrels* and *disputes* in the house. Too often those dissensions, so fatal to family peace, arise from *self-esteem*, *caprice*; and all this because of a want of this golden virtue of humility.

When away from home, also, let your deportment show that humility is the principle which regulates your life.

First, and chiefly by your unassuming manners and simplicity in *dress*. You may, indeed, be always attired with neatness, and, when occasion requires, even with care; but never permit yourself to be so carried away by a love of adorning your person as to aim, at always being dressed in the latest style.

Not only in dress, however, but even in your *deportment*, when you *walk* out, in your intercourse with others. Even in looks it is easy to offend by pride, and *this* is often the cause of dissensions. And as Holy Scripture assures us, that every sin will,

through itself, be chastised, we see here an illustration of this truth. A maiden, influenced by vanity, puts forth every effort to please; and then, so far from winning admiration, she gains only *contempt*.

Away, then, with every trace of vanity. Imitate the example of those Holy Virgins, in all of whom humility and modesty shone forth in such brilliant luster.

The Church celebrates in this month—March—the feast of *St. Cunigunda*, the virginal spouse of St. Henry, Emperor of Germany. Although a wife, she lived with him as a pure virgin, as the Mother of Jesus had lived with her chaste spouse, St. Joseph.

When about to leave this world, the dying monarch assured the relatives of his spouse, that, as he had led Cunigunda in all her virginal purity to the altar, so he committed her to their care again.

Although St. Cunigunda was distinguished for many other virtues besides her purity, God, nevertheless, permitted her to be most basely calumniated; but her innocence was triumphantly vindicated.

Obedient to a divine inspiration, she walked bare-foot and unharmed over twelve fiery plow-shares. While it is, generally speaking, not in order to demand such a miracle from God, alas! how few there are who, to prove their innocence, would dare to submit to such an ordeal.

As a lily among thorns, so does a perfectly innocent maiden appear. But, alas! how rare the flower! Do you endeavor to be this pure lily? Invoke St.

Cunigunda. Say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you grace so to live, that, if aught evil is said concerning you, especially in regard to *vanity* and *pride*, it may be proved to be almost utterly false. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVI.

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### MARY

AT NAZARETH BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

I N meditating upon the various events in the life of Mary, I have already directed your attention to the practice of the different virtues which shine forth so brilliantly in her, as mirror of justice. I demonstrated, also, how they relate especially to your state of life, as Christian maidens, and now confidently hope, that all who have heard me have fervently resolved to put in practice each admonition, which the Mother of Good Counsel has given.

The necessary conditions, however, not only of *making* good resolutions, but of *keeping* them also, is expressed by the words in which the Angel saluted Mary: "The Lord is with thee."

This salutation was, indeed, indicative of the *state* of the most blessed and highly favored Mother of God. She was united to God, and walked ever in His Holy Presence, to which state of her mind the words of the Angel point: "The Lord is with thee; thou art full of grace." He calls her *full* of grace. This salutation can not belong to us; but that, at

least, we may obtain all the graces which God has destined for us, and co-operate with them, the salutation of the Angel, "The Lord is with thee," has to be also applied to us.

Listen, therefore, Christian maiden, to the good counsel bestowed on you to-day, by Mary, your mother :

*" My daughter, if you desire to progress in virtue, endeavor, with special care, to walk in the Presence of God!"*

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To recognize the great influence which this care—to walk ever in this Holy *Presence*—exerts upon our progress in Christian perfection, we need only consider the regular circumstances of our life upon this earth, which are more or less of daily recurrence.

Of the twenty-four hours, as they swiftly pass, each holds for us either *labor* or *rest*, *pleasure* or *suffering*, *prayer* or *temptation*; and if, through all, we fulfill the most Holy Will of God, our every act will tend to our eternal salvation.

For this very end, nothing is more efficacious than to walk in the *Presence* of God, as I will prove.

First, we have all some special *work* awaiting us each day. If we wish to perform it well, and make it meritorious, we must do it with the proper *intention*. This intention is nothing else than to do every thing for the honor of *God*, rather than for a mere worldly motive.



Our actions may be performed with a motive which, in the abstract, may be good; for instance, to fulfill properly the exterior works of that state of life to which one is called by God.

This is true even of works of virtue. They may be performed simply because they are good and praiseworthy in a moral view.

For instance, a man will make every exertion in laboring and work, how to support the family, which God has given to him. Certainly this is a laudable motive; but far inferior to that of working only in view of the greater honor and glory of God, which was the guiding principle of Mary's life, and shone forth even when she consented to become the Mother of God.

Had she perceived that He would have preferred her to refuse the wonderful dignity which the Angel placed before her for acceptance, surely she would not have spoken the consenting word.

Now, nothing in the world can more powerfully influence this very intention, to work only for the greater glory of God, than to walk in the *Presence* of God. It is the continued thought, "God knows and sees it." To do all our works with this pure intention it is not enough to make it at the beginning of each day, but it has to be renewed frequently during its course, in which we will be wonderfully assisted by our care to walk ever in the most Holy Presence of God.

There are certainly many Christians who, at their

morning prayer, do not omit to make the good intention; but, if they are not accustomed to keep themselves in the *Presence* of God, their minds become dissipated, and some other intention, which tarnishes the purity of the first, finds entrance into their hearts.

But it is not alone our regular daily work which awaits us at the beginning of every day. We must endeavor to know what else God requires of us, as to the practice of different virtues, especially with regard to the zeal for our own salvation, and that of our neighbor.

To discover this, we must listen attentively to the special *inspirations* of the Holy Ghost; and indeed nothing disposes us more effectually to hear and accept them, than to walk in the Presence of God.

This walking in the Presence of God, is for us, as we journey towards heaven, what the light of the sun is, when we travel on earth.

Although in the gloom of night it is possible to discern a few steps in advance, yet when darkness flies before the rays of the morning sun, the pilgrim can go on quicker, easier, and with a far more joyous heart.

This is an emblem of the effect produced in our souls by walking in the presence of God. Try it, my young friends, but for one day, to walk in this Holy Presence, and you will soon feel that the constant remembrance of God will fill you with *light*, *consolation* and *strength* to do in His service whatsoever He wills.

So surely as your daily tasks await you, so surely is it a truth that each day comes freighted, more or less, with its share of toil and *suffering*.

Murmur not, however, if God pleases to send you trials and crosses—bear them with patience, and they will tend to your eternal weal. Do not look upon them as coming from the hand of man, but as sent by your loving Father in Heaven, and unite them with the infinite merits of Christ.

That we may acquire this disposition of heart it is most important to walk ever in the Presence of God. The thought, “O Lord, in Whose presence I stand, it is Thou Who dost send this trial to me; for love of Thee and from Thy paternal hand I accept it.” This thought will, with fresh vigor, renew all the motives which encourage us to *patience*. On the other hand, almost every day may also communicate to us occasions for our corporal or spiritual refreshment. In order that also the *enjoyment* of lawful pleasures may become for us meritorious, this our interior disposition will lead us to say also, in these circumstances and delights, “all for the honor of God.” The means to acquire this happy disposition of our spirit, is our care to walk constantly in the adorable Presence of God. For what prevents us from gaining merits for Heaven, in the enjoyment of innocent recreations in which it is allowed to take part, is that *dissipation* of mind, which causes man, in the midst of his friends and enjoyments, to be so utterly forgetful of God.

Far otherwise is it with a soul who walks in the Presence of God. Feeling His nearness, she will have an intense appreciation of the absolute nothingness of all that the world can give, when compared with that which Christ promises, to those who follow in His footsteps.

This constant remembrance of the Divine presence is, at the same time, a pledge, that, according to the manner in which it is made use of, we are rendered more *zealous* in the practice of virtue, and the thought of serving God is kept more vividly in view.

To fulfill what we recognize to be the will of God, and to do all with the intention of His greater Glory, we must beg for that grace to live united with Him in love through the practice of interior prayer—which, at the same time, is the channel by which graces are communicated to us. However, it must be a *true* prayer, a *real* elevation of the heart to God, an intimate conversation, a sweet union with Him. None of these, however, can be separated from the duty of walking in the Presence of God.

Now, what is the principal impediment to true prayer? I answer, it is the want of *recollection*. We are too sensible of the proximity of the creature; too easily influenced by some *affection* or *aversion* which rises up in our hearts, and the most powerful antidote to all this is to beg to walk in the Presence of God. It produces the same effect upon the spirit as does fire upon wood when placed in proximity thereto.

It is accompanied by affections of love to God, which, however brief, are, nevertheless, most effective in elevating the soul to Him, and enabling us to speak with Him, as Moses, in the Tabernacle of the Covenant, conversed with God, "even," says Holy Scripture, "as one friend holds converse with another." And, when he came forth from the Tabernacle of Covenant, his face was radiant, reflecting the light of grace diffused in his heart.

Keeping in the presence of God is, no doubt, the proximate means to enkindle within our hearts the fire of Divine love and cause it to burn ever with a more ardent glow. And it is this love *especially*, which renders prayer more effective in gaining graces from God, so that our petitions are indeed offered up "in spirit and in truth,"—all of which we must attribute to walking in the Presence of God.

But if we are firmly resolved to walk thus, we need not doubt that Satan, on his part, will put forth all his vile arts to disturb, and keep us back from the service of God, and torment us with varied temptations. What will we find the best weapon in this terrible conflict? I answer, the walking in the Presence of God. Yes; for, when the tempter hurls his vile attacks, he selects those moments, when the thoughts of his victim have strayed away from God. He behaves like a vicious cur, which attacks unexpectedly the unaware stranger.

With the Christian, who keeps ever in the Presence of God, it is not so. The vile hell-hound, as St.

Augustine observes, may bark indeed, but he can not bite. And even should he venture to approach a step, he presumes not to touch the watchful Christian, knowing that he will call upon God to aid and protect him, and thus put him to flight.

The Church celebrates in this month—April—the feast of *St. Lidwina*, who, for eight and thirty years, was bound by the fetters of a lingering illness—upon a bed of pain.

Eight and thirty years passed, and her sufferings ceased neither day nor night, but she endured them with heroic patience.

Endowed with wonderful beauty, she prayed that, by illness, she might lose her charms of person, and her prayer was heard.

During all those *years* she took no more nourishment than would be taken by another in the course of some months.

In the first three years of her illness, she found it very hard to endure her agonizing pain; but a Priest, who once visited her, advised her, first of all, to think every day of all that Christ endured for us. Secondly, to remember how brief and fleeting the years, even of the longest life, pass away. And, on the contrary, that the reward for our merits, especially for our patient suffering through the love of God, shall remain eternally.

By taking these his remarks deeply to heart, she came to endure her heavy trial with heroical patience, often uniting herself to Jesus in Holy Communion.

Invoke St. Lidwina during this month, by saying daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the grace to walk in His presence, and, by so doing, to make all your works and wishes and sufferings meritorious for heaven. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVII.

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MARY,

HER JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM.

THE power of Rome had reached the height of its splendor ; the scepter was taken away from Juda ; the eagle wings of the sovereign authority of all-powerful Rome had soared to the confines of the East, and thus Judea became tributary to a foreign Emperor. Then it happened that an edict of the Emperor Augustus was published, to the effect that the census be taken of the people, subject to his imperial rule.

According to an ancient custom of the Jews they had their names enrolled according to generations and tribes ; and since David was born in Bethlehem, once belonging to the tribe of David, that city was looked upon as the cradle of the descendants of David, and they traveled thither to give in their names and position. Mary and Joseph, therefore, set out thither.

Look upon these holy travelers, and admire the wisdom of Divine Providence, which so often makes use of purely human ordinances to fulfill the decrees of the Divine will. Christian maiden ! listen to the advice which Mary will give you to-day, and which, if you heed it, will sanctify your whole life :



*“My daughter, if you wish to follow me, and be confirmed in every virtue, then endeavor to accommodate yourself with meekness of heart to whatever trials God in His Providence is pleased to send you. Learn to suffer without murmur.”*

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For five days Mary and Joseph pursued their toilsome way, and at length arrived in Bethlehem, where they immediately sought shelter in the inns, but, alas! for them no rest or refuge could be found.

Probably they even knocked for admission at the doors of their relatives, but all in vain, on account of the immense throng of strangers who had flocked to the town. Sadly St. Joseph paced through the crowded streets, but no door opened compassionately to bid him enter with his young and tender spouse.

Oh! what anxiety for her filled his loving heart; but the meek and patient resignation to the will of God which shone forth from Mary's heavenly countenance, became some source of consolation to him. As they passed the last house the shades of night deepened around them, and the cold, frosty wind which blew directly towards them penetrated the very marrow of their bones.

Suddenly, St. Joseph discovered a grotto hewn in a rock, which was occasionally used as a stable by the people. This stable became their shelter.

Here they watched through the night,—here, is the ever-blessed place in which the Saviour of man, the

Son of God, was destined to first unclose His eyes to the light of this world.

Whatever may be the way which God points out for us upon earth, in order to fulfill His Holy Will, and become blessed, it is in every case more or less a way of trial—the royal road of the Cross ; and that we may tread its path so as to gain merits at every step, *patience* is an indispensable condition.

For this we have the assurance of Christ Himself, Who says : “ In patience you will possess your souls.”

But, since it is certain that no one can be *patient* who is not also *meek*, patience and meekness must go hand in hand.

Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to reflect often how glorious is patience ! how full of merits this beautiful virtue is for eternal life ! Then we will clearly perceive too, how important a virtue meekness and a lowly spirit is, without which we would not be able to bear the cross, which God, in His Providence, has imposed upon us, with patience and cheerful submission to Him.

“ Patience,” says St. James, “ has a perfect work.” Ah, yes ! it is a glorious work to suffer patiently, in entire union with the Most Holy Will of God.

This truth can not fail to flash vividly before our minds, if we consider the many virtues which simultaneously radiate from one act of this heroic virtue—even as from a diamond are emitted all around rays of most dazzling light.

From one single act of this Patience, first, the three

*divine* virtues shine forth in heavenly splendor ; for the Christian, who cheerfully bears the ills of life, thus openly confesses that, instructed by holy *faith*, he knows that neither the hate of man, nor the malice of hell, have power to harm him, since the guiding of Divine Providence directs all things in life.

Through patient submission to the Divine Will shines forth, secondly, the virtue of *hope* in its most glorious splendor ; for in the trials—amid sorrows which well-nigh crush the heart—the patient soul casts her glance heavenward, cheered by the thought that the greater her trials here on earth, the more surely she may expect the joys of Paradise.

With the act of patience is also linked the manifestation of holy *love*, which burns and sparkles in a thousand brilliant rays ; for each added cross is to the patient soul another source of joy, since by trials, meekly borne, we become more like to Christ, our Love Crucified, and prove to Him the strength and sincerity of our love to Him.

Then, too, are the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Moderation and Fortitude, strikingly reflected in the single virtue of patience. Indeed, where can be found a more convincing proof of *prudence* than in willingness to draw good from evil? and of *justice*, by the diligent care to avoid offending against fraternal charity? This course, also, tends to exercise the virtue of *moderation*, which prevents her giving way to any unjust degree of disapprobation, so that, replenished with the virtue of *fortitude*—notwithstanding the many

adversities which may gather around—she will triumphantly persevere in her good resolutions.

The rays of light, which emanate from the moral virtues, gild, with their pure, clear luster, each act of *patience* that we perform. Humility and self-conquest, united with meekness among the rest, will shine forth with vivid glow. The last named—viz.: *meekness*—appears, indeed, as an indispensable condition of our possessing our souls in patience. How, indeed, could we be patient without meekness, that lovely virtue which enables us, in all our intercourse with others, to calm our agitated feelings, and crush down aught that would give them reason to fear that sentiments of anger, or displeasure, are felt in their regard.

Therefore, virgin of Christ! glance at Mary, and exercise yourself carefully in acquiring a meek and lowly heart. In order that you may be able to do this, steadfastly adhere to the following motives, and faithfully examine your conscience upon the same.

First, although you may be visited with adversities which might well-nigh make your courage falter, whatever grief betide you, never receive it as if the hand of man had held the bitter cup, but look upon it as coming from the hand of a merciful God.

Secondly. Never lose sight of the truth that, so far from being a misfortune, suffering is the most glorious opportunity we can have to prove, through patience, our *love* for God; to show Him that our will is entirely united to His, and to enable us to acquire the richest treasure of merits for a heavenly home.

Should our path through life be strewed with lovely flowers, or only gentle zephyrs steer our barque across the sea of life, we would have nothing to suffer for God. Then, woe to us; for not by such pleasant paths did Jesus lead the way to heaven.

Thirdly. Unite your sufferings with the sufferings of Christ, and return thanks in a special manner when you are permitted to suffer as the subject of unmerited reproach. "Had there been any more glorious portion than to suffer innocently, the Eternal Father would have communicated it to His Incarnate Son, instead of allowing Him to be the greatest, although the most innocent, Sufferer."

Hold this principle of Christian view always present before your mind. Watch, therefore, in the very beginning of the day, lest you lose *patience*, and offend against *meekness* upon those occasions most liable to produce that result.

First. In your day's duties, when things do not pass off as agreeably as they might, keep cool and resigned.

Secondly. The faults, weaknesses, evil habits or vices of those with whom you live, or in whose society you are frequently thrown—your parents, brothers, sisters and acquaintances—will enable you to make many acts of patience; all the more so if it happens that, although there are some amongst them who regard you with dislike, you yet bear with them without a word.

Thirdly. Ill-health and bodily infirmities will afford

you a glorious opportunity of patiently resigning yourself to the Will of God.

How many Christian maidens there are who, while they certainly preserve their purity, are, nevertheless, both at home and in their intercourse with others, exceedingly *quarrelsome*, impatient, and easily excited to anger, so that one is really glad to keep out of their sight.

Far otherwise it is, however, with a young girl who is known for her piety, love of prayer, and zeal in the service of God, and who at home is kind and amiable to all.

Oh! what an edifying sight to behold such a meek and patient Christian maiden!

Let it be your earnest care to be, in the midst of the family circle, like the gentle and innocent lamb and dove—mild and loving, with a heart wherein no gall nor bitterness can ever find a place.

If it has been so with you, then, indeed, you have my heartfelt congratulations. If not, examine your conscience. Discover wherein lies the fault, and make fervent resolutions to amend.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Julia*, who was born in Carthage, of noble and ancient lineage. Alaric, the Ruler of the Vandals, with his barbarous hordes, took Carthage, and sold the Christian virgins as slaves.

The noble Julia was destined to be bought by a Syrian merchant, in whose service, notwithstanding her exalted rank, she performed the most menial

tasks. She submitted to her cruel fate with perfect resignation to the Divine Will.

Not a murmur escaped her lips, but she meekly and patiently persevered in the service of God.

It happened that her master took her to Corsica, where the Governor of the country, finding that she was a Christian, used every effort to induce her to deny her Holy Religion; but all his efforts were lost upon her courageous soul. He then essayed to vanquish her resolution by the application of the most painful torture; but the heroic virgin consoled and encouraged herself by remembering the suffering of her crucified Lord. "I also am ready to be crucified for my Jesus," she cried out to the tyrant, who, in a transport of rage, replied: "Then, indeed, thou shalt have thy wish."

She was then really fastened to a cross, where she called, without ceasing, upon Jesus; and as she yielded up her pure, meek, and patiently suffering soul, her face was irradiated with a most brilliant light.

Invoke St. Julia during this month, by saying daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the virtues of patience in suffering, and meekness of heart, from the meek heart of Jesus. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XVIII.

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MARY,

AND THE INFANT JESUS IN THE CRIB.

MARY, with Joseph, had entered the innermost grotto of the rock. Night brooded over the earth, and each flitting moment added a deeper hue to its ever-darkening shadows. Yes, it was a night, indeed, holy and mysterious, and full of grace for man. It was the fulfillment of the prophecy: "The night shall be changed into day. The night is my splendor and joy."

It was the night in the depths of which were centered the numberless blessings which, throughout the unfathomable ages of eternity, had been destined for it,—the night upon which Mary—pure virgin and mother—was to receive and embrace Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

Although faint and weary from her pilgrimage, Mary fell upon her knees in the dimly lighted cave, and, in accordance with her custom, prayed until the midnight hour approached.

Then, "as the night proceeded to the midst of its course," as Holy Scripture expresses it, "there went



forth, O Lord, Thy Almighty word from heaven, from the royal throne!"

Mary, in heavenly ecstasy, brought forth her Divine Child. Embracing it with the tender grace of a loving mother, she sheltered it in her maternal arms.

Contemplative soul, glance at the babe of Bethlehem; behold how its divine eyes are cast in fondest love upon its mother, Mary, and then direct your gaze to that tender virgin. See the love, the exultation which beam from her eyes as she looks at her Divine Child. The infant stretches forth its little arms, that she may lavish new caresses upon it; and see the fervor with which Mary, in return, presses it to her maternal heart, kisses it, and kneels down in a transport of profound adoration.

Then she wrapped it in swaddling clothes, and laid it in the manger.

Virgin of Christ, listen to her counsel to you, which to-day is as follows:

*"My daughter, wouldst thou be a true child of God? Then kneel by the crib of my new-born babe, and learn the virtues and interior dispositions which will place you among His own true children, and distinguish you from the votaries of a sinful world."*

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The Divine Infant lies humbled in the crib, even to the form of a poor, weak child of man. Yet this, according to His person, is the *Son of God*, exalted and glorified from eternity to eternity. St. Paul says:

“Although God in form, He annihilated Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a slave.” And yet he was also King of kings, and Lord of the most powerful rulers on earth.

*Humility*, therefore, is the principal characteristic of the children of God; pride and vanity the distinguishing marks of those of the world. What does your conscience say in this regard, Christian maiden?

Are you willing to bear the sneering laugh, the cold contempt, the stinging slight which may greet you?

Then, indeed, you have cause to rejoice, especially if they are endured for Christ’s dear sake, and are caused by your efforts to walk the way *He* trod on earth.

But if, with each added year, self-will, self-love, and self-esteem grow stronger in your heart, it is not well with you; and in the manifestation of your conscience you will deserve to be thus reproached by the Infant Jesus: “In the eyes of the world you live indeed; but to Me, being a vain and sinful worldling, you are dead.”

No bed of down was that on which the little Infant lay; for a rude crib, filled with straw, received His tender form; therefore, Mary and Joseph, at His presentation in the Temple, make the offering of the poor—two turtle doves.

Behold here, *two* characteristics in the life led by the true children of God. With the child of the world, the treasures of wealth engross all the love of

his heart; while he looks on poverty with horror and dread. An inordinate desire to have, to possess always more and more, eats into the very fibers of his being, and winds round his soul the galling chains of many cares, wearisome calculations, and interminable toil. And all this is undertaken for the sake of increasing his worldly store. No time has he to think on eternity; for, living entirely for the present as he does, prayer is neglected, divine service and spiritual reading by and by given up, and the reception of the Sacraments becomes a thing of the past.

Christian maiden! do you recognize your own interior in the picture which I have thus delineated? If so, then, indeed, you are a child of the world. The child of God is satisfied with the *necessaries* of life; and what is over he applies to the glorification of God, the support of His kingdom on earth, and the relief of those whom fraternal charity bids him assist. Look into your heart, and see if this is your picture, or whether the world can claim you as its votary.

*Solitary* and *forsaken*, the Infant Jesus lies in the crib, and prays; and here is indicated the *third* characteristic of the children of God.

No greater delight has the fervent soul than a loving union with God and frequent *prayer*. He strives to attain this union by prayer; and from that ever-flowing fountain of grace his heart is always replenished anew. He enjoys in anticipation, through intercourse with Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, that bliss which will one day be ours in Heaven. The taber-

nacle is for him a true *Bethlehem*, the signification of which is, the "House of bread."

Intercourse and association with others is what the worldling delights in, and to him solitude is intolerably wearisome. Meditation upon the presence of God he can not endure, and he prays only from habit, association, or human respect.

He *seems* to pray with his lips, but where are his thoughts? On the things of the world. And as to his intercourse with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament—his reception of the Body and Blood of Christ—oh! how infrequent and ineffectual it is! How different from the zealous servant of God!

*Hard* and comfortless is the couch of the new-born Infant—God; and there is manifested the *fourth* characteristic of His children.

The worldling loves to enjoy, but shrinks from trouble, *self-denial*, and conquest over self. The thought of Penance is odious, while he would fain take part in every pleasure. Each one of you knows the truth of this. The disposition is manifested even in little children who eagerly seek for *amusement*, and strive after what will flatter the senses.

How many temptations to sin are connected with this inordinate desire for society, and the pleasure to be found therein! How it interferes with the distribution of Christ's graces for the work of sanctification in the heart!

The child of God glances at the Infant Jesus, *patient* amid all His *sufferings*, and recognizes the value of

patience in sufferings, and of self-denial in the practice of virtue.

He remembers the inestimable treasure of merits for life eternal, by which our Lord rewards one in whose life the Cross has borne the greater part. Christian maiden ! how is it in regard to your zeal in carrying the *Cross*, and what says conscience about your spirit of *Penance*? Do you not rather love society, and find your greatest delight in the enjoyment which it affords? The *true* answer to this will at once reveal whether you are a child of God, or whether the world holds the first place in your heart.

The Infant Jesus, *immolating* Himself for the salvation of man, is ready to shed every drop of His precious blood to ransom even *one* soul, to gain Heaven for it ; therefore, the *fifth* and last characteristic of the children of God is *zeal* for souls.

The child of God, not satisfied to serve God Himself, never wearies in his devoted efforts to lead others to do the same, as far as he can. If he could he would induce the whole world to acknowledge God, to confess the faith, and live as its divine precepts dictate. But what cares the child of the world whether others are saved or lost? Nay, he even gives scandal, all heedless of the warning words of Christ, in regard to those who thus offend : " It were better," says Christ, " for such a man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he drowned in the depths of the sea."

Having pointed out to you the distinguishing marks

of the true children of God, I would admonish you to examine yourself seriously as to whether you possess them or not.

The Church celebrates, in June, the feast of *St. Juliana*, of Falconieri. Read the history of her life. Born in the year 1270, in Florence, of parents whose wealth secured to her the possession of this world's joys, she, nevertheless, entered the Order of the Servitines, and became a model for the rest of the community. She was noted for her humility, union with God in prayer, self-denial, and love of her neighbor, to the great admiration of the rest. But, amid all the glorious virgins, she is especially distinguished for the wonderful *Communion*, with which she was favored on her dying bed.

She had an inexpressible desire to receive Jesus as Viaticum. But the nature of her disease—vomiting—not permitting her to retain any thing whatsoever, she begged that the Blessed Sacrament might be brought within reach of her bed. Behold! the Sacred Host disappeared from the hand of the Priest, while the Saint, with a sweet smile, and a wonderful light irradiating her countenance, breathed her last.

After her death the semblance of the Sacred Host was found impressed on her heart, sure token that Christ, in the most Blessed Sacrament, had entered therein.

Invoke *St. Juliana*, during this month, by saying, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you an intense and most ardent devotion towards Jesus

in his *Sacrament*, through which you will be impelled to frequently visit your Lord, and adore Him therein—yes, even daily, if it be possible for you. But *especially* pray that she may aid you to make good use of the presence of Christ in your heart, after Holy Communion, through thanksgiving mingled with the tenderest love to Him. She may also obtain for you the grace that, when your dying hour comes, strengthened and encouraged by receiving the Holy Communion, as *Viaticum*, you may yield up your spirit as a true child of God united with Jesus. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XIX.

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MARY,

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

THE Saviour of the world was born, and the word fulfilled, as ages before the Lord had announced, through His Prophets; "He Himself will come and save us." Myriads of Angels, of every choir of celestial spirits filled the celestial regions near, giving expression to their joy at the birth of the Divine Child, adoring it and praising its Ever-Blessed Mother, their Queen.

That very night was not permitted to pass before the glad tidings of the mystery which its depths had revealed was announced to the children of men. And who were the chosen ones to whom it was first imparted? Holy Scripture makes answer in the following words :

"And there were in the same country shepherds, watching and keeping the night watches over their flocks :

"And, behold! an Angel of the Lord stood by them,



and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear.

“And the Angel said to them: Fear not; for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy; that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be unto you a sign: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the Angel, a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.”

The shepherds who had been thus favored by God, immediately arose, commended their flocks to the protection of the Angels, and, filling their baskets with gifts, instantly set out.

They pursued, with all speed, their way to Bethlehem, under a sky now illumined by the splendor of the glittering stars which gemmed the celestial vault. Soon they reached their destination, and immediately repaired to the stable, where, as the Angel had told them, they found the Divine Child lying in the manger and, by it, Mary, the happiest mother on earth.

Contemplate and consider, in spirit, how graciously she looked upon the kneeling shepherds, as they prostrated themselves at her feet, and the tenderness with which she held up, to their view, the most beautiful among the children of men. Glance at the maternal tenderness with which she recommended to Him these

firstlings among His adorers. Then turn to the fervent devotion, the deep reverence and ardent love with which the shepherds paid the first homage to the Infant God—the heart-felt congratulations which they offered to Mary, while they solicited her gracious protection.

Yes, blessed are the eyes which saw what those shepherds beheld that Christmas-tide in Bethlehem. Praising, they returned to their own country, with a remembrance which never died out of their hearts of the divine loveliness of the Babe, and the heavenly beauty of its Mother.

Child of Mary! Catholic maiden! while considering this mystery, so full of grace, listen to the counsel which your Mother gives:

*“My daughter! dost thou desire to live as a good, true child of God, seeking to please me and my Infant Son? Then imitate the example of the shepherds by a zealous practice of that virtue to which their conduct points out, as it were, with extended fingers.*

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The shepherds remained with their flocks and watched. I make the application and say: If a maiden would live so that she can easily perceive the *inspiration* of grace, and, *co-operating* therewith, walk zealously in the service of God, she must avoid *idleness*, and industriously discharge her appointed tasks, whether she be a *daughter* of the house, or a *servant* therein.

Every truly pious girl is distinguished by her cheerful *diligence*; but it is a general rule, and one which seldom fails, that the one who is idle, lazy and slothful is never really *pious*.

Idleness is never allowed, and it is a greater sin yet if, through indulging in it, one neglects to fulfill the duties of her state, if she is employed in the service of others, and receives for it her pay.

Secondly. Although an idle girl may work, it is in a careless and imperfect manner, productive, perhaps, of injury, which she is bound to repair.

Idleness, besides, frequently leads to protracted *conversation*, and thus others are prevented from fulfilling their tasks, or made to perform them after the time allotted for them.

This is not all, however. Through an excessive love of idle *talking* charity is often wounded; and, finally, if an indolent girl enters the married state, she, too, often becomes, by idleness, a burden to her husband, and thus discontent comes to sit by the family hearth.

The shepherds *watched*, the people of Bethlehem *slept*.

“Blessed are they who watch at my door before day-break,” thus cries out divine wisdom to us children of men. All honor to that girl who can say, not only that she is the first awake in the house, but that she rises at once, and begins her daily duties, after having faithfully and fervently recited her prayers.

On the contrary, I have no esteem whatever for the girl who sleeps her morning hours away. No preten-

sions to piety, industry, or any of the attendant virtues can she make. Question your own conscience on that point. Are you fond of *work*? Or do you leave it all for your mother—nay, even for your aged grandmother—to do, while *you* lounge idly in the rocking-chair, devouring the trashy columns of some illustrated newspaper, or cruelly torturing your helpless piano by bringing discord from its keys?

Every young girl should make it a special point to spend a sufficient portion of her time in the kitchen, that she may become so far versed in the culinary art as to be able to prepare a good meal without the aid of a servant. This conduces wonderfully to the preservation of peace and good temper in the family.

The shepherds were *resolute* men. When they learned the Will of God, through the will of the Angel, nothing could delay them from acting in accordance with it.

It was *night*. How naturally, therefore, the thought might have arisen: "Surely we can wait until the dawn of day; the little Infant will not run away; and if we go to Bethlehem at this unseemly hour, asking for a new-born babe, we will disturb the sleeping people, and either excite their wrath, or gain their ridicule."

Nothing of the kind, however, was either in their mind, or on their lips; and here their conduct points to another virtue for us to practice, if we are in earnest in our efforts to walk as zealous children of God upon earth—it is *promptness*. Whatever we have resolved to do for the glory of God, we must

do *at once*, or the devil will throw obstacles in the way; and here lies the principal impediment to an active life,

Many make resolutions, and, to all appearances, they are in earnest—they have the *will*, indeed; but there it ends. They delay in executing them—the good intentions die away, and the tepid life goes on. Am I correct, or not?

Let each one question her own conscience, and read the answer there.

As to the principal cause of this defect in making and keeping resolutions, believe me, it is human respect, the dreaded: “What will they say?” “What will be said of me if I make a firm resolution—and keep it—to live in the service of God?”

The shepherds afford us an admirable example of *adoration*, *generosity*, and *gratitude*.

Christian maiden! That you may walk zealously and resolutely as a child of God, you must love *prayer* and faithfully practice it.

You must evince a *noble* charity to the poor, and be ever willing to hasten to their assistance, and especially remember the Church. Praise and thanksgiving may be given to God, that there are yet on earth, and particularly in America, to be found maidens, who are ever ready with their aid towards supporting the priests of God and His Holy Church.

Let your patroness for this month, whom you will devoutly invoke, be *St. Martha*. We read in the Gospel of the hospitality with which she entertained

our Divine Lord and His Apostles. That Christ permitted her to do so, was a great honor, and she merits to receive your congratulations for it. It should also inspire you with the greatest confidence in the efficacy of her intercession with Jesus. She may not only obtain for you the virtue of industry, but also the grace which in her shone so brilliantly forth, to do every thing for the *love* of Jesus with that good intention with which He performed His every act for the glorification of His Heavenly Father. Then will all your works be most gloriously transformed into gems of merit for your glittering diadem in Heaven. Say for that intention, every day, until our next conference, one Ave Maria, in honor of St. Martha, the zealous servant, through her immense love to Jesus. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XX.

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### MARY

AT THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE INFANT JESUS.

THE eighth day after the virginal mother had welcomed her Divine Son into the world had arrived, the time of His circumcision had come. The hour in which the name of *Jesus* was to be given Him was at hand.

That this name should manifest itself in a most glorious and sanctifying manner for the kingdom of God, becomes evident, when we consider the signification of a name as *distinguishing* the one who possesses it, and think of the relation it bears to his *Dignity*.

Therefore, the Prophet, already viewing in spirit the coming of the promised Redeemer, cries out in his joy: "For a Child is born to us, and a Son given unto us. And the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." And again: "Behold, a virgin

shall conceive and bring forth a Son, and His name shall be called Immanuel."

The signification of all these names is included in the one name, "*Jesus*," which, as the Angel declared to Mary, was to be borne by her Divine Son. Christian maiden! give ear to the counsel given you to-day by Mary, the Immaculate Virgin :

*"My daughter, if you desire to walk in my imitation, and daily progress in the way of virtue, then value 'time' as the most precious treasure you receive from God, and be particular to avoid aught that would destroy so great a boon."*

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The Church unites the solemn commemoration of the circumcision of the Divine Infant with the celebration of the *first day* of the year, a circumstance which points, in the most explicit manner, to all that is required to spend our lives as is indicated by the holy *Name* of *Jesus*. That is, to use well every moment of time, and, in His Sacred Name, so as to gain merits for the coming *eternity*. To obtain a proper understanding of this, meditate upon it, and live in accordance therewith, we must first earnestly consider the *value of time*. We will then gain a fitting appreciation thereof; and, carefully guarding against the evil of losing it, exert every effort to employ it most meritoriously, and in a manner most perfect.

Even apart from what Holy Faith teaches on the subject, man, viewing it in the light of reason itself,



easily recognizes the inestimable good which lies in the value of time allotted for our lives upon earth. For time is, first of all, the requisite condition to acquire wealth, and to obtain the means of enjoyment in this world.

These are two advantages justly ranked among the greatest benefits the world in a natural way can give us.

But what infinitely great importance does its value assume, when we look upon ourselves in the light of faith, and consider the value of our immortal souls, redeemed through the Incarnation of the Son of God, and reflect upon that eternity to which every breath draws us nearer.

In other words, we can not sufficiently appreciate all that is contained in the very word "*time*" when it appears illumined by the heavenly radiance of the sweet name, "*Jesus*." For the name *Jesus* means *salvation*. And what is the relation of time in order to salvation? Listen! Time is the opportunity given by God to us, by which we can gain merits for eternity! And how will those merits be rewarded in eternity?

The reward will be nothing less than *God Himself*. Wherefore, St. Chrysostom is right when he exclaims: "O Time! what is thy value? It equals the value of God Himself." Yes; for time *gained* means a higher degree of union, of glorification, and of beatitude in God forever. Time *lost*, means the loss of that higher degree of union, of glorification, of beatitude

in God forever. It means, also, the loss of a more exalted degree of glory and bliss in the communion of all the Angels and the Saints forever.

Can any Christian, who meditates upon the above, refrain from earnestly resolving not to lose the smallest particle of that precious treasure: *Time*, especially when this reflection more vividly recalls the conviction that, while time is a most estimable benefit, it is one which speeds so *swiftly* away; a treasure *rare*, indeed, but how *fleeting*, too? And when once passed, it is so *forever*!

There was a time—and but a few brief years ago—when I was *not*. Now I live, yet can not call one little moment mine! A little while, and time for me shall be no more!

St. Theresa, after her death, appeared to one of her religious daughters, and said: “O my child! could thou but obtain a true knowledge of the value of time! For the small particle of *time* required to say one Ave Maria, I would willingly leave heaven, say the little prayer, and remain in Purgatory until the end of the world, in order to receive for the merits obtained thereby, so much the greater portion of eternal joy and glory in heaven—in the beatific vision of God.”

Ah! could we but behold every evening, at the nightly examination of conscience, the *crowns* of celestial brightness which we, in that single day, have lost, I do not say by sins, but because we failed to employ its fleeting moments with the zeal character-

istic of the Saints, how we would wish to have lived in such a way, as not to have lost any merit and crown awaiting for us in heaven!

What, then, should be our fervent resolve for our whole life-time?—Never to *lose* one moment's time!

And is it not a matter of astonishment to see the recklessness with which even the children of the Holy Church squander this precious treasure, and destroy all its value? How often do we not hear the question of how to *kill* time? Whence arises this evil—this loss? Not to speak of the numbers who not only do not employ the time of their lives to labor for eternity, but *waste* it through *abuse* and even the commission of *sin*.

In regard to the first cause by which the time of man is wasted, we learn it through the name of Jesus, in its perfect sense.

It is the name of the *Redeemer* Who came to deliver us from sin. To render our works meritorious for heaven, the first requisite is to be in the state of *sanctifying grace*.

As long as the dark shadow of mortal sin broods over the soul of a Christian, not one of his works—even of those which are morally good—possesses merit for eternal life. Oh! what a loss!

And, alas! there are many who profess to be children of the one true Church, who, after loading their souls with this heinous guilt, live for weeks and months—nay, even *for years*—without sincerely confessing their mortal sins.

Thus, that precious time which they could so easily have employed to increase their merits for heaven is *lost—irrevocably lost.*

There are girls who, ere yet their childhood's years have passed, have tarnished the purity of their souls by sins against the angelic virtue, which they committed with little girls—or, perhaps, with little boys—and never properly confessed. What, then?

Although they confess again and again, nevertheless but too often each Sacrament adds another sacrilege to the guilt, which already weighs upon their souls, because they only confess with their lips. A favorite excuse with those who are given to such offenses, is that they did not think those immodest actions were mortal sins, but too often it is a mere pretext.

As instructed Christian children, they should have known that every sin against Holy Purity in thought, word, desire, or action, is mortal.

Again, many imagine that it is sufficient to have confessed the sin, so as to mention it to the Priest, although without true compunction of heart. They are mistaken again. God will not admit any such reconciliation with Him to be valid; for the sinner who relapses *again* and *again* into the same offenses, evinces, beyond a doubt, that sorrow and resolution were wanting, and the confessions were naught but *delusions.*

Christian maiden! on this point the voice of warning can not be often enough directed to you. It is through this deception that Satan seeks to blind

innumerable souls in their earliest youth; and this warning is *especially* needed by those girls who, when just growing into maidenhood, receive visits, and remain alone with persons of the other sex,—particularly if they think of marriage.

While a soul remains knowingly in this condition, in the state of mortal sin, all her prayers, fasts, alms, deeds, and other good works, are utterly destitute of merit in the sight of God. Years, perhaps, pass over her head, and they, with all the hours, and days, and weeks, and months, are, for all eternity, *lost!* If, therefore, the warning voice of Conscience gives notice that you have committed a mortal sin, not yet confessed, delay not to be reconciled to God by a *good* confession, and henceforward live in the state of *sanctifying grace*.

The second source which *kills* time is *idleness* and neglecting to make the good *intention* in our actions—failing immediately upon awakening in the morning to make the intention to do every thing for love of God, according to that intention in which the Sacred Heart of Jesus labored and suffered; and omitting to properly arrange beforehand the various hours of the day that not one moment may be spent in a useless manner.

The *third* source is continual and unprofitable *talk-ing*. How much time do not young women waste in idle and useless conversation, and not merely useless, for, according to the proverb: “Much talk will not pass without sin.”

The *fourth* source of this great evil, is that prevalent passion for making and receiving *visits*, and for amusements, especially dangerous ones, where noise and tumult reign, among which may be classed picnics, balls, and parties. All usually loss of time.

Examine yourself upon each of these points. Lose no time. On the contrary, employ it well, as I have admonished you, in the Most Holy Name of Jesus, and according to His Divine example.

St. Paul assures us, that with its first throb the Heart of Jesus confessed before His heavenly Father: "I am come, O God! to fulfill Thy will, and Thy law is in the midst of My heart." But *what*, then, is the Will of God? Oh! what can it be otherwise than our sanctification; and this, above all, through the most faithful fulfillment of this Most Holy Will—in complying with the duties of our state—and this with the intention and desire to recognize and fulfill what God wills, because He wills it, and according to the manner in which He wishes it to be done. But what *especially* inspires us to live thus, the Holy Name of *Jesus* tells. It contains within itself the signification of all other names—*Emmanuel! God with us!*

It is certainly the name of the Incarnate Son of God, and contains the admonition: "Walk in the presence of God." Oh! what a powerful means to enable us to spend every *moment* of time for God. I have already pointed out to you the way. Make the application!

Emmanuel! God with us! Jesus with us! Endeavor,

*especially*, to take time for frequent intercourse with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and you will, replenished with the knowledge and love of Christ, employ the *time* He has given you in His imitation, meritoriously for the coming eternity.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Philomena*. She is distinguished for the wonderful miracles, wrought through her intercession, in modern times.

Her life on earth was but a few short years, for in the flower of youth she sealed her faith, and proved her fidelity to her virginity with her blood.

Fifteen hundred centuries elapsed before the sacred remains were found. Then, having been discovered, they were placed on the altars of the Church for the veneration of the faithful. But, during that long lapse of time, her virginal soul rejoiced in the beatitude of heaven and the martyr's crown so nobly won on earth.

Invoke the intercession of *St. Philomena* during this month, that she may obtain for you from God grace to employ faithfully the precious *time of youth*, and *all* your earthly life in work, in prayer, in suffering. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXI.

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MARY,

AND THE HOLY THREE KINGS.

“A STAR shall rise out of Jacob.” Thus did Balaam already announce that sign in the heavens, by which the inhabitants of Arabia would recognize the birth of the King of kings—the promised Messiah.

This star indeed arose, and glittered brilliantly in the East as Christ was born. Three royal Magi beheld that wonderful star, understood its significance, and as its shining radiance called them to follow, they obeyed, without a moment's useless waiting. Laden with valuable gifts, and attended by an imposing retinue, they set out for Jerusalem. The wonderful star moved on, ever before them, entirely distinct from all other stars in the sky; but when the city of Jerusalem, with its towering temple came into view on the distant horizon, it vanished away. Then, questioning the scribes, the Magi learned that *Bethlehem* was the spot set apart for the birth of the Messiah, and the star appeared again in all its brightness as they turned their steps thither.

It rested over the dwelling wherein the new-born



Babe, with Mary was, while a bright ray from heaven illumined the humble home.

The three Kings entered, beheld the mother with the Divine Child, and, falling down on their knees, adored Him, presenting their offerings of *gold, frankincense and myrrh*; meanwhile they did not forget the mother of the royal Child, but also paid homage to Mary, who looked at them graciously, blessed them, and beheld the fulfillment of those prophetic words, which, in exultant joy, she had spoken in presence of St. Elizabeth: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed." Listen, O Christian maiden! to the good counsel which, in considering this event of her life, Mary will give you to-day.

*"My daughter! if you are resolved to walk in my footsteps, then return grateful thanks for the privilege of being a child of the Catholic Church. Look upon the gift of faith as a blessing far greater than all other gifts in life, and seek to gain thorough instruction in every thing relating thereto.*

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According to the unanimous doctrine of the Holy Fathers, these three princely Magi were a foreshadowing, and the first fruits, of the call of all *heathen* nations to the faith of Christ, the Church of God.

Consider well what I will tell you of this, that the counsel of Mary may be more vividly impressed on your heart; *then* this hour will have a most salutary effect on your whole future life.

First, then, thank God from the deepest depths of your heart that it is your happy lot to be a Catholic, for *faith* is a gift immeasurably precious, and equally rare. It is indeed an inestimable blessing, for it illumines your pathway through life. With the light it imparts it enables us to walk with unswerving steps the way to eternal bliss. St. Paul says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and it is indeed, which places before our eyes the truths which God has revealed to man for his eternal salvation. Besides this, it shows also the means, by using which we not only learn to understand the Divine Will, and our duties as children of God, but are also strengthened to walk the path to salvation, with zeal and fidelity, amid the sweetest spiritual consolation, until death.

This great gift is also comparatively a *rare* gift. Think of the four thousand years which elapsed before Christ was born in the world, and of the millions of heathens, who, during that time, trod the way of falsehood and error. How sad for you, had you been of their number, living before the advent of Christ! What would have been your fate for eternity?

And, even since the time of Christ's advent on earth, how many heathens may still be found among the children of men! More than half the human race still grope in the dark night of idolatry; and of the millions who believe in *Christ*, how many have fallen away from His Church. Suppose you had been born among those who live as Christians in an erroneous belief?

How would it have been with your hope of eternal salvation ?

But God be forever praised and thanked, you are of the number of those who belong to His Holy Catholic Church, and *this* you should esteem as a happiness greater and more to be prized than all earth's rarest treasures.

Living, especially as you do, in America, among so great a variety of infidels and sectarians, you can not help being frequently reminded of this happiness to be a child of the true Church of God. When Sunday comes, behold the members of each denomination, wending their way to their various places of worship—one going hither, another thither, while to you God has manifested a special goodness in calling you, without your own choice and merit, to the only true and saving Church!

But remember it well, it is not enough to call yourself a Catholic, but you have to make yourself thoroughly acquainted with all the tenets of the Holy Catholic Church, in order that when her enemies lift up the voice of calumny and reproach against her, and assail her doctrine, you may not only be preserved from suffering shipwreck in your faith, but enabled to give an account of what it teaches, and bring others to embrace it as well.

With a view to bring about this happy result, I have written a series of books. I wish you to procure them *all*, and read them with careful attention. In them is contained all that is necessary for a Catholic—

even a poor servant girl in this country—to know, in order to give testimony of what she believes as a faithful child of God.

*First*, in this series, is the *book for the conversion* of America, under the title of “Catholicity, Protestantism and Infidelity.” It abounds in short, clear and plainly elucidated arguments, proving that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ. Have you this book? If not, procure it—your whole soul must be penetrated with the conviction: There is but *one* true Church; Christ has founded it, and it is the Holy *Catholic* Church, which now exists, although more than eighteen hundred years have passed since Christ has established it.

She is that Church in regard to which we have the Word of her Divine Founder, that “against her the gates of hell will never prevail.”

This assurance proves, in the most peremptory manner, that especially the Protestant sects have all fallen away from the Church, since their origin is far from contemporary with that of the Christian name. Four hundred years ago and there was not a single *Protestant* on earth.

Besides, you have to be able to answer all the objections with which Protestants and Infidels are used to attack the truth of the Catholic Church. In this book they are all triumphantly answered.

The second book is “The Manual of the Catholic Religion for Self-Instruction.” In it I present incontrovertible proofs, that there is nothing which we be-

lieve and do to-day, as children of the Holy Church, which was not believed in Apostolic times, and proved, as well as taught, by the Holy Fathers. That you should be well posted in this regard, is the more advisable, since those who are not of our holy faith very often excite doubts of every kind in the minds of the imperfectly instructed. Be, therefore, careful to acquire an accurate knowledge of its various doctrines.

You should try it also for another reason: You might be induced to listen to the pleadings of some Protestant youth, and be persuaded to marry him, on the plea that it could make but little difference whether one belongs to the Catholic or Protestant belief. If you have not the book, delay not to procure a copy and give it to him.

The third in the order is the "Sacred Heart Mission Book."

After you have read, and thoroughly understood, the contents of the two mentioned volumes, you can say: "I know now all that is necessary for me, as a real Catholic, to know; but I must also *live* as a Catholic, in the imitation of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, in order to be saved."

Christian maiden! all that I could say to you upon this subject is contained in this Mission Book of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially in the *dialogue* between the soul and Christ. In that little volume you will be taught how to advance in the way of *perfection*, by imitating the virtues of the divine and

adorable Heart, through an always increasing knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

The fourth book is that on the "Infallibility of the Pope." To avoid falling into error, we must cling firmly to the Holy Apostolic Chair, the Infallible Head of the Church. By the book on the infallible Authority of the Pope in defining articles of faith, you will obtain all necessary instruction on the subject. I would wish you to read it that you may be fortified against those who insist that Catholics believe that the Pope, as *man*, is not fallible as other men are. He is, indeed, so; but not when, as successor of St. Peter and Representative of Christ, and Head and mouthpiece of the Church, he renders a decision in matters of *faith*.

The fifth book is that on the joys of heaven, inscribed: "Easter in Heaven." In order that you may serve God with joyful *courage*, one of the most frequent subjects of your meditation must be *Heaven*. Perhaps you may think that man knows but little of the joys which are awaiting us in heaven; but in this regard you will fully realize that you are utterly mistaken. Read my book called "Easter in Heaven."

The sixth book is the "Lives of the Saints," who are already rejoicing in the bliss of Paradise. Let not a day pass without reading the life of that Saint whose life is celebrated that day by the Church. Each life will furnish you with a practical lesson for imitation; and thus, without stepping out of the family circle, you will have a little sermon all to yourself.

Address yourself, also, with the greatest confidence

to Mary, the Mother of Grace, the Protectress of the Church, that she may guide and protect you through life. For this end I have written a work in honor of Mary, appropriate for her own beautiful month of May. The title of this book is: "Feast Sermons for three years of the month of May."

If you live in this manner, the words of Christ, in regard to you, will be proved: "Therefore, let your light shine before men, that they may praise your Father, who is in heaven."

The example of a Catholic maiden who lives in accord with the teachings of her holy faith, distinguished for her tender piety, is in truth a most wonderful *sermon*, and one of the greatest advantages for the sanctification of others both at *home* and *abroad*.

If you are zealous in prayer, visit diligently the Church, receive frequently the Sacraments, and obey your parents; if you are kind and loving towards your brothers and sisters, and treat your servants with proper consideration, your example will encourage them at home also to lead good and pious lives in the service of God.

And, regarding persons *outside* the family circle, especially your young lady friends with whom you keep up an interchange of visits, they will, from your example, derive the greatest benefit for the sanctification of their lives.

Be solicitous, also, that maidens not of the one true faith, attracted by your example, permit themselves to be advised by you. Inform them on the various

points of religion, give them books which will instruct them, and persuade them to accompany you to Church.

Follow this advice in regard to any relatives and friends whom you have, professing an erroneous belief; and this applies also to a Catholic *servant* girl, who is employed where there are girls of the Protestant belief.

Do not be deterred by a vain fear of man, as, alas! this is but too often the case in this world. Glance, rather, at the example of the holy three kings; they went on their way, and would not have turned aside had the whole city of Jerusalem laughed them to scorn.

Finding Jesus, they confessed Him, and brought others to His knowledge as well.

And you, Christian maiden! do you comprehend that you, although neither priest nor missionary, can still contribute your share towards propagating the kingdom of God upon earth, towards converting and sanctifying the children of men? Certainly you can, and will do so, if you are in earnest about it.

But there is another duty, also, which you must not forget. Contribute liberally, as far as you can, towards supporting the kingdom of God. And here let me not neglect to give honor to whom it is due. There are many congregations, especially among the Irish, where young girls are most zealous in benefiting the Church.

In this month is celebrated the feast of *St. Thecla*. She was born in Iconium, of noble and very wealthy



parents, and there the years of her youth were passed. Tamnias, a youthful noble, upon whom fortune had lavished her choicest gifts, sought her hand in marriage ; but Thecla, who had, in her native place, heard a sermon from the lips of St. Paul, preferred to obey his counsel and remain a Virgin.

Indignant at this resolution, her heathen parents made every effort to induce her to forsake the faith ; but useless were all their endeavors. The tyrant Nero subjected the heroic maiden to various tortures, and even employed the rack to overcome her constancy ; but in vain. Far otherwise ! Thousands of heathens witnessed the marvels which took place during her cruel martyrdom, and innumerable converts to our holy faith were made.

Beg the intercession of St. Thecla during this month, that she may obtain for you the grace of being strengthened in faith, and of *propagating* it as far as you can. Amen !

## CONFERENCE XXII.

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### MARY.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE  
TEMPLE.

FORTY days had elapsed since the Infant Redeemer had come to rejoice the heart of His Immaculate Mother, when she, with St. Joseph, took the Divine Child to the Temple in Jerusalem, according to the Mosaic Law, to fulfill the law of purification, which, after the birth of a son, was prescribed therein. As this law was undoubtedly only for those who, after the birth of a child, could no longer appear as virgins before the Lord, it was certainly not binding upon Mary, who, while remaining in His sight a virgin, although a mother, yet subjected herself to the literal fulfillment thereof. In this connection St. Augustine remarks: "Grace elevated Mary above the law, but her humility subjected her to it."

Ah! who could imagine the feelings of the Virginal Mother, as, with the Divine Babe, she found herself once more in the Temple in which she had offered her virginity to the Lord. What affections of thanksgiving must have penetrated her heart at the thought

that, while she had observed her vow with such perfect fidelity, the Child of Promise was now, nevertheless, borne in her arms! And what sentiments of admiration animated the Angels of heaven as she stood there resplendent in virginal purity.

Very justly does St. Bernard cry out: "If a virgin were to bring forth a child, that child could be none but God Himself; and if God would become man, none but a Virgin could be His Mother."

Christian maiden! I have indeed, at different times, already spoken to you of the value of virginity before the Lord; but a regard for this virtue can not be too often impressed upon your mind. The heart of a maiden, whose life is pure in spirit and in truth, is, in the sight of God and man, as a fair garden, in which, like fragrant flowers of all other virtues bloom.

Give heed, then, to the admonition which Mary, the Virgin of virgins gives you to-day in the Temple:

*"My daughter, if you wish to be pleasing to me and to the heart of Jesus, then cherish the greatest esteem for the virtue of entire virginal purity in your heart; this will insure your possession of the other virtues which adorned my heart, and which your Jesus demands of you."*

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Holy Scripture, in pointing to Mary, often employs the symbol of the *lily*, in order to acknowledge and render tribute of praise to her wonderful virginal purity.

Erect and slender this beautiful flower grows from

the root heavenward, and is, therefore, a fit emblem of a mind which is ever fixed on heavenly things. Was not this precisely the trait which shone brilliantly forth in the entire life of Mary?

In every instance she chose the better part, caring not for the world; her only thought was heaven, for which alone she lived on earth.

The fragrant *odor* of the *lily* is spread far, far around, and thus it is with a truly virginal life. As long as a maiden is noted for her modest deportment; as long as no want of care, in regard to purity of heart can be seen, she will be a source of edification to all who know and associate with her.

To facilitate and promote the *growth* of a *lily*, it is often transplanted from one place to another, and here, too, it is emblematic of the life of Mary. From her birth-place, the house of her holy parents, this fair flower was planted in the house of God, in the inner inclosure of the Temple. From thence she was transplanted to Nazareth; from Nazareth to Bethlehem; from Bethlehem to Jerusalem; and from Jerusalem to Egypt. From Egypt, behold her again transplanted to Nazareth; and from there to so many different places in Palestine. She followed Jesus in His apostolical journeys; no plain too wide for her maternal love; no vale too deep; no hill too high.

Behold her there, when her beloved Son was raised upon the Cross on Calvary, and finally transplanted from Mount Olivet—body and soul into heaven—the Paradise of eternal bliss. The virtues which, as prac-

ticed by Mary during all these events of her life, are eulogized in terms of most ardent admiration in different passages of Holy Writ, where their sweet odor is compared to the fragrance which the lily diffuses afar.

Let us now glance in order at each of these tributes of praise. We read: "She will bloom as a lily, and her odor will be like that of Libanus."

The sweet odor which Mary exhales as a lily among virgins, is that of *faith*. From Lebanon, the wood employed in the building of the Temple was furnished. From Mary, we have Jesus, the Founder of Faith, with the flesh and blood of His humanity. Christ Himself speaks of His body as a temple.

Christian maiden! hear the admonition of the Mother of God, and heed her advice: "If thou wouldst not only be called a virgin, but also live as one, then let thy endeavor be to practice those virtues which the Holy Ghost, comparing them to the *lily*, extolls in me as blessed. First, strive to increase in yourself the strength of *faith*, the root of all other virtues."

Mary cries out to you: "I am that *lily* of the heavenly fields, of which it is written: 'Blossom, ye flowers, like the lily, exhale sweet scent, and descend in grace.'"

"Full of grace!" This was the glorious tribute of praise awarded her by the angel of God.

If you, Christian maiden! would be, indeed, a true child of this blessed Mother, then diligently cultivate in your heart the virtue of *hope*. It will direct your

mind to *heavenly* things, and, like the lily, diffuse a delightful perfume, which will enable you, unlike the maiden whose heart is taken up with the world, to seek those things which are above, where Christ the Saviour is. It will enable you to provide for that which endureth forever, and to disperse the dark clouds of gloom and despondency which would overshadow your soul.

Mary is that *lily* of which it is written: "Her lips are as *lilies*, from which drop the choicest myrrh."

Myrrh is emblematic of *love*, proved by *trials* of the most bitter kind. If you would also claim the lily as a symbol of your *virginal* dignity, then must your heart necessarily give proof by your love, which has borne the test of suffering, that you may truthfully say with Mary: "What do I seek in heaven, O God? and what do I desire upon earth, save Thee, O God of my heart?"

Mary is the lily of which is written: "I am the flower of the field and the lily of the *valley*." In this instance it is emblematic of her perfect humility.

How sweet indeed the fragrance of lilies exhaled by her life upon earth! And it was precisely through the practice of *humility*, the virtue which, according to her own testimony, the Lord beheld so resplendent in her.

Christian maiden, do you desire the lily to be a true emblem of your virginal state?—Then shun all vanity and self-esteem. Crush down the wish to please mankind, and walk in modesty and discretion; for

then in all your demeanor at home, and when away therefrom, the delightful odor of humility will be diffused in your every act.

Mary is that *lily* of which is written: "As a lily among thorns, is my beloved among the daughters of Eve."

This, indeed, was Mary—pure Virgin—conceived without a shadow of sin in the midst of the fallen human race, for whom, in punishment for defying the mandate of God, the earth should bring forth thistles and thorns.

If we behold a lily growing in a lovely garden, with fragrant flowers around, it does not seem to us half so beautiful as when we chance to see it in some lone *wilderness* blooming, with thorns on every side.

Seek, then, to merit this praise. Alas! how seldom, in this sinful world, where the thorns of corruption grow rank and wild, do we meet with a maiden who is thoroughly pure in her thoughts, desires, actions and words!

It is possible to deceive mankind, but that God, whose all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses, and the deepest depths of the human heart, knows how many there are who consider themselves as pure virgins, while they are, indeed, no longer so before the eyes of the omniscient God. Is it so with you? Alas! if so, I pity you!

This point leads us back to the last. Where the lily of humility does not bloom, too often the virtue of chastity is *not*.

Mary is the lily of which is written : " I have brought forth a pleasant odor, and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches." The meaning of which is, that the life of the Mother of God was not filled merely with those *longings* after sanctity, which blossom for awhile, then die away, but that the tree of her holy life was rich in all the fruits of virtues, as the most faithful image of justice.

Live in such a manner, O Christian maiden ! that this can also be said with truth of you.

Mary is that lily of which is written : " My odor is as the purest balm." Balm is emblematic of *healing*.

Mary is the Mother of Mercy, the refuge of sinners. Maiden, do you hear my words ? Let your life and encouragement preserve all, who associate with you, from the wounds which sin would fain inflict on the heart ; but if, perhaps, some have already been wounded thereby, live so that your intercourse with them will lead them to amend their lives.

Mary is that lily of which is written : " My conduct is as a rainbow in the clouds, as *lilies* by the rippling brook, and perfume in the summer day." A tribute of praise which is also due to her as Mother of Mercy, Refuge of sinners, Consoler of all who are sad and afflicted in this valley of tears.

Child of Mary ! imitate the example of Mary—especially her diligent practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Mary is, finally, that lily of which is written : " The wilderness shall rejoice, and, like a lily, the desert shall



bloom." With all your energy and zeal for the kingdom of God, you should, nevertheless, cherish a love of solitude, and beware of useless visits. Love solitude, particularly for this reason, that the spirit of prayer, which is the means of obtaining graces, may abide in you.

Without grace we can do nothing; but with it, we are able to do all.

And it was thus that all the holy virgins bloomed in the Church of God, fair *lilies* in His garden!

Oh! what a glorious array of fragrant flowers, the sweet odor of which perfumed both heaven and earth!

In this month—October—is celebrated the feast of *St. Theresa*, that virgin so celebrated in the Church of God, who, by the memory of the virtues which distinguished her life, and the perusal of her wonderful writings, still diffuses the sweet odor of lilies therein.

An Angel once appeared to her, having in his hand a dart, at the end of which a point of fire burned, and pierced her heart with it. This so wonderfully increased the ardor of her love for God that, according to the testimony of the Church, she did not die so much from bodily illness, as by the Divine Love which burned within her heart, until at last it was consumed.

At the moment of her death, a withered tree, which reared its lifeless branches near her cell, bloomed forth, in token of her fervent desire to be with God.

From this, also, arose her ardent love for crosses in this life—her motto being, “Either to suffer or to die.”

Christ Himself, once appearing to her, extended His hand to her with these words: “Seek, as a true bride, to promote My glory.”

Beg her intercession, especially during this month, and say daily in her honor, one Ave Maria, that you, by the ardor with which you embrace the *cross* for love of Jesus, may prove a true *spouse* of Christ, the Crucified. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXIII.

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### MARY.

#### THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

SCARCELY had the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph returned to Galilee, when they were obliged to prepare for a journey attended by far more dangers and hardships.

Only too soon was the mother of sorrows destined to behold the verification of the prophecy which the venerable Simeon had declared unto her: "Behold this Child is set for a sign which shall be contradicted."

For when Herod discovered that the three magi had returned to Arabia without revealing to him the abode of the Divine Child, promised to mankind, he resolved upon most cruelly exterminating all the male children of Bethlehem and its environs, not yet two years old. By this barbarous murder the tyrant imagined he would secure, to his own family, the right of succession to the throne.

But what are human devices, when placed in opposition to the wisdom of God! In the deep silence of night St. Joseph beheld before him an Angel of the

Lord. "Arise," said the heavenly Spirit; "take the Child and its mother. Haste into Egypt, and there remain until I shall tell thee." St. Joseph obeyed. Without hesitation he took his virginal spouse and her Divine Child, under cover of night, into Egypt.

The journey which the holy family were bidden to take extended over a distance of more than four hundred miles. The road was wild and little frequented. They were without shelter, while ever and anon the pitiless winter storm swept over their innocent heads. Oh! what a situation for Mary, the virginal mother of God, a maiden but fifteen years old—and for the babe she bore in her arms! Who that beheld them thus wearily wending their way, would have thought what most holy and blessed persons composed that humble group!

At last they arrived at the city of Heliopolis, now Cairo; and tradition tells us that when they entered the gate all the idols of Egypt fell from their altars. As they could not find a habitation in Heliopolis, the holy family took up their abode in a neighboring village, where they remained for seven years, and where traces of their sojourn may be seen at the present day.

Christian maiden, listen to the counsel which your Immaculate Mother is about to impart:

*"My daughter, flee the snares of the tempter as far as it is in thy power to do so. Avoid the occasions of sin, but if it, nevertheless, approach thee, invoke my powerful aid, and conquer."*

To be tempted or not? *That* certainly is not the decisive question. It depends entirely on whether occasion has been given for the temptation, and whether, when it assails the soul which Satan longs to seize, it is properly resisted, and valiantly conquered.

As I said, "To be tempted or not," does not yet decide whether or not it is well with us in the way of salvation. Holy Writ itself says: "Because thou wert pleasing to God, temptation must assail thee;" and again: "Blessed is he who stands temptation; for when he is tried he will receive the crown of life."

But all depends upon this; whether occasion is given for temptation, as is indicated by the word *temptation* itself. Satan will seek *you*. Go not in quest of him. Then avoid the occasions of sin. Fly from them! This is the first point I wish to be observed.

Should you ask: "What are the particular circumstances necessary for you as a maiden to avoid that you may place no opportunity in the way of Satan to tempt you?" I reply: Carefully avoid all association with girls from whose *companionship* and example you can derive no benefit. Have nothing to do with worldly companions who do not relish prayer and are negligent in receiving the Sacraments; who deem it no grievous matter to remain away from Mass, and who have, perhaps, already forbidden intercourse with persons of the other sex.

Each of the points above mentioned is of the utmost importance, and you have indeed reason to ques-

tion your conscience as to whether it can reproach you on any one of them.

Experience too often proves that there are many young girls who, although they have been carefully prepared for the reception of their first Holy Communion, yet soon after they leave their parents' house are found giving up prayer, or, at most, offering up but brief and tepid petitions at the throne of grace.

They grow careless in regard to attending Divine service, at which they are bound to assist, and remain away for months from the Sacraments, those channels of grace. They live as the worldling, and indeed they are wholly given up to the spirit of the world. And why? Because they were thrown into the company of young girls, who set them a wicked *example*, and thus caused them to act in a similar manner—to give up *prayer*, and abandon their life of piety.

Yes, the masters of the spiritual life were right in saying of a person who, after a truly pious life, falls into a grievous sin, that the fatal incident is always preceded by a neglect of prayer.

Therefore, Christian maiden, if you would remain free from numberless temptations, or, when they approach you, victoriously conquer them, be careful as to those with whom you *associate*. Note the conduct of the young girls who live near by; and if you find that so far from loving prayer, or leading pious lives, they are entirely given up to a love of the world, have

nothing whatever to do with them. Shun their company, love retirement, avoid in general all idle conversation and excessive loquacity; for, even though your companions do not precisely give scandal, much talk will not pass off without sin, and, still less, a great deal of *laughter*.

Satan finds a golden opportunity through frivolous conversation to induce maidens to sin against fraternal charity, to waste time, to lose the spirit of prayer, and to be continually troubled and tempted with worldly thoughts. Therefore, shun too frequent and lengthy interviews, even with girls who are otherwise good, and avoid *talkativeness*.

How few young women can be found who love *solitude* and *silence*. and whose constant aim is to walk in the presence of God!

Christian virgin! examine your conscience upon this, make good resolutions for the future, and faithfully keep them. I am inclined to say that one glance at a maiden who is forever talking and laughing, who is ever ready to utter the idle jest, is enough to give the impression that she is, in a spiritual sense, as if continually in the midst of bees and wasps, which constantly threaten to sting her.

On the contrary, a girl who loves to walk modestly and in quiet retirement before God, who carefully bridles her tongue, gives the instant impression that the devil has no, or few, occasions to tempt her to sin.

If all the above be true in regard to companions of your *own* sex, how much more dangerous is it to have

any intercourse with those of the *other*; to receive visits from, and remain alone with them! Holy Scripture says that such conduct is like fire approaching straw.

Never, never, as a rule, can such private interviews take place without resulting in temptations in thoughts, words, desires and looks, and even concessions against virginal purity, which are always mortal sins, if willful.

Therefore, if you, pure virgin, would remain secure from the danger of temptation, oh, by all means avoid being alone with persons of the other sex; shun all such private interviews although you are already betrothed. This I have heretofore advised on some former occasions. But girls are often so light-minded especially in this regard, that it is advisable to repeat the warnings.

Avoid, also, *idleness*. To this admonition attention should be paid by such young maidens as, through the circumstances of their parents, are placed above the necessity of earning their daily bread. Let them so usefully employ every moment of their time that, should the tempter seek entrance to their hearts, he will find every avenue closed against him.

Do not give way to *vanity*, to a passion for *dress*, nor a desire to make a good *appearance* in the eyes of men. Dress modestly. In all things you may recognize the benefit of piety, and by such a mode of dress you will give satisfaction to others, and be better provided for yourself, and preserve purity of heart.

Sigh not after *pleasures* and *entertainments* which



present so many opportunities to see, and hear, things which tend to excite the imagination, create temptations, and deaden the spirit of prayer and piety.

Of this class, as you have frequently been warned, are all amusements carried on after the close of day—excursions, picnics, theaters, parties and balls—where the doors of the senses are thrown open, and hosts of temptations can enter.

Certainly, one may think that her only intention is to amuse herself in a lawful way. But Satan slyly laughs at this, knowing well what an easy task he has to lure his victim, by such gatherings, from the path which leads to heaven, to the road whose end is destruction.

Therefore I repeat: If you would preserve yourself from temptation against holy purity, do not be too fond of *amusements*.

Finally, avoid *novel reading*. Do not cherish a taste for love stories, and to read newspapers of a similar class; otherwise the poison of vain and sinful thoughts and desires will penetrate the inmost recesses of your heart, and you might even grow weak in your faith.

Should you, nevertheless, be tempted, call upon Mary, from the depths of your heart, and fight with the weapons of the children of God.

Of these, St. Paul thus speaks: "Seize ye the girdle of truth." Christian maiden, live in the spirit of recollection. Think especially upon what Faith teaches, regarding the four last things to be remembered.

“Put ye on the armor of justice.” Hasten to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Often approach the Sacred Tribunal, and regularly receive the body and blood of Christ.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel.” That is, *work*, and lead a well-regulated life by a well ordered use of time.

“And take unto you the helmet of salvation.” Think constantly of Heaven, and often reflect upon eternity,—fast hastening on.

“Seize ye the shield of faith.” Look upon every thing in this world in the light of faith; then the things of the world, its honors, wealth and pleasures will lose their charm, and temptation will have no power to wound.

“And seize ye the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Be thoroughly instructed in the tenets of our Holy Religion. Resist the first breath of temptation,—resist *entirely*,—and the demon of hell dismayed, will fly, while you, as a true virgin of Christ, and faithful child of Mary, will walk pure and stainless before the Lord.

The Church celebrates in this month—November—the feast of *St. Cecilia*, that glorious virgin and martyr.

Born of noble parents, she was sought in marriage, by Valerius, a youth, noble and blessed with an ample portion of this world's wealth, and also betrothed to him.

But when Cecilia confided to him that an Angel constantly watched over her, that her virginal purity might never be dimmed, Valerius wished also to see that angelic spirit—a favor which was not refused after he had received Baptism.

Having related this marvel to his brother, he, in turn, desired to behold the angel, and also he saw the Angel who guarded the virgin, and he, too, received Baptism. And both, with St. Cecilia, afterwards gave up their lives for the faith, and earned the martyr's crown.

Invoke St. Cecilia, during this month, by saying daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may assist you in temptations, and never fail to recommend yourself to your Guardian Angel. By such conduct, you will lead a life in which the different virtues will be united in one harmonious accord. St. Cecilia is, as you know, the patroness of the true Church music, which elevates the soul to God. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXIV.

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### MARY

VISITS THE TEMPLE WITH THE CHILD JESUS.

THE Holy Family had returned to Nazareth. They once more entered the poor little house, which was their only patrimony, and dwelt together,—the *Earthly Trinity*—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Thus are called these three Holy ones who, sheltered by that humble roof, united in tenderest love were—in heart and soul—but one.

Oh! what an indescribable appearance of devotion did Jesus, Mary, and Joseph present, when, in the greatest recollection of spirit, they traversed the distance which lay between their home and Jerusalem. What edification it gave when, the journey accomplished, with the most profound adoration, they entered the temple, attended by legions of Angels.

From this visit of the Holy Family to the temple, arises the following counsel to you, from the Mother of God.

*“Be always willing, my child, to visit the house of God, and be eager to avail yourself of those fountains of grace, which for you, as a child of the Holy Church, are ever flowing there.”*

Ah! yes. Love the temple of God, visit it diligently, and always enter it with a heart in which the deepest reverence dwells.

The experience of every age, which is ever and anew receiving confirmation, teaches that, whenever a maiden becomes noted for zeal in attending Church, and fervor in assisting at the Divine Service on the day of the Lord; when she evinces a love for participating in the various devotions of the different seasons throughout the ecclesiastical year, and, if possible, assists often at Mass through the week, it is a certain sign that in every way, she is a thoroughly good and pious girl.

Yes! whether she is still in the home of her parents, or away from their care as a servant, she will always attend to her duties.

If, however, nothing of this kind is manifested,—if, on the contrary, a young girl shows no intention of going to Mass, unless urged on by the word or command of her mother, and even then goes only through compulsion, the sweet sentiments of true devotion dwell not in such a heart.

That you may be thoroughly penetrated with love for going to Church, often reflect upon the innumerable and important motives there are to inspire you with the greatest devotion and reverence, even at the sight of a Church. Often call up to mind all the reasons which should animate and strengthen in you feelings of consolation for your spiritual needs, when you enter the house of the Lord.

Certainly God will hear the prayer offered up to Him "in spirit and in truth," no matter where it is uttered; but He has promised already, even in the Old Covenant, to be especially propitious to the petitions, which His people send forth in that place set apart by His Providence, as a shrine to adore Him as our God and our Father.

Therefore, when the corner-stone of a building, intended for the worship of the Lord, is to be laid, the Church has prescribed many ceremonies and prayers; and, after it is finished, she blesses the walls, and calls together her faithful children to unite in fervent prayer.

There she offers up the Sacrifice of the New Law, announces the word of God, and administers the Sacraments; and there, within its sacred walls, she carefully treasures Jesus Christ Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

As you enter the Church, therefore, let your thoughts dwell upon the many manifestations of Divine Grace that have already taken place within its walls. How often Christ offered Himself in that place to His Almighty Father! How often has the Word of God resounded through this temple! how many sinners has it caused to tremble with contrition in the very depths of their souls! and how often has it encouraged the good, not only to believe, but to live according to the teachings of the faith, and become blessed children of the Holy Church, and once Saints in Heaven.

Then, indeed, you will love to enter the Church,

and, in so doing, will be most respectful and reverential, and never forget the motives which should prompt you, on every occasion, to cross the threshold of God's temple with feelings of awe, there to offer Him your prayers in spirit and in truth with the rest of the faithful.

Consider, especially, how many Sacraments have been administered therein, how many baptisms, confirmations imparted, confessions heard, absolutions given, and holy communions distributed. If you think of this, how venerable and majestic will even the exterior aspect of a Catholic Church become in your eyes!

Then you can not but be reminded of the proper *behavior* to observe, when you leave your dwelling to go to that Holy Place, and when you are assisting at the services celebrated beneath its roof.

There are, alas! many young girls who are deficient in this regard.

First, as to your exterior, you should, indeed, be attired in garb befitting the festival day, but not in such a style as to present yourself in the temple of God like an overdressed doll, hoping to attract the attention of others, especially young men.

How wicked must such conduct be in the sight of God, since humility is an essential condition of the adoration which He requires from all in His temple.

Walk, therefore, with decorum and modesty on your way thither; guard your eyes; do not gaze curiously around.

It is detestable, and even scandalous, to see girls,

when they reach the Church, so far from observing silence and recollection of spirit, even standing at the very door, talking in the most frivolous manner, and scanning all who come to Church, hoping to be observed by them in turn.

It also causes scandal when, through tepidity and indifference, a habit is contracted of coming so late, that the delinquent fails to hear Mass entirely, and thus violates a precept of the Church.

A true virgin of Christ goes at once into the Church without a thought of waiting at the door, sprinkles herself devoutly with holy water, makes the sign of the cross, and kneels down at her place.

Then she prays with the deepest reverence and most vivid realization of the solemnity, sublimity and sanctity of what she will behold during Divine service in the temple of God.

She must, in true recollection of spirit, listen to the instruction, *as it is* God's Word. Let her, then, listen with especial attention to every word which falls from the lips of the Priest, and preserve them in her heart, and apply them to herself, as it is written of Mary: "But she preserved all these words in her heart."

Let her, particularly, reanimate her faith, that the Holy Sacrifice of Mass may become for her a fountain of grace, for the sanctification of her life, and that she may replenish her heart with that plenitude of appreciation which so adorable a sacrifice merits. Let her think seriously of the truths of faith which were enun-



ciated in the Council of Trent, namely: That the Mass is precisely the *same* sacrifice which, in suffering and blood, Christ offered to His heavenly Father on *Calvary*.

Ah! let her consider the depth of meaning those words contain!

*Christ now offers Himself for me to His heavenly Father, as once He did on Calvary.*

To be *there*, beneath the Cross, was not granted me, but God to-day bestows on me the same happiness which it will be my dearest aim to employ for the sanctification of my life.

And as the days of the ecclesiastical year pass by, endeavor, Christian maiden! to live according to the feasts and festival *seasons* which the Church, in succession, celebrates. This tends wonderfully to animate and strengthen our appreciation of faith, and its influence upon our lives. To any young girl who is living from home as a servant, I would say: Before you conclude any engagement, see that you will be allowed time to attend Divine service, to be present at Mass, preferring rather to accept lower wages than to live where you can not go regularly to Church and receive the Sacraments.

Believe me, those into whose employment you enter, will soon discover that she, to whom they grant time and privilege to comply with the requirements of her religion, is a better servant by far than the girl, who is indifferent therein.

I myself have heard American Protestant Ladies

frequently remark that they prefer Catholic servant girls, because they can be relied upon, but they also add that they are not all equally good. That those who insist upon going to Church on *holy* days are by all means the best. Do you hear this? But certainly, good, pious Catholic girls would not accept a service where the domestics are not allowed to go regularly to Church, nor where they would be exposed to innumerable temptations; as, for instance, in restaurants, hotels, or any place of public resort.

If you are at all able, and your pastor desires it, fail not to contribute your share towards the fitting decoration of the altars, and the providing of a plentiful supply of the requisite linen. In fine, be always ready to contribute, according to your means, that the celebration of Divine service may be conducted with all possible Solemnity.

The Church celebrates in this month—December—the memory of *St. Bibiana*, who lived in the time of the cruel Emperor Julian, when the storm of persecution swept over the land.

It was her privilege to have parents who confessed their faith as martyrs; and her sister Demetria also won the martyr's crown. The heathen Governor who, at the command of Julian, sought to induce St. Bibiana and her sister to give up their faith, placed them with Rufina, a woman of a thoroughly depraved and wicked character.

But her vile machinations were all in vain. The two sisters remained steadfast in faith, and the price-

less jewel of their innocence retained its brilliant luster.

By the command of the Governor, they were then tied to a pillar, and cruelly scourged to the bone. Bibiana, while the blood streamed down her tender flesh, prayed without ceasing, until her pure spirit winged its flight to God; and now, in a magnificent temple in Rome, are deposited the holy remains of these two saintly virgins. Invoke her during this month. Say daily, in her honor, until the next conference, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the grace of perseverance in your good resolutions, especially concerning your devout behavior in Church. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXV.

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### MARY

LOSES THE CHILD JESUS, AND FINDS HIM IN THE  
TEMPLE.

AT our last meeting, in considering the visit which Mary made to the Temple, I reminded you all of the interior dispositions which should prompt every good Christian maiden to assist with reverence and zeal at Divine service, and admonished you as to the high estimation in which you should hold especially the august sacrifice of the Mass.

I advised you to assist thereat, as you are commanded to do on Sundays and holy days of obligation, with the greatest possible recollection and profound adoration, and, during its celebration, to unite your praise, thanksgiving, and suppliant prayer, with the praise, thanksgiving, and suppliant prayer of Christ, Who offers Himself anew for us to His heavenly Father in Holy Mass. But there is something still which marks the temple of God for us in an especial manner as a most venerable place, and one wherein the greatest consolation can be found.

Mary lost her beloved Son, and *found* Him again in the Temple; three long days she sought Him, and

who can describe the anxiety which tore her maternal heart, when her search was vain? The Holy Fathers justly remark, that of all the griefs which oppressed the heart of Mary, this was, indeed, the greatest. In her other trials, though hard and bitter, Jesus was with her, even on Calvary, but now His *loss* caused her a trouble far deeper, for she feared that some *fault* of hers had sent Him from her side.

In her other trials, therefore, no word of complaint escaped her, but now, with gentle reproach, she said: "Son, why hast Thou done this to me? Behold, I have sought Thee with sorrow!" But, oh! what rapture filled the heart of Mary when she found the Child Jesus, and He returned with her to Nazareth, their home!

From this visit to the temple arises the following counsel from Mary to you, Christian maiden!

*"My child, wouldst thou have a pledge that sin will never separate thee from me? Then often confess, but ever with a view to reap the greatest spiritual advantage, and an increase of sanctifying grace in thy soul."*

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What an important counsel! "Confess often! Confess well!" A maiden who obeys this warning shows that she is a true child of the Church, and really tries to preserve her heart from every stain of sin.

On the contrary, as soon as a girl begins to confess but *seldom*, there is every reason to suppose that, in general, she is wanting in the spirit of piety.

It naturally follows that, in regard to *prayer*, she will grow indifferent, and, as to attaining *perfection*, she neither desires nor attempts it. Her religion is merely one of habit; and, if exposed to temptations, she lives in the greatest danger of falling therein. Therefore be attentive to what I will tell you of this to-day.

First, then, go *often* to Confession, but go with a *well* disposed heart.

In order that you should approach the Sacred Tribunal with fitting dispositions, it must not be the advice of the Priest which affects your determination, but your own earnest desire to go.

This longing will come from the esteem with which you regard this Sacrament; and this desire, from meditating upon what holy faith teaches in regard to its effects.

As to this, Christ bequeathed the Sacrament of Penance to his Church; first, that mankind might, when unhappily they had fallen into sin, be reconciled to God, and again rejoice in the state of sanctifying grace. Oh, what a gift, and what a Sacrament! The Apostles remind the faithful of its value, since in the Creed, they mention no other grace or power given to the Church save this: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the *forgiveness of sins*."

The magnitude of this grace shines most brilliantly forth if we consider the evil—the misfortune—of sin, which, properly speaking, is the only real evil, since it is the only bar to our salvation.

If all who received the Sacrament of Baptism would remain ever free from sin, they would all be saved eternally.

It was sin, and sin alone, that closed the earthly paradise on us. It was sin, and sin alone, that wrested Heaven from us *forever*, and opened wide the portals of hell's deep abyss.

If Divine justice was to be satisfied, God Himself had to become man, and mankind, through His merit, had to be reconciled with God.

Through the Sacrament of Penance this merit of Christ is applied to all those who, by sin, have marred the beauty of their baptismal robe; and for all who have had the misfortune to sin grievously after baptism, it is the only refuge—the only “plank,” after the shipwreck of sin—left to man to save himself, as it is styled by the Holy Fathers.

Oh, with what eagerness does a sick person, whose life is fast ebbing away, grasp at a medicine which alone will bring certain relief! Yes, he will have it, even though it must come from the ends of the earth, and take his last penny to obtain it.

How highly, then, should we not esteem a Sacrament which can extricate us, when we have fallen into the abyss of sin! If an Alpine traveler were, in the steep ascent, to lose his footing and fall down the rocks, how he would grasp the rope thrown by some friendly hand after him!

With what a death-like clutch he would hold to it! Ah! could there be a rope cast down into the fathom-

less depths of hell, with what haste would not the damned rush forth to seize it!

But into that deep abyss no rope of grace can reach. On earth, indeed, it is ever near us all—I mean confession—the Sacrament of Penance. Thank God for it, O Christian maiden! approach, grasp it, and you are saved.

All that I have heretofore said is especially intended for those, who have unfortunately committed *mortal* sin; and it is the more important, because precisely those sins to which maidens are principally exposed—namely, sins against chastity—whether in thoughts, desires, words or actions, are invariably mortal.

This, however, is not the only reason for so highly esteeming the Sacrament of Penance. It not only blots out mortal sin, and clothes us anew with the precious robe of sanctifying grace,—it not only enables us again to win merits for a blessed eternity, but it cleanses us from *venial* sins and heals the wounds which our *imperfections* have inflicted on our souls.

Now, after mortal sin, there is no greater evil than “venial sin,” with which no earthly evil can be compared. What a motive for a soul, who loves God indeed, to confess frequently!

To be free from those loathsome vermin of venial sins—this hideous leprosy! To appear pure in the sight of God!

It is true that many of these evils are blotted out



by acts of contrition but if there were a means—a certain soap—by which a person thus afflicted bodily could be perfectly freed from such vermin, and healed of the leprous sores, would he not hasten to procure and use that soap?

Such for the Christian, whose heart is inflamed with the love of God, is the use of the Sacrament of Penance. And not only that, but—and this is the principal reason—through the worthy reception of absolution the light of sanctifying grace will grow more and more brilliant in the soul, and be a preservation from the commission of fully deliberated venial sin.

Sanctifying grace, the more it increases, will make us, as children of God, evermore like unto Him. It was for this that the Saints of God, and others, who had the opportunity to do it, confessed so often—some even every day. They so ardently longed for an increase of sanctifying grace!

Here is an illustration: “There is a lamp. It burns and sheds light around; but when turned up higher, the light becomes greater, and, could it still be turned higher, the light would grow brighter, and at last would shine like the sun.” Now make the application. With every absolution you receive when free of *mortal* sin, the light of sanctifying grace increases; and, therefore, your glory in Heaven. Oh! how anxious you should be to go often to confession!

But then you must go *properly*, and not merely through *habit*,—a most important consideration! It is known from experience that there are, especially

among girls, those who, from their school days up have gone monthly—yes, even weekly—to confession and holy communion, and yet are habitually relapsing sinners, and this even into mortal sin. This remark concerns especially the relapses into sins against chastity, again and again the guilt of sacrilege thus burdening their souls.

And there are girls so shallow, stupid, and uninstructed, as to put forward the excuse: "I have always confessed it." Confession to them means merely to tell to the Priest their sins, and, with the lips, recite an act of contrition, then perform the penance imposed by the Priest, without determination to avoid such sins of habit.

"To confess worthily," as regards mortal sins, means to regret them so deeply before God, that he who confesses can truthfully say: "Rather would I die than commit that sin again."

It means that the penitent will prove by his conduct, that he is not a relapsing sinner.

There can, of course, be relapses after a true and valid confession, in consequence of extraordinary temptations; but I speak here of the abuse and self-deception of habitual sinners, whose shallow excuse is, "I confessed it."

But to confess and commit sin, to commit sin and confess, is *no* confession, but mockery and contempt of God, according to the expression of the Holy Fathers, who most justly style such confessions a theatrical farce.

“But,” some foolish girl may say, “Surely the Priest absolved me.” Yes; but it was because he thought you had that *true* contrition, which preserves you from relapse, but no confessor would absolve one, who has become an obstinate sinner. If he finds that his counsels and admonitions have so far proved vain, he will refuse absolution, until an amendment of life has been proved.

For those that confess often, and have not committed anew a sin, I have to admonish them that in this case they have to accuse themselves of a sin of their past life, and to renew an act of contrition, as if they had it not yet confessed; and they should not specify sins once committed against chastity, in order not to be tempted anew. Mention such sins only in general terms. Avoid also repeating your general confessions, unless there is a grave reason for so doing, if you have made one sincere general confession.

Say not: “I do not feel at rest.” And you should not feel so. Humble yourself and trust in God, and, relying on His Infinite Mercy, cast yourselves into the paternal arms of the Infinite Mercy.

Nevertheless, it is advisable to devote some time annually to a particular recollection of spirit, to make a kind of spiritual *retreat*, and then a confession to the ordinary confessor, in regard to your most prominent sins, beginning from your last annual confession. This will enable you to become better *known* to the Confessor, who then can lead you on in the way to perfection.

In regard to *confession* itself, guard against talking of what is not necessary in the Sacred Tribunal, and do not ask for a lengthy instruction. That belongs to the pulpit, not to the Confessional. Remember that others wish to go to confession, too, and save time.

The principal point is to animate your *faith* to the extent of your power, and, kneeling in spirit with St. Mary Magdalen at the foot of the Cross, clasping it in a loving embrace, think at the moment of absolution of that moment when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus; then imagine how the precious blood from that Sacred Heart flows through your own, washing it pure and clean. Silently repeat the name of *Jesus*, and unite your confession with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.

In this month the Church celebrates the feast of *St. Christina*, to whom you should cherish a particular devotion. She was only a servant girl, but her life was so saintly that she was called, not by her own baptismal name, but *Christina*, as much as to say: "You are a Christian."

I will refer but to two points in her life—as evincing that love of God and desire to please Him alone found a place in her heart.

If other young women ever ventured to indulge in frivolous or obscene conversation in her presence, it instantly caused her to *vomit*.

Secondly, whenever she entered upon a service she *stipulated* for sufficient time to attend all the services of the Church, and frequently receive the Sacraments.

Invoke her during this month by saying daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God, grace and fervor like unto hers in prayer, in zeal for attending divine service, and frequently receiving the Holy Sacraments. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXVI.

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MARY,

WITH JESUS IN THEIR HOME AT NAZARETH.

AFTER the unspeakable grief, which Mary had experienced in her separation from Jesus, she had the inexpressibly great consolation of abiding with Him, under one roof, for nearly twenty years.

The plenitude of the Godhead certainly dwelt personally in Jesus. However, He permitted the treasure of His graces to shine forth always more and more brilliantly through the sanctity of His life, like the sun, which, although, when it first dawns on the world, certainly holds the same power of light, yet, mounting higher and higher in the heavens, beams forth its rays with more and more splendor.

It was the happy lot of Mary, as the Mother of Jesus, to live in the most intimate union with Him.

She caught each reflected ray of this sanctity as it so lovingly developed, and Jesus, on His side, wanted to manifest, in an always increasing degree, the ineffable affections and sentiments of His gratitude to her,

because He infinitely better than any other child knew what He owed to her devoted love as Mother.

He, Who was at the same time the Personal Infinite Love!

Meditate often upon the life of Mary, with Jesus in Nazareth. Congratulate her that the Son of God presented her with the precious gift of all those years of His hidden life, thus enabling her to have the example of His virtues so long and so clearly before her; but listen also to the good counsel which you are about to hear from this admirable Mother:

*“ My child! it is true you are not so blessed as I who lived under one roof with Jesus, your God and Saviour. Still, He abides on earth with you. Yes! He is very near; and you can live for hours under the same roof with Him, by zealously using His presence on earth in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

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Catholic maiden, offer up your thanks to Jesus. Be grateful from the deepest depths of your heart, that although, it is long since He ascended into Heaven, nevertheless He remains with us ever present in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Especially thank Him, if you are so happy as to live in the vicinity of a Church wherein this Blessed Sacrament is kept. Go to your Jesus as often as you can; nourish in your heart the devotion of visiting Him in the Tabernacle wherein He dwells. Yes; visit Him daily, if possible.

At least you should never cease to contemplate the "*Sacramental life*" of Christ upon earth, for it clearly points out the requisites for you, in general, to live in zealous imitation of Him, and in the practice of those virtues essential to your becoming more and more like unto Christ.

It will show you how to pray, that God may hear your petitions and grant you the most abundant measure of grace, without which we can not even utter, meritoriously, His Sacred Name, and through which alone we can wax strong in our imitation of Him. It is my intention, in a few earnest words, to lay this before you to-day.

First, then, Christ, in the most Blessed Sacrament, leads a life of humility and even *annihilation*. Listen to the words of St. Paul, already, in regard to His Incarnation: "Although God, He annihilated Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a slave." Thus indeed did Christ,—He became man and appeared as man, and no one beheld the splendor of His Deity.

In the Most Holy Sacrament even the form of His majestic humanity disappears, and we see Him under the appearance of bread. Oh! what a lesson of humility from Christ to every human soul: "If thou wouldst become like unto Me, and gain spiritual treasures from My presence in the most Holy Sacrament, then imitate My Most Blessed Mother—*humble* thyself! Oh! with what admiration did My Blessed Mother look upon My humility, as day by day passed



on, and I—although, according to My person, God—dwelt in our humble little house with her, deigned to aid her and My foster-father in their household tasks, and even at times, as it was in Egypt, obtained the very bread we ate by asking charity.”

This virtue is also an essential condition for obtaining *graces*. How deeply important, therefore, is it for you to cherish and practice it, that you, too, may merit the praise which the angel gave to Mary: “Thou art full of grace,” which can not be if humility be wanting in your heart!

Even in the places where He abides—the circumstances attending the tabernacles—the Saviour evinces the depth of His humility. Nazareth was at least a city. In the Blessed Sacrament He often remains in the very heart of some lone wilderness.

In Nazareth His dwelling, if small, was built of stone, while in the Most Holy Sacrament He often remains in a tabernacle made of wood, and rudely nailed together.

Ah, yes! well indeed may He cry out to you: “Learn of Me to be meek and humble of heart.” Humility is a virtue in which young girls are often wanting, while vanity and pride too often reign triumphant in their hearts.

Christ dwells in the Most Holy Sacrament in utter *poverty* and detachment from every thing on earth. Mary saw the poverty in which He lived at Nazareth; yet she knew He was the Lord of the universe; she saw that He labored hard to earn His daily bread;

yet in Him she beheld the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things. What amazement filled her maternal heart, as, encouraged by His admirable example, she rejoiced amid the depths of her poverty.

Consider, further, Christian maiden, that here in the Most Holy Sacrament Jesus remains wholly devoid of all possessions. What an admonition for you! Child! detach your heart from all irregular desires after this world's goods, its wealth and property, and especially renounce all luxury in *dress*.

Christ, in their home at Nazareth, led, with Mary and Joseph, a life of *solitude*. We do not read of Him that, when a child, He associated with other children; nor that, when He attained the years of youth and manhood, He enjoyed company. Mary imitated the example thus constantly shining before her eyes; she sought not to be with other women; for to be alone with Jesus gave her more solace and joy, than she could have gained from any one else in the world.

Thus dwelling in quiet solitude with Him, her life became each day more sanctified. Child of Mary! virgin of Christ! glance at Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, where His solitude is deeper still!

At Nazareth He had at least the society of Mary and Joseph; but here, fast under bolt and bar, He is alone, entirely alone! In Nazareth this solitude lasted but thirty years; here over eighteen hundred years have past, and still He stays alone. Profit by the example of Jesus in His love of solitude; seek Him in

the Most Holy Sacrament; often visit Him there, and you will wonderfully increase in virtue.

Jesus in Nazareth was poor, indeed, yet He partook of food and drink. Mary followed His divine example, although their nourishment was of the plainest kind. Oh! had you been so happy as to be handmaid in that holy house, what encouragement would you not have received from these two admirable models!

*Deny yourself.* This was the great principle which guided the Saints on earth. All, without exception were devoted to a life of self-denial and *penance*.

Glance at Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament. There He abides, taking no nourishment, motionless; it would appear, without the use of His senses, perfectly silent, as if he neither saw nor heard.

To Mary was given the happiness of seeing Jesus pray, and of praying with Him. Thus she became, according to the salutation of the Church, the singular *vessel of devotion*.

*Prayer!* what a means for the sanctification of life in the imitation of Christ. Oh, had it been your happy lot to walk as handmaid in the house of Nazareth—to be near Jesus—to behold Him in His abiding union as man with God!

But see! glance at the Sacred Host, and ask Him: “O Lord Jesus! in all these eighteen hundred years, what hast Thou been doing in the Most Holy Sacrament?” He will tell you that He has been *praying*;

that ever and unceasingly He prays! In Nazareth He at least labored and spoke, ate and slept; while here His constant state is—prayer.

In Nazareth He obeyed His parents. Oh! what a model of *obedience!* But in the Most Holy Sacrament He is even subject to every priest who brings Him down upon the altar, places Him here and there, or bears Him away with him. Yes, and He is ready, whenever you wish, to enter into, and dwell in your heart. Do you see now, child of Mary, Christian virgin, how you can share with the Blessed Virgin all that she enjoyed in Nazareth, if you endeavor to use the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, according to her admirable example?

Every thing depends upon whether we look up to Him with that lively *faith* which animated the Mother of God, and follow His inspirations with the readiness which alike characterized her and all the Saints.

The Church commemorates in this month the Feast of St. Catherine of Ricci, who first beheld the light in the year 1522, and was one of those virgins so privileged, as to suffer and vividly see the passion of Christ, which she did from the evening of Thursday until the same hour on the following day.

During this time she remained in a state of ecstasy. Say each day, in her honor, during this month, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you the grace of a fervor resembling hers in making use of Christ's presence in the *Blessed Sacrament*, wherein dwells the

same Jesus, whom she beheld in ecstasy, and which, according to the prayer of the Church, Christ instituted as a perpetual memorial of His passion for His faithful children until the consummation of time. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXVII.

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### THE HAPPINESS OF HOLY COMMUNION.

FOR a period of nearly thirty years Mary enjoyed the happiness of being most intimately associated with Jesus in Nazareth, where one roof sheltered this devoted Mother and her loving Son. Joseph had already departed to the bosom of Abraham; and now Jesus was to go forth from the home of His youth, to enter upon His *Apostolate*, and announce to the world the word of salvation.

The pang of an entire separation from Jesus, however, was not to be suffered by Mary. She, with some holy women, accompanied Him in all His journeys, of which, at some future time, I will speak in detail.

And in the very beginning it chanced that Jesus, with His blessed Mother and the disciples, were invited to a wedding, of which you certainly remember the gospel narrative.

It tells us how, at an intimation of His Blessed Mother, upon this occasion Christ performed His first miracle, in presence of His disciples, as a proof that He was the promised Messiah of the world.

While the invited guests were seated at table, He changed the water into wine,—in which the Holy

Fathers behold pointed out and prefigured that great, that stupendous miracle, by which He had received to crown the conclusion of His Apostolic life.

This was the institution of the *sacrifice* of the New Law, by the change of bread and wine into His body and blood, at the marriage table of the Altars in His Church, wherein would be prefigured our changing into Him at the marriage feast of heavenly joys.

Virgin of Christ! Child of Mary! listen to the good counsel Mary gives you to-day:

*“My daughter, wouldst thou have all the part thou canst in what formed my greatest happiness, I who was so highly favored as to bear Jesus beneath my heart? then bid Him come into thine whenever thou canst, by frequent and worthy reception of His Body and Blood in the Most Holy Eucharist.”*

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In regard to our intercourse with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, there are three special relations in which we stand, to two of which I have already directed your attention.

The Most Holy Sacrament is the Sacrifice of the New Law. Look upon the Holy *Sacrifice* of Mass with that appreciation which it deserves, and fail not to make use of the streams of graces which flow therefrom into your heart.

The Most Holy Sacrament is, at the same time, the Sacrament of the real *Presence* of Christ. Thank God for this happiness, and endeavor, through fre-

quently visiting it, to derive profit from the Presence of your Lord.

Finally, Christ approaches us personally in this Sacrament, enters, in Holy *Communion*, into our hearts.

Thank God, O Christian virgin! for the privilege which permits you to take Christ in your own heart, and profit through Holy Communion for the sanctification of your life in such an efficacious way.

In order to gain a fitting appreciation of the happiness granted to us poor children of men in receiving Holy Communion, behold all that we need to consider! *Who is He* Who comes to us, and what are the *treasures* and *graces* which He brings?

To the first question: *Who is He* that comes to us? Prompted by faith we will answer: "*Jesus* Himself, the Incarnate Son of God; Jesus, the King of Angels; the King of kings; the Lord of the universe, our God and Redeemer, the Spouse of our souls."

What a *Personality!* what a happiness! Oh! if it were but given to us to behold with our corporal eyes what is seen by the Angels who ever long, as St. Peter says, to cast one look into this mystery of Christ's love, what devotion would fill our hearts, what inexpressible longing would overwhelm us to receive Jesus in this Sacrament of His love!

Yes; Christ is here present, corporally and essentially, as He lay in *the Crib*; as He dwelt with Mary in Nazareth, and wandered all over Palestine.

He is even here, and comes to us in the Glory of that brightness which shone about Him when He was



transfigured on the lofty Mount of Tabor. And yet more, he is present in that splendor in which He soared gloriously from the sepulcher, and now sits enthroned at the side of His Father in *Heaven*.

Oh! if we could see Him at the moment when the Priest raises the sacred host to administer it to us, what a longing would rush over us to open our *hearts* that He might enter therein!

And this, the more as He approaches us not only in His majesty, glory, and splendor, but in the most loving relations, which mutually unite us by the tenderest ties, such as fill our hearts with the desire to be with those whom we love, and to receive them in our abode.

Is He not our *Father*?

And what a Father, through Whom we are called, and are, indeed, children of God.

Is He not our *Brother*? And what a Brother, Who will one day divide all His glory with us.

Is He not our *Friend*? And what a Friend, Who once offered for us His blood and His life.

Is He not the *Spouse* of our souls, in Whose union and love we have a foretaste of the joys which await us in Heaven, by tasting them already on earth in Holy Communion?

Is He not *God* the *Son* Himself, the *infinite* Perfection? Oh! with what longing should we not desire to receive Him into our hearts; and when the Priest administers Holy Communion to us, cry out to Him from their innermost depths: "Come, O my Lord

Jesus! Thou art *Almighty*; I am weak. Thou art *Omniscient*; I am groping in blindness. Thou art *Holy*; my heart is the dwelling of sin. Thou art *Truth*; I am falsehood. Thou art *fidelity*; I am instability itself. Thou art infinite *beauty*; I, through the dust of my imperfections, appear so deformed. Thou art *love* itself; I am indifference. Thou art *rich*; I am all needy and miserable."

But, above all, what should enliven within us this longing for Holy Communion, is the thought of what boundless oceans of grace we really receive when we communicate. Oh! consider what we are taught by holy faith: He brings us *Himself*. He imparts Himself to us with His *Divinity* and *Humanity*, and oh! what a *Union* is this!

The Holy Fathers can not find adequate words to designate and describe the wonderful thoroughness of this imparting and its eternal and temporal value. They say, even as *light* penetrates space, and as *wax* melts into wax, so does the humanity of Christ impart itself in Holy Communion to our humanity, and to our soul. By this, then, is implanted within us the germ of a more glorious resurrection of the body from death, which will one day bring us into a more intimate and blissful union with the glorified Humanity of Christ, and will permit us, in greater plenitude, to share forever in the delights of His beatitude.

To more clearly elucidate this, I say, if, for example, two men, who had, during life, merited, in an equal degree, their glory in heaven, and received Holy

Communion, one as often as the other, they would be called to an equal reward. Suppose, however, that after his last confession, one of them, prevented by sickness, had not the happiness of receiving a privilege which the other enjoyed ; will those two servants of God arise one from their graves in an equal degree of glory, and attain an equally exalted station in heaven ?

No ! The one to whom was given the grace of an additional and worthily received Holy Communion, will arise in such glory that, compared to the other, he will be as the sun shining far above the stars, and his place will be so much higher in heaven.

And, with this, what an abundance of *graces* accompanies the worthy reception of Holy Communion !

How it assists us in the practice of virtue !

How it weakens and deadens within us the influence of concupiscence ! How it strengthens us in the combat with our enemy, making us like lions breathing fire against the dragon of hell, as St. Chrysostom justly observes.

It is the bread of Angels prefigured by that of which Elias partook, and which so invigorated him, that he knew no fatigue through forty days of wandering until he had gained the summit of the lofty mount, and looked on *God*, as far as could be, in this mortal life.

The last gift, and that which crowns all the rest, is final *perseverance*.

Nobody, properly speaking, can merit it ; it is a

free *grace* of God. But Christ Himself declares : “ Whosoever shall eat of this bread abideth in me, and I in him, and he will have eternal life.”

Behold here, O Christian virgin, what powerful motives these are to encourage you to seek often and often the happiness of Holy Communion, and each time to receive it more worthily.

All that I have heretofore said, however, will *not* take place merely through the *frequent*, but by the always more worthy reception of Holy Communion. We must adorn our hearts for the reception of the Heavenly Guest with the aspirations of love which animated the soul of St. John, who reposed on the heart of his Saviour, when he instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

What is the meaning of this? I answer: “ St. John walked with Jesus in life, nor left Him until He stood beneath the cross ; he calls himself ‘ the disciple Whom Jesus loved.’ ” Listen, Christian virgin, to the application I make of this :

That Holy Communion may have its full effect, the recipient must, after Holy Communion, like St. John, remain with the Divine Guest, Who has taken up His abode with him. Judas receives Holy Communion, and, in unseemly haste, departs, while St. John remains on the bosom of Jesus in silent, but rapturous thanksgiving.

*Thanksgiving* is the test which decides whether a soul may be permitted to receive Holy Communion with more than ordinary frequency. If *this* be defect-

ive, we may vainly look for the characteristic of St. John's love and the unction which was found therein. Habitual communion may even bring danger to the soul through that indifference which often creeps in by *habit* and *custom*.

What I say, therefore, is this: "If, after the reception of Holy Communion, you are so occupied with the presence of Christ that, so far from requiring a book for thanksgiving, your silent, loving affections for Jesus bind you to that adorable Presence of Him, then communicate oftener. If not, however, by all means approach the holy table once a month, and make use of some suitable book, which will enable you to make your thanksgiving after Holy Communion in a proper and devotional manner."

Among the virgins who in this century were enrolled in the list of saints with great solemnity, in Rome, at the canonization which took place in the year 1867, was St. Frances, of the five wounds. She was born in Naples, in the year 1713, wherein also lived, at the same time, the two great saints, St. Francis, of Hieronymo, and St. John Joseph.

When the little Mary Frances was but four years old she knew her catechism; at the age of five she went to confession; and when seven years old, she received Holy Communion.

Throughout the entire life of this great servant of God, she manifested, in common with all the Saints, an exceeding great and tender devotion towards Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Invoke her intercession during this month, especially, and say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you that strength of *love* for Jesus in Holy *Communion*, with which she received it into her heart. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXVIII.

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MARY,

THE COMPANION OF JESUS.

WHEN JESUS had scarcely attained His thirtieth year, He emerged from solitude, and, leaving the quiet little house in Nazareth, bade His most Blessed Mother farewell, and entered upon His public *apostolical* life.

Consider the deep emotion which moved the heart of that loving Mother, when Jesus revealed to her His intentions, and told her that to accomplish the work of the Redemption of mankind, for which His Father had sent Him into the world, He must separate from her. And this separation we may well believe, thrust into her heart another sword of sorrow.

But she, who was actuated solely by the desire of fulfilling the Most Holy Will of God, and who had had, for thirty years, in Jesus, the most brilliant example of this disposition of heart, now also submitted with perfect resignation to the Will of God.

But while Jesus was to leave her, still she was not to be entirely deprived of the consolation of following

Him, and, therefore, of at least looking upon Him, listening to the words which fell from His lips, and doing all in her power to assist Him in His missionary journeys.

Herein, also, she serves you as an example in reference to your life as a child of our Holy Church. Listen, therefore, to the counsel of your heavenly mother, the Queen of Apostles, who says:

*“My daughter, there is besides the Apostleship of the Word, as preached, and the holy office of priesthood, yet another to which you, with every human soul, are called by my Divine Son. It is the Apostolate of good Example, of Conversation and of Prayer.—Practice it zealously.*

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As tradition informs us, Mary accompanied Jesus with a number of holy women, not only urged on by the desire of being near Him and hearing His heavenly words, but that they might be there to provide for Him and His Apostles; so that, when they arrived anywhere, their place of dwelling would be ready, and refreshment prepared.

For Mary, the tender Virgin and Mother of God, such a life was certainly one of no little hardship. In many instances she had to pass without intermission over mountains and hills, and to traverse valleys and plains which lay in their path. Many pious women and maidens accompanied her, and performed, under her direction, the necessary work.

However, in the midst of a life so full of turmoil, and not without danger, Mary, the Holy Virgin,



remained admirable as ever. She thus gained the opportunity of hearing every *sermon* of her Divine Son, and witnessing the *miracles* He performed. She accompanied His labors with her *prayers*, in order that His words might fall into the hearts of His hearers, and bring forth the more good fruit.

She loved Jesus in a degree in which no heart had ever loved Him; yet during His Apostolic labors she was never obtrusive, but remained at a respectful distance with the holy women, and shared with them the sweet troubles consequent upon providing for the sustenance of her Divine Son and His Disciples.

Mary was not only, as once in the temple, the contemplative dove, hidden in the cleft of a rock, nor merely the tender, solicitous Mother in Nazareth,—no! she was also the strong woman whom God placed in different circumstances of life, that all the children of men, but especially married women and maidens, might have a noble example for imitation.

Child of Mary! you have already, I hope, understood how zealously the Holy Virgin availed herself of the glorious model she had ever before her, that, by imitating the virtues of Jesus, her own life might grow ever more holy. You have understood upon what it depends that you also, with earnestness of purpose, and a zeal which never wavers, may, after her example, follow Jesus for the sanctification of your life.

This *imitation* of Jesus is surely the condition of all conditions to become ever more and more like unto

Him. Nay, more ; it is the condition of our salvation ; for all whom God pre-elected to glory, in the Communion of Christ, those, also, has He pre-elected to become like unto Him in their lives upon earth, as we learn from St. Paul.

But if we really recognize Jesus as our Saviour and Redeemer, and love Him as such, we will not be satisfied merely to save *our own* souls. He also enjoins us to contribute, as far as we can, to leading souls over the whole world to His knowledge and love. We are called upon to do all in our power that they may walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and we must labor for the salvation of all.

In one word, there is a *Lay-apostolate*, in which maidens also can take part, and prove their apostolical zeal, as I will show you to-day.

Christian virgins ! to you is not given the sacred Office of the Priesthood ; you have not the mission intrusted to the Apostles and their successors in the holy Office, to whom are directed the words of Christ : “ I will make you fishers of men. Go forth unto the whole world and preach.” And as St. Paul admonishes the faithful : “ Thus shall every man consider us as distributors of the mysteries of the graces of God in the holy Ministry.” But the same Apostle also cries out to all the faithful : “ Be ye my followers, as I am a follower of Christ.”

I will first speak of the apostleship of *Example*.

Listen to the summons of Christ the Lord to all mankind : “ Thus shall your light shine before men,

that they may see your works and praise my Father, Who is in heaven." That the influence of good example is, indeed, most beneficial upon the lives of others is so evident from constant experience, that no detailed proof is required.

Indeed, the influence of example is so powerful, that, not to speak of virtue which we *behold* in another, even to hear or read of the good which has been accomplished in the service of God incites and encourages us to the same.

We have a glorious example of this in the Conversion of St. Augustine. He was yet a slave of sin, when he read the lives of the Fathers of the desert in Egypt. The consideration of their example affected his will more powerfully than any thing else, and he thought within himself: "If such things were possible to them, why not also to me?"

Let us especially consider the founders of so many holy *Orders*. Let us think of St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius. Hundreds and thousands, attracted by their example, flocked around them, to live like unto them. Had there never been vouchsafed to the world a Benedict, a Francis, a Dominic, an Ignatius, there would be now no Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, nor Jesuits; and how many souls have these saved by their word and example!

Yes; after the lapse of centuries this Example still leads others to follow it, and so the effect will go on until the end of the world.

Above all, read the lives of the many holy Virgins,

who have been as fair flowers in the garden of the Church. The more frequently you read of their eminent sanctity, the more will you be encouraged to imitate their example.

Let us take, for instance, your very own example, as a daughter of the house, or a servant girl. I ask you, Christian maiden, if, when at an early hour you arise, and, immediately falling on your knees, devoutly recite your morning prayers, would not your brothers and sisters, and also the servant girls, seeing this, be edified, and urged to do the same? And if you then can go to Church and assist at the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, will it not be a source of edification, not only to your parents, brothers and sisters, but to the servants as well? Will they not be encouraged to imitate your Example?

If you, during the day, keep yourself ever in the presence of God, avoid all idle conversation, work diligently, finish every thing as perfectly as you can, conduct yourself kindly towards all, manifest an amiable and obliging spirit to others, and, when you have occasion to leave the house, dress yourself without vanity, and walk modestly along the streets; how many frivolous girls, perceiving this, will, perhaps, be moved to give up their vanity, and imitate your life?

And if you appear punctually at Divine service, assist thereat with great devotion, and often receive the Holy Sacraments; do you not think that this being observed, the sweet odor of your example will, as the

Apostle says, be diffused as an encouragement for the sanctification of others? Certainly!

You should be especially zealous in soliciting other young girls to join a *Sodality*, and thus place themselves under the special patronage of the Blessed Virgin. It is related in the Lives of the Saints, how, through the example of a holy "servant girl," who attracted the notice of the King of Bulgaria, he asked for missionaries, and how, they coming at his desire, he was converted, with all his subjects, to the faith.

Besides this Apostleship of Example, there is yet another which is of service for those who are not Priests, and especially for Christian maidens.

It is the Apostleship of *Admonition, Encouragement, and Consolation*. How many occasions present themselves, if we only seek to make use of them, to preserve others from evil, by encouraging and inciting them to do good!

Let us take, first, those who live under *the same* roof—brothers, sisters, and domestics—or, in regard to a servant girl—her companions in labor—the children; nay, even the master and mistress whom she serves.

How much good can be effected by her well-timed *advice* and *encouragement*, to prevent evil, and excite them to good! What beautiful examples of this zeal for souls do we read in the lives of the many holy Virgins who have adorned the Church of God! How many sinners were converted through the encouragement of a St. Catherine, of Sienna, a St. Rose of

Lima! And how many maidens, animated by the exhortations of their friends, have begun to lead pious lives, to grow zealous in the service of God and the reception of the Holy Sacraments, or have been even converted to the one true faith. Often, too, my own experience, when servant girls asked for instruction in our holy faith, at the question: What induced them to do so? they declared that they were induced to do so by other servant girls, who urged them on, and furnished them with suitable books. The same holds good in regard to the conversion of husbands or wives, in consequence of relative exhortations and conversations.

There is beside *oral* exhortation, the *printed* word, a means which, in our time, can be applied for the conversion and sanctification of others.

I direct your attention in this respect, especially to a book, in writing which, my object was the conversion of Americans. It is called "Catholicity, Protestantism, and Infidelity," and can be had both in English, German, and French. Each one of you should read it, and give it to others to read. Those who are already Catholics will be confirmed in the faith; and those who are not, may, by its perusal, be instructed and encouraged to enter the Church.

The third kind of Apostleship, finally, which can be exercised by those in your state of life, is that of *Prayer*,—pray for the propagation of faith, the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of the good.

When St. Theresa heard of the arduous labors of

St. Francis Xavier in India, she frequently scourged herself to blood, and performed other works of Penance, that God might bless his apostolic work, and He did bless it in a most wonderful manner.

Behold, Christian virgins! the manner in which each one of you can contribute to assist Jesus through *apostolic* zeal; and if you do so, how great will be your reward in Heaven!

The Church celebrates in this month the Feast of *St. Catherine of Sienna*. If ever there was a living verification of all that I have said above, regarding the Apostolate of Example, of Encouragement, and Prayer for the salvation of souls and the Church, we behold it in her. She incessantly importuned God in prayer for the conversion of sinners, and He granted this prayer for the salvation of innumerable souls. The luster of her virtues, her fervor and prudence, shone forth so brightly in life, that she was intrusted by the Pope himself with most important missions for the salvation of souls and the greater glory of God.

On one occasion the Lord appeared to her with two crowns; one of gold, the other one of thorns, and bade her make choice of one. The saintly Virgin seized the one of thorns and pressed it upon her head, in token of her desire to become like her suffering Jesus. If you want to be zealous, you must also be a lover of crosses and tribulations—a mortified Christian.

Say daily, during this month, one Ave Maria, in honor of St. Catherine of Sienna, and invoke

her, that she may obtain for you the grace of an influence like hers, powerful in the conversion, salvation, and sanctification of *souls*, and a readiness to suffer all that God pleases to inflict upon you for that end. Amen!



## CONFERENCE XXIX.

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### MARY

ON GOOD FRIDAY.

THE palm branches, which the children of Israel had cast in the path of their Saviour, still covered the streets of Jerusalem.

And in the valley of Cedron yet lingered the echoes of the joyous shouts of the Hosannas with which the multitude had greeted the triumphant entrance of the Son of David,—with which the daughter of Zion had saluted her King.

Suddenly the demons of hell incited the enemies of Christ, in their hate, to the greatest of all possible crimes—attempted Deicide.

Behold Jesus betrayed by one of His own Apostles ; forsaken by those, Whom He had chosen as disciples ; denied by St. Peter ; bound by His chosen people ; derided, mocked, judged by heathens ; struck at by furious soldiers ; scourged, lacerated, crowned with thorns ; His death demanded by an angry mob ; condemned to the ignominious death of the cross, and placed between two common thieves.

“Crucify Him ! crucify Him !” The angry cry which more than a million voices shrieked aloud, arose upon the air.

More than three millions of men were accustomed to go thither to be present in the temple at the Easter festival.

The Mother of Jesus heard the appalling cry of murder, and hastening into the street, at the corner of a house, which is still pointed out as the spot, awaited her Divine Son.

He came on, bending beneath the heavy weight of the cross, while sweat and blood streamed down from every pore. As Mary drew near in the deep anguish of her soul, the cold sweat bathing her heavenly countenance, a feeling of awe came over the rude soldiers who guarded her Son. Nay, as they beheld her so majestic, and with something more than human in her aspect, they involuntarily lowered their weapons.

Jesus, as St. Bridget saw Him in a vision, wiped the blood from His eyes to enable Him to look upon His Beloved Mother, inclined His head under the weight of the Cross, and then as He saluted and expressed His thanks to her, His lips, for the last time addressed her by the sweet name of "Mother." Then she clasped her maternal arms about Him, taking in also the Cross moistened as it was by His most precious blood. Thus she embraced, for the last time on earth, this well-beloved Son.

Child of Mary! dwell upon this memorable farewell! Such a mother! Such a Son! And listen today to the counsel of that most sorrowful mother, given to you at this occurrence.

*“My child, there is no other road to heaven than that which Jesus trod—the royal road of the Cross. Therefore, daily take up your Cross and follow Him.*

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That this is true indeed, experience has taught you long ere this. There is not a day without bringing with it something to suffer and to bear, as will be seen by carefully noting every thing that happens in its course; and it is most important that we try to endure these ever-recurring trials in a spirit of love for the Cross—in patience and resignation to gain merits thereby, and carry the Cross with Jesus; that it may indeed be so with you, meditate for a few moments upon the manifold trials of life, and by this means guard against being confused by them, and consider what is most necessary to be done to gain merit by them for Heaven.

First, we are very often a burden to *ourselves*. The early morning brings difficulties upon us, and they proceed from our own bodies. Difficulties of indolence. To *rise at once*, and at an hour sufficiently early to give us the proper time for prayer, is already a trial which we must overcome for the love of Jesus.—Prayer itself, which must be said the first thing in the morning, if one wishes to live as a true Christian, and follow Jesus, requires a certain amount of self conquest, as it is usually the case with all for whom prayer did not yet become a want of his heart, but rather an obligation. Closely following the morning's devotions comes

the *daily occupation*, which produces fatigue and is, therefore, a continual burden. Hunger and thirst are its very natural attendants, yet there may be very little to satisfy their demands, and that little of an inferior quality. Behold here an opportunity of carrying the Cross. Abnegate yourself.

Then, too, it is often a problem, difficult indeed, of solution for a man to provide for the *daily wants* of his *family*. He may be even without *employment*,—and this will be more of a burden to him than work itself. Very often, too, there is much to suffer from, living in a house so miserable that it affords *no shelter* from the winter's cold, or situated where disagreeable odors abound, and ceaseless noise disturbs the hours of rest,—particularly if there be sick persons in the same or an adjoining apartment, and constant coughing from the old, and crying from restless children. This, with the addition of annoying insects, and noisy animals around, renders a night's repose an impossible thing. To stand it patiently, abnegate yourself.

And then, what can be said of the miseries which *sickness* entails upon man himself! They are innumerable, especially if the illness be painful and difficult to cure. Ah! yes, what manifold trials are sent to us day after day, and we must bear them with patience if we would truly follow Jesus in union with the most holy will of God.

There are, also, *difficulties* with those with whom we *live*, which often become for us a heavy trial. Many are compelled to live with uncharitable or

malicious persons, or with the wicked and immoral, and are so connected with them that they can not go away, as they would wish.

Suppose, for instance, there is a father who is a drunkard, a step-mother who is ill-humored, or a brother and sister whose hearts are full of acrimony and hostility towards the others. Suppose a person who, with no fault of hers, has incurred the ill-will of another, who acts toward her in the most offensive manner, and even takes away her means of earning her daily bread! Then there is poverty! Ah! hard indeed is it to suffer its woes; and still worse where there is a family to support—parents, perhaps, or brothers and sisters. And they may fall ill, not a penny in the house, and no one to tender them aid! What a trial is this!

Such are the many exterior crosses to which the daily life of man is subject.

What, then, must I say in regard to the manifold troubles which come in his *interior* life. Temptations of faint-heartedness, of anguish of conscience, sadness and grief, separation from loved ones, especially through *death*.

How important is it not to dispose our heart in a way which will enable us the better to endure all these trials, since we knew well they would come on, as even a heathen poet of old has already advised?

But it is of far greater moment for us to cherish sentiments by which we can turn all our trials into occasions of *merit*, and render them most *advantage-*

ous for eternity. To produce this happy effect, of what should we especially think? Christian maiden! listen to me, and often reflect upon what I am about to tell you of the light in which you, enlightened by faith, must view these trials which will ever recur. You then will bear them with calm tranquillity, and even joyous courage, so that they will be transformed to shining gems of merit for life eternal.

First, suffering is *no misfortune*. On the contrary, to suffer patiently and for love of God in perfect submission to His Most Holy Will, is, in His divine eyes, something so glorious that the Angels well might envy *us*, and why? Because those bright celestial beings have never had the opportunity of proving their love to God in this most perfect manner—by suffering patiently.

Most truly has one of the deepest thinkers of modern times remarked: "Had there been aught more glorious than to suffer patiently for love of God, and to suffer for His sake, the Eternal Father would surely have destined it to His only-begotten, dearly-beloved Son, and would, indeed, not have permitted Him to suffer the greatest and bitterest suffering which ever befell man."

Witness the touching plaint which, according to the Prophet Isaias, the suffering Redeemer made: "Oh! all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto mine!"

Secondly, enlightened by Holy Faith, we know that no evil can befall us unless Divine *Providence* so

*ordains* or *permits* it. We read already in the Old Testament: "There is no evil in the city, which God has not made;" by which we are to understand: "*ordained* or *permitted*."

Christ Himself assures us of this in a far more definite manner, when He says: "Not a hair shall fall from your head without the permission of God."

Besides this, God is our Most Wise and Loving Father, Who desires, far more than we can possibly wish, that every thing may serve for our salvation. Therefore, O Christian maiden! when adversity crosses your path, and troubles come thick and fast, do not think in your heart, nor cry out: "An enemy hath done this to me."

No! rather looking at the hand of your Heavenly *Father* kiss it in spirit, and reflect that all your troubles are from Him, and that in suffering you can find the sweetest consolation.

Thirdly, it is true that *sin* brought misery and woe into the world, but it is equally true that Christ, through His passion and death, changed them into sources of *salvation*.

All who have gone before us and reached eternal bliss walked in this way to enter heaven. The Mother of God, St. Joseph, all the celestial citizens, the Saint whose name you bear, have followed the Crucified. Think within yourself; "Suffering—I am in good *company*, naught in this world could tempt me to take another path."

Fourthly, suffering is the most precious opportu-

nity of gathering higher *merits* for eternity, brighter gems for the crown of recompense,—and as the value of precious stones is different, some being a thousand times more costly than the rest,—so does the merit gained by patient *suffering* often surpass that bestowed for the greatest number of other good works.

What enduring *Gratitude* do the *Martyrs* feel now towards God that He permitted them to suffer such pains and tortures while yet on earth.

Fifthly, the thought of how brief and *fleeting* all earthly torments are, and how soon, our sufferings ended, we will enter that better land, where grief and pain shall never come, should never leave your mind.

Oh! think of this, Christian maiden, when, by the striking of the clock, you note that another hour has passed, and brought you nearer to Heaven, and you will bear your sufferings patiently, nay, even with joy, if you fail not to unite them with the Passion of Jesus Christ, your loving Saviour.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Angela*, foundress of the Order of Ursuline Nuns. The desire to visit the Holy Places urged her to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, although on her way she suffered the loss of her sight. The thought that she had the happiness of setting foot upon the ground over which Christ had borne for us His heavy cross, strengthened her to carry meritoriously the cross of her life, in imitation of her beloved Jesus.

Implore her to intercede for you. Say, during this



month, each day, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you such a love of the *Cross* as filled her ardent soul, that you may be enabled to bear all the troubles of life with perfect *patience* and *resignation* to the Most Holy Will of God. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXX.

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### MARY

#### BENEATH THE CROSS.

**B**EFORE Jesus reached Mount Calvary, Mary was already there, upon its summit.

When her Beloved Son had celebrated His recent triumph, she did not appear in public, where His Presence might have tended to her earthly glorification. Ah! no; but on this day, which was to witness His sufferings, when He was to be despised, mocked, and condemned to the cruel death of the Cross, she *did go forth*.

She was not ashamed of her Jesus, and all the mocking insults, heaped upon Him by His enraged foes, were far outweighed by the honor she rendered Him.

Arrived at the summit of the steep ascent she beheld the gathering multitude, and watched the men as they dug deep holes in the earth in which to lower those three crosses,—the middle one being destined for that Son, Whom she regarded with such boundless love.

Oh! what a death-like shudder passed over her frame! But St. John, ever tender and careful of Mary, led her to a spot a little more distant.

Soon, however, there fell upon her ear the sound of the hammers. Jesus is nailed to the Cross! Listen to His cry of pain. How it pierced her maternal heart! And now, drawn up by ropes, the *Cross* rose slowly in the air, and, with Christ facing the West, sank into its place. Hell felt the shock, and trembled to its very depths.

Then Mary left her place of refuge, too far away for her, and drew near the Cross of her Divine Son, while the sword of sorrow sank into her heart deeper and deeper, and settled in its very depths.

Lifting her eyes heavenward, her gaze met that of the Crucified, and uniting her sacrifice to His before God the Eternal Father, she offered it to Him for the salvation of the whole world. She listened to each word which, from the Cross, came from His pallid lips, and perfectly understood the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the mercies of God.

She clearly and distinctly comprehended the purpose for which God had chosen her, and all that He had intrusted to her. It was as if she beheld Adam, the Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, David, the Prophets, and the whole anterior world pass before the Cross, and gaze upon *Him* in Whom were fulfilled each promise of the Redemption of mankind.

She saw how, in wondering adoration, they bowed before the anointed of the Lord.

Mary also saw, how all nations on earth received beneath the Cross the message of salvation; she beheld those saved through the blood of Christ, and

learned the dignity to which, as the Eve of the New Law, she was elevated through Christ upon the Cross. In the person of St. John she accepted us all for her children, if we, with him, accept and receive her for a mother; but it must be with the love, veneration, child-like simplicity, and imitation of her virtues, which characterized her adopted son.

We must obey her counsel; and what is the counsel which is given to you to-day from the Cross by this sorrowful Mother? Mary cries out to you:

*“My daughter, if you would fully receive in your heart your share of the treasures of Redemption, then listen to each word from the Cross, and understand it, as I will tell you to-day.”*

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“Father, forgive them.” Jesus prays for the forgiveness of all the sins of all the sinners who have ever lived on earth, or will ever live until the end of time; and not merely in general, but also especially for every human soul. He, the King of Prophets, to Whom the future was as an open book, He adds to this prayer the words: “they know not what they do.”

Most true. If you offend so good a God it is because you have never sufficiently reflected upon the *evil* which sin is, and thence arises the question: Did you ever make a general confession? This is something which should be done by every young girl when she has attained a certain age.

You, I trust, attended to this duty previous to the

reception of the First Holy Communion; but here a second question must be asked: "What is a good and valid confession?"

It may be that, even before the reception of the First Holy Communion, you were guilty of mortal sin; it may be even you were already a habitual sinner. There are girls who go to confession every week, or at least every month, and each time they are guilty of an additional sacrilege. Thus the number of their sins grows greater and greater, they are never forgiven,—no, not even if the Pope would hear their confession, and give them absolution—and why? Because, O Father in heaven! they know not what they do; they deem it sufficient to accuse themselves, and then, in the usual formula, express their contrition, and perform the penance imposed. Behold, the next confession reveals that they have relapsed into the same mortal sins. I told you this already, but it can not be repeated too often. It is especially true in regard to sins against holy purity, in thoughts, desires, actions and words. If it has been thus with you, O Christian maiden! satisfy your conscience, confess. If you have lived in such a condition, make now a sincere, perfect general confession, and give yourself the consolation of being able to say to the priest who attends your dying-bed, and hears your last confession: "From that confession made in the year —— I never offended God by relapsing into mortal sin."

For this, however, it is necessary to avoid the occasion of sin, cost what it may; and that venial sin

and imperfection neither may find a dwelling-place in your heart, go often, but worthily, to confession.

“Amen! I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” Christian maiden! If you wish to progress in the way of virtue and perfection, then must your mind be ever fixed on heavenly things; and there is one thought which must take deep root in your heart, namely: “I am not created for this world, but for heaven; not for the brief and fleeting time of earth, but for the eternal years.”

This will encourage you in the way of virtue and perfection, will urge you on, and strengthen you to follow the example of the saints, and, while there is still time, to increase your merits, and consequently your glory and delight in heaven.

“Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother.” In order to live in such a manner, we need graces, many, effective and *great* graces; and to obtain them, hasten with unbounded confidence to Mary, the Mother and Distributer of Grace. Go often, therefore, in spirit, to Calvary, and imagine that with St. John you are standing beneath the Cross. Prostrate yourself before the sorrowful mother, embrace her, conjure her by the blood of Christ to assist you: speak to her thus: “Do you know, my dearest mother, that you must obtain for me the grace to live the life of a Saint? This is my hope, this is my trust.”

“My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?”

My daughter, Jesus suffers, as it were, the pains of reprobation for you. Remember what I told you in a recent conference of how precious it is to suffer for the love of God, and beseech our Saviour to grant you an ardent love of crosses. As long as you receive the cross from the hand of Jesus, and bear it for love of Him, nothing can prevent your progress and perseverance in virtue's path.

"I thirst." Jesus thirsts after your sanctification and salvation. All hail to you if, not satisfied with merely fulfilling your duties as a maiden, a daughter, a servant girl, in a general way, and with just sufficient care to avoid reproach, you are thoroughly in earnest in your desire to do better and better every day, and live the life of a Saint.

"It is consummated." O, momentous word, *Fidelity*. Ah, yes; if this were never wanting, each one of you would be a saint already.

My God! reflect upon the many good resolutions you have made in your life, especially on the happy occasion of your first Holy Communion! But did you observe them?

If so, with what confidence will you answer the summons which bids you leave this world, exclaiming with St. Paul: "I fought a good fight, preserved faith, kept my resolutions, sanctified myself and others. For the rest is now prepared for me the crown of life which the Lord has promised me."

The Church celebrates, in this month, the memory of the blessed Anna de Paredes, "The Lily of Quito,"

the name by which she is known in South America, where she first unclosed her eyes to the light.

She is so called, because, immediately after her death a lily sprang up from the blood she shed.

Her life was spent in the practice of penance to a wonderfully severe extent, and she had continually Jesus, the Crucified, before her eyes.

Invoke her with particular devotion as the patroness of American maidens, and say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that you, following her example, may live, if not in the performance of such penance, at least in the spirit of constant self-denial. Amen!



## CONFERENCE XXXI.

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### MARY

ON EASTER MORNING.

THE sepulcher was securely sealed, and the friends of Jesus had deserted the holy spot. They were actuated by a fear of the soldiers whom the Pharisees had placed there to guard, but God so directing, to give unwilling yet certain testimony that our Lord had miraculously risen from the grave.

Mary, although remote in body from the sacred remains of her Son, was still with them in spirit, and we learn from tradition that she went forth on Easter morning, even before the holy women had set out, and walked in the way of the Cross—to Calvary.

Jerusalem was buried in slumber; the mists of the morning hung over the deicide city, and the first faint beam, which heralds the coming day, stole through the splendor of the star-lit sky. All nature seemed to smile in anticipation of some great joy and triumph, when suddenly earth trembled to its very center, and an Angel of the powers winging his flight from heaven, in the twinkling of an eye rolled back the heavy stone, and behold, all gloriously the Lord and Saviour soared up from the grave.

And at that moment He appeared to His most blessed Mother, in the very road over which she, but a few short days ago had walked in such agonizing grief—the painful way of the Cross.

Fitting, indeed, was it, that to her was given the privilege of first beholding the risen Lord in all the splendor of His transfiguration. Oh! what torrents of joy, what overwhelming delight rushed over her soul when she clasped Him in her loving embrace, and rapturously greeted her Son! How glad was she to welcome Him entoning the Alleluia of the approaching bliss of heaven!

And who can tell what an increase of grace and consolation Jesus on that day bestowed on His most blessed Mother, to compensate her for the abyss of sorrow into which through His passion and death, she had been plunged?

Congratulate Mary that she was thus preferred before all the children of men, but reflect also most earnestly upon the counsel, which, in considering this event of her life, she imparts unto you, namely:

*“My daughter, never yield to that sadness which will not be consoled, but serve God full of cheerful courage and confidence in Him.”*

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This counsel is more important and of greater influence than may, perhaps, at first appear to you.

Before proving it to you, I want to point to the usual quite opposite disorder in girls. Experience, it is true, proves that a certain fickleness and un-

due indulgence in mirth is eminently characteristic in maidens, as your own knowledge certainly tells you.

Wherever there is an assemblage of girls, even if they are engaged in some occupation, there will be one uninterrupted sound of chatting and laughing, a constant endeavor to amuse themselves. So inherent is this inclination in them, that the like of it is not to be seen in any other class of human beings.

This disorder was, I might almost say, apparent at the first fall into sin. It was Eve, who, as it were, gave way to curiosity—approached the forbidden tree—gazed at the fruit, and heedlessly talked to Satan till he accomplished her fall.

How many of your sex may trace their fall into sin, to this instability, which seems to be innate, and this ungovernable and unrestrained passion for enjoyment and talkativeness. How edifying and attractive is that young girl, so admirable, yet, alas! so rare, who is not infected with this weakness, and whose whole deportment is marked by modesty, decorum, and recollection of spirit.

But when one meets with girls who have scarcely passed the years of childhood, who are not full-grown, yet have the full use of reason, and who evince a wanton and frivolous spirit in all their acts, the terrifying thought ever and anon presents itself to the reflecting mind: "Alas! I fear you will not preserve your innocence very long." *Abnegate yourself!*

There is, however, another trait of character in re-

gard to girls, which certainly merits disapproval, and which is found more frequently among young persons of your sex than in those of the other.

This is an irritable, discontented, and quarrelsome turn of mind, which gives rise to a certain mode of behavior to be met with even in those who, in other respects, are trying to live piously, yet give themselves up to a spirit of gloom and despondency which is not from God.

There are girls who are extremely irritable, given to quarreling, and thoroughly impatient. When told to do any thing by their parents, they grow peevish at once, as their whole demeanor reveals. Their brow is clouded, their forehead wrinkles, and looking straight before them, they seem to debate, "Shall I do it or not?"

They murmur and, perhaps, openly refuse to obey, and often, alas!—at least within their hearts—they utter a curse, or imprecation. Do you behold here, O maiden! the mirror which reflects the faults by which you grieve your parents' hearts? Such conduct certainly will not call down the blessing of God.

All this applies equally to the manner in which you treat your brothers and sisters, and the servants of the house. She who is so unhappy as to possess such a character, instead of lovingly trying to perform acts of kindness, begins, perhaps, early in the morning to quarrel and contradict, and even allows herself to go further, and strike or abuse her younger brothers and sisters.

Or, if she be a servant in a place where other girls are employed, how surely will her ill temper produce aversion, discord and even actual enmity. How sincerely do all who are not obliged to live with such a character congratulate themselves!

As I have already remarked there is a certain sadness and melancholy even in the character of young women who are apparently pious in other respects. This may render them a burden to others, and can be carried so far as to be an impediment to their own salvation.

It may possibly arise from their peculiar temperament; and, if so, it is certainly difficult to refrain from manifesting it when with others. But it can, also, especially if one is truly in earnest in her efforts to lead a pious life, arise from a conscience troubled with *scruples*.

In this case, of course to the confessor belongs the work of restoring peace to the needlessly troubled soul; but then upon that soul there rests the obligation of taking advice that she may joyfully serve God, with a cheerful mind, and advance in the way of virtue.

One who is pious, but at the same time unnecessarily timid, must, in order to be helped, keep in view the maxim of St. Alphonsus, who rightly says: "Where there is no manifest sin the penitent must rely on the sentence of the confessor, as the representative of Christ, Who says, 'Whosoever heareth you, heareth Me.'"

Secondly, she must seriously consider how dangerous it is in regard to salvation to yield to temptations of *pusillanimity*. For faint-heartedness gives occasion to Satan to lead a soul, especially at the hour of death, to the very brink of despair—the condition of all others most fatal to a dying person.

Let each one, therefore, take as a “maxim” of life, and firmly adhere to it: “Place rather too much than too little confidence in God.”

The timid soul should consider how vain and absurd the wish ever and again to look back on the years that have passed, and to make useless general confessions. And what reason is put forth for this?

They say, “I do not feel perfectly satisfied, nor altogether tranquil.” But such a boon is not granted to man. He can not thus make out his account with God, in regard to his life, as he could enter a store, and, asking the amount of his indebtedness, say: “Here is the money: now I am free.” There is nothing of this, nor *can* there be, with God. We must *humble* ourselves before Him; and even though a person may have made a general confession to the Pope himself, that would still be no motive for thinking, “Now, indeed, I am as sure that I am *certainly* absolved from my sins as I am that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .”

Besides, she who wishes to accuse herself always anew, in the Sacrament of Penance, by a general confession, does not consider that the bad odor of sin can reawaken temptations, which, had she trusted

in God and been silent, would not have molested her further.

Look onward in the way and practice of virtue. This will strengthen and refresh the soul, and render it zealous in the service of God.

Certainly one who no longer offends God by grievous sins is advised, in every confession, to declare some sin of her past life, and include it, to make sure that, since a real sin is confessed, the absolution is real.

It is also necessary to have true contrition for it, with the firm resolution to perform the penance imposed, that through the absolution the grace of the Sacrament of Penance may be imparted to her who confesses.

But when the penitent, in such a case, includes sins against chastity, in making the accusation, care must be taken not to detail all the circumstances, it being sufficient to say: "I accuse myself that I have sinned in my youth, against the sixth Commandment." Otherwise Satan might find occasion to tempt the soul, by recalling her sins too vividly to her mind, and thus achieve her relapse.

The Saints were souls filled with light, strength, courage, and fidelity. *Hope* imparts light, strength, courage and consistency.

A faint-hearted Christian walks in darkness, and is powerless to help herself.

Weak and timid, she has no stability; and thus,

through languor and tepidity before God, sustains the loss of numberless merits.

Now, let me ask: "What will inspire us with confidence in God, and raise hope in our hearts?"

Glance at the risen Saviour. Look at His five glorious wounds, and thus be reminded of these consoling words of Christ: "I think of thee; I provide for thee; I guide thee; I protect thee; I love thee." Let this assurance of the Lord sink into the innermost depths of your heart, and all faint-heartedness will vanish.

You will walk before God in that perfect and joyous confidence in Him which will sanctify your life.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Marianna*, who was born in Spain. Even in her earliest youth the fire of Divine Love burned so ardently in her heart that, when but three years had flown by since her birth, she thus prayed: "O! how I love Thee, my God! I love thee more than my father, or mother,—more than any thing in the whole world!" When about ten years of age, she, by associating with a giddy little girl, was led to imitate her example, but soon, recognizing and regretting her little faults, she began to lead a holy life.

During an ecstasy, God once spoke to her thus: "The faults of those who love Me truly will be consumed like chaff in the flames of their love, and nothing will remain of them but the ashes of humility and self-knowledge."

Invoke her intercession, by saying daily, until the



next Conference, one Ave Maria, that in all your actions, you also may have the intention to serve Jesus with a cheerful, joyous disposition, and that you may be thoroughly penetrated with the desire: "*All for Jesus!*" Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXII.

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### MARY

ON ASCENSION DAY.

FOR forty days after His resurrection, Jesus remained visibly present to His Apostles and Disciples, and held converse with them upon the kingdom of God.

How often, during these days, did He not seek the society of His Most Blessed Mother, whom, *as* His mother, He not only honored with His personal presence during thirty years, but also chose as Protectress of the Church He would found as the visible kingdom of God upon earth?

The faithful and fervent heart which knows and truly loves Jesus and Mary, in meditating upon this point, is inclined to believe that at the conclusion of His mission on earth, even as when He began His labors for the salvation of man, He granted her the boon of His perpetual presence.

The time rolled by, the fortieth day arrived, and at the noon-tide hour Jesus, together with Mary and His Disciples, went from Jerusalem to Mount Olivet.

Here the Saviour had often spent whole nights watching and praying, with His divine eyes lifted to the stars.

Here had His agony of sorrow begun. Covered with bloody sweat, His cross and passion before His eyes, it was *here* that His cry arose to His Heavenly Father; and now from this spot would He ascend into Heaven, and mount the throne of His Glory.

Oh! with what deep veneration and tender love did Jesus, before His departure, embrace His Beloved Mother.

Then, imparting His blessing to her, to His Apostles and disciples, He raised Himself before their eyes, and soared up to His heavenly home.

Soon a luminous cloud hid Him from view. But to *Mary* He still remained visible. If St. Stephen, while yet on earth, beheld the heavens open, and saw Jesus at the right hand of His Father in glory, should not *Mary* receive a joy and consolation like unto His?

Yes; certainly the triumph of her Divine Son was as visible to her eyes as if she were already enthroned above the Angels and Saints as their heavenly Queen.

St. Paul declares of himself that, while yet in the body, he was lifted up to the third heavens by the Lord, and yet had to remain on earth to care for the interests of the Church just springing into life.

In like manner *Mary* still dwelt corporally on earth to console and assist the Apostles and the daily-growing Church. But her heart!—ah, it ascended to

heaven with Jesus, and from the moment when she beheld Him soaring upward, she conceived a longing more ardent than ever for Heaven and for Him.

Child of Mary! Christian virgin! listen to the counsel of your heavenly mother. She administers it in the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles :

*“My child, while here on earth, let your conversation be in heaven! Often, therefore, consider the motives most fitting to fill your heart with longing for that happy home.”*

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“Lift up your heart.” This is the call of the Church which daily goes forth to her children through the lips of the Priest at the Altar. Oh! how equitable is the disposition which fills the heart with an ardent wish for Heaven. For all that tends to excite and increase our longing after some desired spot on earth are the very motives that should make us more eager to reach eternal bliss.

The motive which principally excites a *desire* to leave one place of residence for another, is the certainty of being released from some *misery*, to escape which we would gladly sail over the ocean.

The poor and oppressed wish to leave one place, if they know that in another abundance and *plenty* await them.

Those who are misunderstood, or despised, or, as it were, trodden in the dust—ah! how willingly would they leave their present abode, and go where they might even mount a royal *throne*.

The poor invalid, racked with bodily pains, would hasten away, if it could be so, to the place where he knows that a certain *cure* and constant health awaited him.

The captive, pining in his prison cell, longs to be where his fettered hands might be *released*, and freedom granted him.

He who has fallen into the hands of thieves and murderers, and is exposed to the merciless hate of unrelenting foes, would gladly go where a *protecting* hand will lead him safely through.

The unfortunate forsaken one, whom his fellow-creatures seem to shun, and for whom no heart in love or friendship seems to throb—the poor creature who is calumniated, persecuted, and despised—ah! how intensely does he sigh after a place where *loved* ones wait for him to give him life-long happiness.

Such, O virgin of Christ, should be the feelings of your heart. Thus should you long for heaven here below; if, while in this vale of tears, you lift your gaze upward.

Here is, indeed, the valley of *tears* and wretchedness—there all is *joy*, too great to be described. St. John, in the Apocalypse, thus writes: “And I saw the heavenly Jerusalem, and I heard a voice from heaven, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God is with His Saints, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor death, nor misery, nor mourning, nor separation; for the Lord shall wipe from their eyes all tears. All other things have passed away.”

Think of the words spoken by St. Agatha to her mother, who was weeping at her grave: "Do not weep, dear mother; I am in the midst of eternal joys."

Yes, here is the labor, there the *repose*; here we suffer hunger and thirst, there eternal *refreshment* will be ours; here is poverty, there *abundance*; here is contempt, there a *throne*, a brilliant *crown*; here is calumny and persecution, there *glorification* and *security*; here perpetual struggle, there victory's *triumphant* cry; here the sound of tears—ah, never do they cease to flow,—but there the *alleluia*'s exultant strain; here there is toil without end, but there an enduring *reward*; here sickness and death, in heaven everlasting *life*; here separation from those we love, there a *union* with them which will never, never end; here God's enemies, here ill will and envy abound, there is the kingdom of *love* and mutual *beatitude*; here is that earth which, having been cursed, yields thistles and thorns, there the *paradise* created by God to bless His faithful children forever.

This longing desire for heaven grows more intense when the contemplative soul does not think exclusively of delivery from every ill, but dwells, also, upon the joys which, in the company of the Angels and Saints, await us in heaven, the kingdom of *reward*.

Yes! of reward. "Amen, amen. I say unto you," says Christ, "whosoever shall give a cup of cold water in My Name; shall not lose his reward in heaven." And what is that reward?

Listen to the answer of St. Paul: "Eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him."

If this be true of a drink of cold water, how magnificently will not the Lord reward all the other good works which we perform for His glorification on earth! But, above all, with what divine munificence will He not repay us for all we have *suffered* for His sake!

And this is not all. We shall, at the same time, enter into the company of all the *Angels* and *Saints*, and partake of their beatitude and joy. What a powerful motive for us to sigh after heaven, if we but think what glorious, blessed beings the Angels are! If we could but conceive the beauty of a single Angel, and possess his happiness; if we could but have the hope of sharing with even one of those glorious beings the joys of heaven, how much encouragement would there not be in the very hope. But, no; we shall enter into the love, delight and beatitude of the *whole celestial choir!* The very same holds good of the Saints, and not only of the Saints, but even of *Mary*, the Queen of Saints.

The great Saint Augustine says that his most earnest desire was, that he could have seen the Saviour when he was on earth! Ah, yes! St. Augustine, I, too, can say the same. The second wish, however, of the Saint, that he might have heard the Apostle St. Paul deliver one of his sermons, does not agree with mine, which would have been, to gaze with St.

Dionysius, while yet on earth, on the glorious beauty of the *Ever-Blessed Virgin*.

But a little while, and this double wish will be gratified, and we in heaven will joyfully cry out: "I behold *Mary* in her Glory, and enter into her Love and Bliss." Yet more, I see *Jesus* Christ in that glory of which St. Paul thus speaks: "Wherefore God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bend of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and that every tongue should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ entered into the glory of God the Father." I enter in this His Glory, in His eternal love and Bliss.

Who that reflects upon this can refrain from sighing forth, with David: "Oh! who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may soar up and enter into such heavenly joys?"

And yet, all this is not Heaven. What is Heaven? God—*God Himself*. There face to face, I shall behold God, the *Infinite* Beauty—enter into God, the *Infinite Beatitude*, unite myself with God, as it were, to a *Unity* of nature. It is the living image, with its eternal prototype, to remain in this union with Him without end—eternally, forever and ever.

But if this longing really fills our hearts, what an all-powerful motive it will be for us to avoid every thing which might prevent us from entering heaven.

One thing alone can impede it and work our eternal ruin, and that is sin. This desire for heaven will also lead us, through zeal in the practice of works of



piety and virtue, similar to that of the Saints, to do all we can to increase our celestial glory.

We read of St. Theresa that she rejoiced in her heart as often as the clock gave warning that another hour had passed; and, within her, her heart intoned an "Alleluia," that she was so much nearer to the joys of heaven! and there was never a Saint that did not cherish a similar thought.

From this moment do you also think daily, yes hourly, of that heaven which is ever drawing nigh. Then your virtuous zeal will each day increase, and you will faithfully persevere in the service of the Lord.

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Rose*. She was the first flower of sanctity which bloomed in the garden of the Church, in this part of the world,—the first born American, who was placed for veneration on the altars of the Church. A great honor for you, maidens!

The most of your number first saw the light in this region of the globe, or have at least lived in this country from your earliest youth.

Therefore, honor, with particular devotion, these holy virgins whom God deigned to single out by two celestial flowers. *St. Rose*, whose face, when she was still a little child, resembled a beautiful rose—fit emblem of the sweet odor which would be one day diffused by her virtues as a true virgin of Christ—who, later on in her holy life addressed her in the following words: "Rose of My heart, be thou My spouse."

The other Saint, for whom you should cherish a special devotion, is the blessed Anna de Paredes, the "Lily of Quito," whom I already mentioned, and from whose blood sprang up a fragrant lily. Beseech St. Rose, particularly to obtain for you, from Jesus, the grace, that you, replenished with longing for heaven, may henceforth live no more for this vain world, but for that celestial home alone. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXIII.

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### MARY

ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

JESUS had ascended into heaven—He had gone home to His Father. The Saviour had entered into His Glory. The Apostles and Disciples of the Lord, with *Mary*, had returned to Jerusalem, according to the direction they had received from Jesus, to assemble there to meditate in silent prayer while waiting the advent of the *Holy Ghost*, who would replenish them with *strength* from above for the work for which He had chosen them, and enable them to do His will.

There, to the number of one hundred and twenty, they withdrew to the room in which Jesus, on the eve before His bitter passion, had celebrated the “Last Supper,” and instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, as sacrifice in the kingdom of the Church He was to found.

All were there, as St. Luke asserts, unanimously engaged in prayer, having before their eyes as model and consolation, *Mary*, the Mother of Jesus. With what ardent devotion, with what desire and longing, did not these chosen children of God prepare them-

selves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, during the ten days from the Ascension of Christ until Pentecost.

In the midst of this multitude, called together by the Lord, the prayer of Mary arose, like a column of fire towards heaven, and in it were concentrated the whole devotion and longing of the Apostles and disciples, who prayed with her.

And behold, at nine o'clock on the morning of the tenth day, the house was suddenly shaken, as also the apartment in which they were assembled at prayer, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, Who, in the form of fiery tongues, rested on the head of each. But who, indeed, could measure the plenitude of graces poured at the time especially into the heart of Mary, by the Holy Ghost! Through this overshadowing, she had become the Mother of Jesus, the source of every grace, which will ever be imparted to us, through the Spirit of God, until the end of time.

Thus St. John expressly declares: "This Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, with Whom He would replenish His own until the end of the world."

Christian maiden, place yourself in spirit in the Supper room, where *Mary*, surrounded by the holy women, was at that hour to be found, and hear the counsel of your mother.

*"My daughter, prepare your heart after the model of mine. Sigh forth to God, the Holy Ghost, that He may replenish you with His sevenfold gifts, and consider seriously what each of these gifts signifies that you yourself may become a temple of the Holy Ghost."*

With regard to these gifts of the Holy Ghost, the most important point to be remarked, is that they not only relate to a *passing* act of virtue, but that they lay the foundation for that disposition of our soul, through which we are enabled to *constantly* practice those actions to which these gifts relate.

The first of these is the *fear* of God. This is that gift through which we are confirmed in that interior disposition, which leads us to fear nothing else in this world but *sin*—the misfortune of offending *God*.

Well, indeed, is it with the soul who is replenished with this gift, the most important of all others for the affair of salvation, to which there is, properly speaking, but one impediment, and that is sin.

This gift manifests itself especially by a thorough detestation of sin; and the sincerity thereof its possessor evinces by the care with which he shuns every occasion of sin, and firmly resists temptation the moment it appears.

Christian maiden! is that the case with you?

Often beseech the Holy Ghost to continually increase in you this gift; for then, indeed, you will be a child of God.

Little indeed is the worldling concerned about sin, if it be followed by no adverse consequences for this world.

The spirit of this world is fruitful in regard to sin, and obdurate therein, with no thought of doing Penance for it.

The second gift of the Holy Ghost, is the gift of

*Piety.* It is this which leads to a permanent union with God by the practice of prayer, and enables those who possess it to pray, not merely because it is their *duty*, but because prayer becomes a real necessity for them. In other words, it is for their spiritual life before God, in God, and with God, what *breath* is for the body and corporal life.

Christian maiden! do you live in this state of *permanent* prayer?

This gift manifests itself especially through fidelity to night and morning prayer; through walking in the presence of God, by a love for pious reading; through zeal in assisting at the different services of the Church, at Holy Mass, Vespers, and the various devotions throughout the ecclesiastical year. But *especially* is it manifested by frequent and worthy reception of the Sacraments, in visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, and in not only often receiving the Holy Communion, but deriving great profit of increasing unction of prayer therefrom.

Is this a faithful picture of your life? Does it bear the impress of this gift? Then, indeed, you live after the manner of the children of God. The worldling, filled with the spirit of the world, prays, as it were, through compulsion; and hence he prays merely with the lips. *A life without prayer!* Such is the characteristic of worldly people.

The *third* gift of the Holy Ghost is the gift of *Knowledge*. This enables us to have constantly before our eyes the great affair of *Salvation*, and, there-

fore, to live upon earth for no other motive than to know and accomplish the Most Holy Will of God in all our actions, and to keep ever in view the coming eternity.

Then, according to the example of St. Aloysius, we will estimate the value of things, only in proportion as they will promote our salvation; and on every occasion remember His watchword: "What will this avail for Eternity?" A soul replenished with this gift, will also exclaim in the words of St. Paul: "I esteem all things as dross, and desire to know nothing but Jesus crucified."

Is it thus with you, O Christian maiden? Can you say that Jesus and your salvation are dearest to your heart, and hold the first place therein? Can you, in the presence of the All-Seeing One, cry out with truth: "Jesus! Thou seest my heart; all my desire is before Thee; and the sighs of my heart are known unto Thee?" Or is not rather that reproach of Christ most justly merited by you: "Martha! Martha! thou art solicitous for many things; but one thing alone is necessary"—to serve God here below and to be saved.

The worldling feels and lives otherwise; his heart is choked up with temporal cares and plans; he does not even take time to think of, and provide for the coming eternity. Careless as to what might be the will of God in regard to his actions, he is all the more careful to put in practice his *own*, for his earthly existence and benefit. *Carelessness* in matters of salva-

tion, such is the characteristic of those given up to the world.

*You* live in the midst of the children of the world, therefore often breathe forth the prayer: "Come, Holy Ghost, replenish my heart with the spirit of *knowledge*, and free it from all exaggerated care for the things of this world."

The *fourth* spirit of the Holy Ghost is the gift of *Counsel*, which enables us in all those difficulties which, in the way of salvation we so often meet, not only to take the wisest course ourselves, but to impart good counsel to others also. Hail to a soul that lives in this blessed state!

But little chance the infernal foe will have to disturb her interior, and destroy her peace of heart. She will abide in the state of union with God; and with the most perfect confidence in Him place all her actions in His paternal arms.

Is this the case with you? When a difficulty presents itself, can you decide on what to do, and does experience prove that, not only for yourself, but in regard to others too, to whom you give advice, that your counsel is good and wise? For the gift of counsel is manifested thus.

Very easily is the worldling confused and disquieted, and powerless to help himself in matters of salvation; neither does he seek counsel with God nor with his representative, but on "flesh and blood" places all his reliance. Yes! he goes for counsel to men who prosper in this world, but care little for their eternal



salvation. *Helplessness* in spiritual regard is the characteristic of the spirit of the world.

The *fifth* gift of the Holy Ghost is *Fortitude*,—a gift which not only assists us to reach that condition of soul wherein we can make good resolutions, but gives us power to *execute* them as well.

This is the state which enabled the Saints to become Saints, and which, when happily you have entered it, will certainly sanctify you. What do you say: “Has it been ever thus with you? Oh! then, indeed, you would already be a Saint. How many resolutions have you made in the years of your life past, and you failed to keep them!

The worldling, too, has sometimes even thoughts of a general confession, making resolutions to do better, lives for some time in accordance therewith; but, behold, a short time passes, and he relapses again. *Langour* and *weakness* in well doing characterize the spirit of the world.

Therefore often sigh forth to God the Holy Ghost: “Come and replenish me with *strength* for the faithful service of God.”

The *sixth* gift of the Holy Ghost is *Understanding*. This so influences the heart of man that he constantly looks upon every thing in the light of faith in accordance therewith. By it we attain that disposition of soul through which we not only confess all articles of our holy faith with the lips alone, but live, as it were, out from the very root of faith. Happy are you if herein you behold yourself as in a mirror!

The child of the world may, indeed, be instructed in catechism, but his faith remains a faith of the letter, not having any influence upon life. With the lips he confesses the same faith which the Saints confessed, but at the same time he lives like the heathen. Now you are surrounded every-where by men infected with the spirit of the world. Therefore, often pray and sigh: "Come, Holy Spirit, replenish my heart with the light of faith." *Ignorance* in matters of faith, and sterility in the practice of good through faith, is the characteristic mark of the spirit of the world.

Finally, the *seventh* gift of the Holy Ghost is the gift of *Wisdom*, which so enables man to regulate his life as love towards God and our neighbor requires.

*Uncharitableness*, self-love and egotism! Behold the marks of the spirit which animates the child of the world! Zeal in seeking intercourse with God, and in the exercise of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, a true zeal for souls, such are the effects of this gift of wisdom in the life of the Christian, the true child of God. Christian maiden! what does now thy conscience say in this regard? Is it the Spirit of God or the spirit of the world which replenishes thee?

Nourish great devotion towards God the Holy Ghost; follow His inspirations, and His gifts will sanctify your life in the imitation of Mary.

The Church celebrates in this month the Feast of *St. Nothburga*.

Although born of indigent parents, and living in the

lowly state of servitude, she became, nevertheless, because replenished by the Holy Ghost, and opening her heart to His inspirations, so great a Saint, that the Church placed her for veneration on her Altars.

This should encourage, especially, all servant girls to imitate her example. Invoke her, that she may obtain for you the grace to keep free from sin, and to be filled with the desire for sanctity according to your state; to walk as a living temple of the Holy Ghost on earth, and to recognize, also, during your work, the presence of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through your own recollection of spirit.

With this intention say daily this month, in her honor, until the next conference, one Ave Maria. Amen!

## CONFERENCE. XXXIV.

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### MARY

#### AND THE GROWING CHURCH.

THE Apostles had been filled with the Holy Ghost and most fittingly prepared for the promulgation of the gospel by that Spirit of Light, and, behold! on the very same day, through their preaching, thousands were converted to the doctrine of Christ, recognizing Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. The prayer of Mary fructified the seed of the Divine Word which they sowed in the name of her Son.

To her the Apostles immediately brought the numerous ears of the ripening field of Christendom, and with a mother's tender care she welcomed them. She assisted the Apostles with her counsel and prayer in the first meetings of the faithful for the worship of God, shining brilliantly forth by her humility, by the fervor of her prayer and burning zeal for the welfare of souls, as an admirable model for all.

Thus, never wearying in her efforts to spread the kingdom of God upon earth, she lived in Jerusalem

until the year 44 of our Lord, when a terrible persecution, which broke out, urged her to flee from thence with the Apostles.

Her adopted son John conducted her to Ephesus. From there the protecting care of Mary was still extended to the growing Church, and often the Apostles were, by the aid of some bright-winged messenger of heaven, brought to her from every part of the world known at that time.

And she, the Queen of Apostles, was ever ready to aid them by good counsel, and by her fervent prayer.

Thus Mary, as the Rose of Jesse, celebrated in Holy Writ, filled with the odor of her wisdom and virtues the first days of Christianity.

Child of Mary! listen to the counsel of the Queen of Apostles and the Protectress of the Church addressed to you:

*“My daughter, wouldst thou prove thyself a worthy child of that Church which my divine Son founded and trusted to my care, then must thou model thy life upon the virtues of the Christians by whom I was surrounded while I dwelt at Jerusalem and Ephesus, as the Protectress of the infant Church.”*

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Christian maiden! that you may truly live, so let us briefly consider the virtues which shone pre-eminently forth in the lives of the Apostolical Christians, of which I will enumerate especially *eight* mentioned by

St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Thank *God* if they also mark your life.

First, then, we must contemplate their activity in all things concerning the kingdom of Christ, the Church just springing forth into life, their heavenly aspiring mind, their solicitude for the *affair of salvation*; in one word, their care for *the one thing* necessary, for which Christ had come upon earth—namely, the salvation of their souls.

For this they seemed to forget every thing else. The period which immediately succeeded the descent of the Holy Ghost was, as it were, one uninterrupted *Festival*.

The Apostles preached every day, and every-where; neophytes were baptized and heathens instructed. *Mary*, together with the holy women, provided for the embellishment and decoration of the apartments where the primitive Christians met for the purpose of worshipping God.

This all-prevailing care of salvation should be the constant disposition of all, who call the Church of God their Mother, unto the end of time.

But, alas! that generally it is not so! Even with Catholics the first and principal care is usually for their temporal welfare, rather than for the soul's eternal weal.

What testimony does conscience give you on this point, especially here in this country, where business and the hope of making a fortune, the happiness of

this world, and the efforts to enjoy its pleasures to the full extent, seem to engross the heart.

The *second* characteristic virtue of the early Christians, is that they were wonderfully instructed in all the revealed truths of holy faith.

Read the epistles addressed to them by the Apostles, especially those of St. Paul. Do you suppose the primitive Christians really understood their meaning? Yes; they certainly did, or else the Apostles, particularly St. Paul, would not have written to them in such a manner.

Instruction! instruction! The Church calls upon her children to acquire it, and nowhere is it more requisite than in America, where they have to live in the midst of heretics and infidels, and where the number of Priests is yet so small. Are you so thoroughly instructed that you are able to give an account of your holy Catholic faith?

And why should this not be? Procure for yourself those three books which I wrote in promotion of that end: "Catholicity, Protestantism and Infidelity," the "Manual of Religion," and the book on the "Infallibility of the Pope."

The third virtue, which I mark as characteristic of the apostolic Christians, is the *deference* ever manifested by them towards the Ministers of the Sanctuary, the Apostles, and those who shared with them the holy office as representatives of Christ.

Jesus had gone from them to heaven, it is true, but His word re-echoed in their souls: "As the Father

hath sent Me, so I also send you ;” “Whosoever heareth you, heareth Me ;” “Whosoever honors you, honors Me.”

What an important disposition for all succeeding ages of the Church, especially for the faithful of to-day, and, *above all*, for the Catholics in America.

The enemies of the Church allow no opportunity to pass, for working against the clergy. Their object is to lower them in the eyes of the faithful, to render them despicable before them, and, if it were possible, utterly to banish them, recalling the words of the Lord and the lessons of experience : “Strike the shepherd, and the flock shall be dispersed.”

Ask yourself, Christian maiden, does this veneration, in regard to the representatives of Christ, penetrate your heart, and do you manifest it by your exterior deportment and obedience to follow their instructions and advices ?

The *fourth* virtue characteristic of the early Christians is their *liberality to the Church*.

Read in the Acts of the Apostles what the Evangelist St. Luke relates of them at Jerusalem : “They laid the price of their goods sold at the feet of the Apostles, saying : Take what thou wilt for the infant Church ; we will live upon what remains.”

Oh ! what a glorious model and example of generosity in contributing to the Church of God has thus come down to us through the long course of centuries !

This duty is especially obligatory in regard to each



one's place of residence and the congregation to which she belongs.

Every member of a congregation should feel, in conscience bound, to contribute his proper share to the support of the *Church*, the *school*, and the *Priest*, of that place; first, that they may have a temple worthy of that God to Whose worship it is dedicated; and, secondly, that fitting provision may be made for the decoration and embellishment thereof.

Married women and maidens, especially, should generously contribute their share to the Sacristy and Church, so that long after death their memory will still be cherished in grateful acknowledgment; and Catholics and Protestants alike will see that it is our dearest wish, as far as we can, to glorify God in a manner worthy of Him.

Besides a splendid Church, also a worthy *Pastoral* residence should be provided. This should be commodious, and built with a proper regard for health, not merely affording sufficient space for the Priest to live in, but so arranged that he can live *comfortably* therein, especially in his declining years. It should also afford accommodations for the fitting reception of other Priests, or, at times, even the Bishop.

Thirdly, a commodious *school* is essentially requisite, and provision should be made for a suitable building for it. Size and a proper regard for the health of the children and teachers should be taken into consideration, and also a convenient house should be provided to accommodate the Sisters teaching the

children, which is so great a blessing for the congregation. If such a school be necessary all over the world, how much more so in America, where, as yet, the Church is in its infancy! Christian maiden, what are you here doing in this regard? "*Honor to whom honor is due.*" Believe me, America is not without its share of generous maidens, whose greatest joy is to labor for the Church, and in whose ranks I bid you take a place.

The *fifth* characteristic virtue, which shed its luster over the lives of the Apostolic Christians, was their extraordinary *devotion* towards Christ Jesus, present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

The first Christians very often—yes, daily—received *Holy Communion*. Alas! that there is, nowadays, need of a precept obliging the Christian to approach the holy table at least once a year.

Is such a precept not a shame for every Catholic worthy of his name?

How often and with what preparation and thanksgiving do you receive Holy Communion?

The *sixth* characteristic virtue of the first Christians, particularly as long as Mary, the Blessed *Mother* of God, dwelt in their midst, was their attachment, devotion, and tender affection towards her.

This we can easily understand: Jesus had ascended into heaven, but Mary, for their consolation, still lived many years on earth.

When a loving father is taken away by death, the children, according to experience, turn with deeper

fondness to the mother who still remains. "From henceforth," predicted the Queen of Prophets, "all generations shall call me blessed." And Simeon prophetically foretold it to Mary.

And so it was at the beginning of the Church, and so it will remain, until time shall be no more.

Christian maiden! how is it with you in regard to your devotion to this Most Blessed Mother? Do you wear the scapular? Do you daily recite the rosary? Do you celebrate her feasts by a fervent reception of Holy Communion? and do you celebrate, with particular care, the beautiful month of *May* in honor of her?

The *Seventh* characteristic virtue of the apostolic Christians was that *fraternal kindness* which shone forth in their every act, and the mutual love which beautified their lives. St. Luke thus eulogizes them: "They were all of one heart and one soul." *Peace* to men was the word which fell upon the midnight air, from angel voices, on Christmas when the Holy Child was born. "Peace be with you," was the salutation which always fell from the lips of Christ in greeting his own,—"*Pax vobis*," is the reminder of the Church at every Mass, by the lips of Bishops and Priests.

Ask yourself, do you live in *peace* and friendship with all?

Finally the *eighth* virtue, as characteristic of the early Christians, was the apostolic *fervor* which penetrated their every thought and act to spread the king-

dom of Christ on earth—the Church—and to save souls. Every one in his sphere *of life*, and according as he was situated, endeavored to secure the salvation of his neighbor and to convert each human soul to the Church of Christ.

To this may be partly attributed the wonderfully rapid conversion of the Romans to Christianity, and of every part of the globe, at that time inhabited.

If such apostolic zeal for souls would to-day animate the hearts of all Catholics, the heathen world and the innumerable heretics scattered over the globe, would open their hearts to the truths of faith.

I have on another occasion already mentioned the means by which even girls may contribute their share to this, namely: By their own holiness of life; by instructing children; by spreading suitable books; by their pious intercourse and prayer.

How is it with you in this regard?

The Church celebrates, in this month, the feast of *St. Margaret Mary Alacoque*, of the Order of the Visitation of Mary.

She was the virgin chosen by God for the propagation of the devotion to His Most *Sacred Heart*.

How wonderfully did the Lord favor this, His servant, in opening, through her, to the children of His Church, a source of devotion, which now exercises such a blessed influence upon millions, causing them, by the veneration of the Heart of Jesus, to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ, and therefore to gain new strength in His imitation.

She began this devotion with some of her sisters in the convent where she lived; and now, behold, over the whole world the entire Church dedicated itself to the Sacred Heart, by a solemn act, and earnestly recommended this tender devotion to her children.

Invoke her with special confidence, and have your name immediately enrolled in the confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus if you have not done so already.

Say daily, during this month, one Ave Maria, that she may obtain for you from God the grace to dedicate yourself with her zeal, devotion and love to the veneration of the *Sacred Heart* of Jesus. Amen!

## CONFERENCE XXXV.

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### DEATH OF MARY.

MARY had finished her course upon earth, and accomplished the great work for which God had selected her from all eternity. Eleven years had rolled by since the ascension of Christ, during which time she unceasingly, like a dove, sighed according to the Holy Ghost, in the "Canticle of Canticles," after Jesus in Heaven. Her heart burned with the desire to go from this earth—the valley of tears, the dwelling of sin; to leave the land of her exile—and enter her heavenly home.

Finally, the day of her blessed departure arrived. Gabriel, who brought her the message of the Incarnation of the Son of God, was now sent with the glad tidings of her eternal union with Him, whose Mother, according to His humanity, she was.

Mary, from that moment, longed ardently to return to *Jerusalem* and yield up her spirit where Jesus had accomplished the great work of Redemption, and rendered His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father. And this desire she made known to St. John.

She wished to die in that blessed room, sanctified by the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and where the Holy Spirit had replenished her and the

disciples of the Lord, that they might spread His Church upon earth. Her adopted son willingly complied with her wish, and conducted her to Jerusalem.

According to St. John Damascene and the most ancient apostolic tradition, as the hour drew nigh wherein Mary was to depart from the world, all the Apostles, with the exception of St. Thomas, were—carried by Angels—suddenly and miraculously assembled in that apartment hallowed by memories so precious.

Overwhelmed with the deepest affliction, they gathered round the death-bed of the Divine Mother and Protectress of the Church, and with breathless interest, listened as she again recommended them to preach the Gospel of Christ with unswerving zeal, and to make the most assiduous efforts for the salvation of souls.

After this she extended to each one her hand, in token of farewell, and addressed more particularly St. Peter, as Head of the Church, Christ's Vicar on earth.

She recommended to his most earnest pastoral care the lambs and sheep of Christ, the Divine Shepherd of souls. She thanked St. John for the fidelity with which, as her daily beloved foster-son, he had cared for her during the last eleven years of her life. Ah! what emotion must have overwhelmed the heart of St. John, the disciple of love, at the departure of Mary! How intense was his grief at the coming separation from her, whose presence ever made for him a heaven of earth!

He and the other Apostles, threw themselves on their knees, imploring Mary to give them her last maternal benediction, and lo! as she imparted this blessing, the whole room was suddenly illumined with a wondrous heavenly splendor; and *Christ*, accompanied by numberless Angels, approached the death-bed of His Most Blessed Mother.

He embraced her, and, merged in the deepest depths of her burning love, in the most blessed affections and union of her will with the most holy will of God, the bonds of her earthly life were dissolved. "Into thy hands, O Jesus! I commend my spirit," was the last loving sigh of her heart, as her glorious soul went forth in the embrace of the Lord to the ocean of a blessed immortality.

Surrounded by the Apostles, her holy body lay lifeless on the bed of death. Lifeless, indeed, but wonderfully lovely, and invested with such a charming and graceful appearance that it almost seemed as if she were peacefully sleeping. The sobs and tears of the Apostles gave token of their heartfelt sorrow, and, as the tidings of her most blessed death was announced, all Christendom mourned in the deepest affliction.

But a little while, and all was to be changed into joy. From every side were brought the most precious perfumes and fragrant spices, material of the finest texture was provided for a worthy interment of this admirable Mother, who so peacefully slumbered in the Lord. The Apostles, accompanied by all the faith-



ful of Jerusalem, carried her earthly remains to the sepulcher in Gethsemane, which had been prepared for her, amid the singing of psalms and hymns.

In this, they were accompanied by numberless choirs of Angels, who, from their golden harp-strings, brought forth harmonious strains; and so the blessed body of Mary remained for three days in the quiet repose of the grave.

Child of Mary, listen to the counsel of the divine Mother, which she, from her dying bed, imparts to you :

*“My daughter, if thou wouldst one day die the precious death of the just, then must thou always think of death, and live as if each day would be thy last.”*

---

It was even thus that St. Anthony, as he lay upon his bed of death, counseled his sons in Christ. Gathering around the dying saint, they said: “Tell us, O holy father! as thy last farewell, what really is the best ‘maxim’ in spiritual life, that in the most certain manner we may sanctify our lives.” “My children,” he replied, “let every *day* be spent, as if, before its close, the angel of death would bid thee follow Him!” to which I add: And let each *action* be performed as if it would be the last one in your life.

Ah, yes! who would not wish to die as did those servants of God—the Saints? And if the end is happy, it will be a sure pledge of eternal bliss.

We must, therefore, by leading holy lives, often re-

flect upon our last hour—before that hour comes,—and begin now to make such preparation for death that we, at that awful moment, will have no cause to apprehend that inconsolable anxiety which invests the death-bed of the tepid soul, not only with agonizing terror, but with real danger as well. Therefore:

Live, so that you can experience that consolation which filled the heart of St. Paul when he exultantly cried aloud: “O Death! where is thy sting? It was lost in the victory of the risen One.”

Therefore, Christian maiden! think very often—yes, daily—of the *certainty* and *near* approach of death, and repeat often within your heart the three questions: “When will I die? What kind of a death will be mine? How will I die?”

*First*, in regard to the *certainty* of death, remember the words of St. Paul: “It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death comes judgment.” Yes; this certainty should be always before our eyes; for of all that awaits us in future there is nothing to which we can look forward with such unerring certainty as *death*. “Will I remain in health, or will bodily illness be my lot? Will I be poor or rich? Will the angel of death call me away in the bright spring-time of youth, or will I linger amid the temptations and sorrows of life, until the years of old age?”

And what will be my fate when I stand before the terrible judgment-seat of Christ? Will it be a happy or a miserable one? The answer to each one of these momentous questions is enveloped in the impenetra-

ble veil of uncertainty. One thing is, however, inevitably certain, and that is *death*.

Equally certain is it that, when the time which God has given us, in order that through a holy life we may gather merits for heaven is passed, there will be no more time for us to make use of it.

What an important monition for us, therefore, to turn to our spiritual profit with the zeal of the saints, that time which is still left to us ; since, as St. Paul says : " It is appointed for all men once to die. Remember it ; only *once*, and the time of this *once* is involved in an absolute *uncertainty* if you consider the second question : "*When* will I die, and *where* ? " The answer no man knoweth. Each moment, as it speeds along, may see your latest breath, and there is not a spot where you can feel secure from death.

*How* frequently and forcibly are we reminded of this, by the cases of sudden death of which we so often hear. Even priests, while on their way to prepare the parting soul for death, have themselves been called to meet their Judge " before " they came to the dying man. The question, however, of all others most important : " How will I die ? " It may be answered by the well-known saying : " As man lives, so will he die. " I will not dwell to-day upon the terrors of that death to which those who have lived as hardened sinners may look forward ; for, according to Holy Scripture, " Hard indeed, and evil is the death of the sinner. " I will direct your attention to-day to the difference which exists between the death of the tepid

Christian, and that of the zealous, fervent one, whose only delight has been the service of God.

It is true, that after a *tepid* life, one may still die in the grace of God, but what overwhelming anxiety will cloud her dying moments. May God preserve you therefrom!

Now, let us consider the circumstances which surround the dying moments of the tepid Christian with unmitigated gloom, and fill her heart with an anxiety that knows no solace; and then, in turn, reflect upon all that a death which is, indeed, precious in the sight of the Lord, brings to the fervent soul.

What renders the death-bed of a tepid Christian so full of gloom and anxiety, is the approaching separation from all earthly *goods* and *pleasures*, for which all, who have been tepid in the service of God, are filled with an inordinate attachment.

*To die*, means to leave house and home, and all one's earthly possessions.

No wonder, then, that she who has set her heart on all these perishable goods, and permitted them to occupy more of her thoughts and labor than she ever gave to heaven, feels the grief of this separation in a most intense degree, and has reason to sigh with King Aggag: "Thus dost thou separate, O bitter death!"

On the other hand, how immeasurably different are the feelings of a fervent and zealous child of Mary, who, disengaging her heart from the goods and joys of earth, has lived for heaven alone, at the

thought which stands vividly forth: "I am about to leave this vale of tears, which yields but thistles and thorns, and joyfully hasten whither?"—To the land of unending bliss, the home of eternal joys; to heaven, and there in glad triumphant strains will cry: "Heaven is mine! All is mine!" Such a death, I wish from my heart, you may have. And the condition for it? It is the entire detachment from all inordinate desire for the goods and pleasures of earth.

What overwhelms the dying moments of the tepid Christian with unutterable gloom and dread, is the separation from *flesh* and blood, from those so dear, so fondly loved, from whom she now must part.

Ah! when men, as it were, have loved their earthly friends with a love greater than that they gave to God, and felt for them a fondness which was, indeed, rather a disorderly inclination, this separation is hard and bitter.

But at the death-bed of the fervent child of Mary, who, during life, has loved her Creator infinitely more than any one in the world, and thus lived only for Jesus, the thought brings the sweetest solace. She closes her eyes upon the world and its trials with the sweet hope echoing in her heart: "But a little while, and I will look upon Jesus and Mary, and behold the Angels and Saints in their glory; I die with joy, for my death will lead me into their joy and happiness." Christian maiden! behold the death which, from my inmost heart, I wish you may have. And the condition for it? *A life of holiness*, in the imitation of Mary.

What renders the death-bed of the tepid Christian so full of gloom, so devoid of solace, is the fact that, even in the consolation of our holy religion, she finds no comfort; for Extreme Unction, and the Viaticum rather cause her to fear. And why should they not? During life, as it were, she received the Holy Sacraments rather through compulsion, not of her own will and through devotion for Jesus, and, besides, she is suffering in every part of her body from the deadly weakness which heralds the end.

Ah! different far are the feelings of the zealous child of Mary who, we might say, lived only for Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament. In sweet remembrance now of all the Holy Communions which ever she received, Jesus will come as Viaticum into her heart.

If you, O Christian maiden! when prostrate on your dying bed, would meet the call of death with fervent joy, then heed my advice and receive with zeal during life the Holy Sacraments.

What casts a shadow of gloom over the life of the tepid Christian, and fills her heart with an anxiety bitter and deep, is the thought of the *agony* of death, and the putrefaction of her body in the grave.

Certainly, the lukewarm soul, who knows nothing of penance, but has always pampered her body, and allowed herself every sensual gratification, has reason to fear.

It will be far otherwise with a true child of Mary, with the maiden, who has lived in the spirit of penance; she will be well prepared to meet the bitter-

ness of death. I trust it may be so with you. And what is the necessary condition for it? *Conquest* over self. The practice of *mortification*.

In conclusion, what surrounds the death-bed of the tepid Christian with the deepest dread, and a gloom which naught can console, is terror at the thought of meeting the Eternal *Judge*. Much cause has such a soul, indeed, to fear; not the fervent child of Mary. Ah, no! Looking tranquilly back on the perfected work of her life, on her portion of time well employed, her graces so justly applied—full of the hope of a blessed immortality, she can sigh with the dying St. Francis Xavier: “In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; never shall I be confounded.”

Such a happy death I wish to you. But what is required for it? A holy life, in the imitation of the holy life of Mary.

In this month the Church celebrates the memory of one of the most glorious Saints in the choir of holy virgins, *St. Catherine*.

She stands forth as especially distinguished for the thorough knowledge in matters of *faith*.

She most triumphantly *defended* it against numerous philosophers, and finally sealed her belief with her blood.

As we read in her life, at the death of this glorious martyr, her blood was changed into milk,—a prodigy which also took place at the martyrdom of St. Paul.

Her body was carried by Angels to Mount Sinai,

where the Lord in the days of old had imparted the law to Moses.

This was a mark of distinction to this holy virgin for her wonderful knowledge in matters of faith.

Cherish, therefore, a great devotion to St. Catherine, and until the next conference say daily, in her honor, one Ave Maria, that, through your thorough instruction in matters of faith, you may gain the admiration of men, and, through the firmness with which you keep your good resolutions, you may sanctify your life. Amen!



## CONFERENCE XXXVI.

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### MARY

#### ON HER THRONE IN HEAVEN.

AS I have already mentioned, all the Apostles were present at the death-bed of their illustrious Queen, save St. Thomas.

God's Providence so ordained that he should arrive later, to testify to the Resurrection of Mary. It was as if Jesus, Who was already risen from death, permitted the same Apostle to be absent also, when He appeared to the rest, precisely to place the certainty of His resurrection in a clearer light for all subsequent times.

But *three* days had elapsed since the departure of Mary, and the solemn ceremonies attendant on her holy remains, when St. Thomas reached Jerusalem. He, who had placed his hands in the side of Jesus, desired to have the happiness enjoyed by the other Apostles, to behold and once more venerate the body of his Most Blessed Mother, and to kiss her maternal hand.

In compliance with a wish which arose from his loving heart, the grave was opened, but the body

was not to be seen any more ! Naught remained but the fair and fragrant flowers they had placed thereon, and the fine white winding-sheet in which it had been lovingly wrapped, while from the opened sepulcher came a perfume so delicious that it seemed to have been wafted from Heaven.

The holy remains of Mary were not destined to see corruption. Jesus, on the third day, aroused her from the slumber of death, and her glorious soul, uniting with her transfigured body, soared up from the grave and *ascended* into Heaven.

Angels and Saints in numbers, which could not be counted, met her with exultant strains of joyous greeting, while the countless hosts of heavenly citizens awaiting her at the gate of Heaven, amazed at the brilliant glory which shone around their Queen, thus sang, according to the Canticle of Canticles :

“Who is this, that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?” And loud rang forth the glad response of Mary’s celestial escort :

“Lift up your gates, O ye princes ! and be ye lifted up, ye eternal gates ; for *Mary* our *Queen*, and the *Mother* of our Lord and God cometh nigh.”

And, behold ! Jesus Himself, together with St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, SS. Joachim and Ann, accompanied by Adam and Eve, by all the Holy Patriarchs and Prophets, by all the Holy Martyrs and the Blessed, both of the Old and New Law, who, up

to that time, had entered Heaven, awaited her at its open gate.

Oh! what a reunion! what a salutation!

The loud rejoicing strain of the Alleluia broke forth from all the choirs of Angels and Saints when Mary, by the side of her Son Jesus, soaring higher and higher, entered the unfathomable depths of contemplation of the Most Blessed Trinity, and ascended the throne prepared for her in Heaven.

Then Jesus crowned her with the diadem of glory as *Queen* of heaven and earth.

“Even as the splendor of the sun surpasses the brightest glitter of the stars,” justly cries out St. Basil, “so does the glory and beatitude of Mary go beyond that of all the heavenly hosts, whose sovereign she is.”

Then Mary, amid the joy of the Church triumphant entoned the “Magnificat,” fit token of praise and thanksgiving for the eternal glorification imparted to her in the kingdom of God—and for her election as *Mediatrice* at the throne of Divine Grace; as Mother and Distributer of the favors of Jesus.

Child of Mary, listen to the counsel of your Queen and Mother from her place in heaven, where, enthroned, she sits in glory:

*“My daughter, think of heaven and of my glory there, and live so that you can share it, in a more perfect manner, once with me.”*

---

Christian virgin! do you hear the words of your

loving Mother? There is a *Heaven*, wherein there is a *place* for *you*, and what faith teaches us of that bright home is sufficient to fill our hearts with longing for its joys.

A month ago we meditated upon this when we contemplated Mary as she stood on the Mount of Olivet and gazed after her beloved Son, as He ascended into heaven. Besides the desire there to behold *Jesus*, and to enter into His glory, the wish to see *Mary* in heaven, and share in her blessedness is what should *especially* fill our hearts with the desire to go there.

Thus it was with St. Stanislaus Kostka. Scarcely eighteen years of his life had gone by, yet his heart was consumed with the desire to leave the world, that he might look upon Mary on her heavenly throne.

The feast of the Assumption was approaching, and, as probably you have all heard, he wrote a letter to the Queen of Heaven, begging her to take him to herself,—to call him from earth on that *feast* on which she had been crowned.

And, indeed, on the fourteenth of August, 1568, this devoted servant of Mary took sick, and at three in the morning of her festival day she appeared to him, and, surrounded by numberless holy virgins, she led him away to dwell forever with her in Heaven.

Ah, yes, St. Stanislaus, Heaven is your happy home to-day, and there, with Mary, you will ever be!

With what affection did Mary embrace him, and

what a torrent of bliss rushed over his soul at the sight of his Queen!

And should not a similar desire, such as burned in his heart, animate ours, that we, too, may be permitted, at no distant day, to share, for all eternity, her heavenly bliss?

And to arrive at a better comprehension of this, we need but meditate for a few brief moments on what makes *Heaven to be Heaven*, and consider the part which Mary bears therein.

Heaven is, first, in regard to its exterior magnificence, the *paradise* of creation. Now, if St. Paul assures us that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for those who love Him—if we can not picture the beauty of that dwelling which He has gone before to prepare for every *one*—how great, therefore, must be the glory of Mary's heavenly throne!

Yes, Holy St. Stanislaus! I long with thee to see and contemplate the glory, the *magnificence* of the throne of Mary in heaven.

What makes heaven to be heaven is, secondly, the glory, the delight, the perfect beauty of the holy Angels. They shine forth, according to their different choirs, higher and higher, and, according to the different choirs, the individual qualities of their nature as Angels appear brighter and brighter. Brilliant as their prerogatives are, however, they are in royal manner surpassed by Mary, as their *Queen*. O St. Stanislaus! how my heart yearns to look with thee, once

and soon, upon Mary in heaven, Queen of all the Angels!

The same is applicable to the different grades of heavenly honors and glory among the Saints—the Virgins and Confessors, the Bishops and Apostles, and those who gave their blood for Christ. All their glorious qualities shine royally forth in *her*.

Yes, St. Stanislaus, I long to go to Heaven, to behold the Saints in all their glory; but, above all, I would wish to see with you once and soon, Mary as the Queen of Saints, and to enter into her beatitude and love.

What makes Heaven to be Heaven is the fact, that heaven is a kingdom of *reward*, where the Lord our God confers for every merit of the Saints a glittering crown. When St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi gazed upon the glory of St. Aloysius, in ecstasy she cried aloud: “Never could I have believed that even in heaven such glory could exist!” Ah! Christian maiden! what would she have felt and said if it had been granted to her to see the glory of a St. Ignatius, a St. Francis Xavier, or of the great St. Joseph, but, above all, that which in Paradise surrounds the Queen of heaven—Mary. Every merit which adds to the glory of the Saints of God shines forth in *her*, as a most brilliant gem, and to her may be well applied those words of the Holy Ghost: “Others have gathered riches, but thou dost surpass them all.”

Did I possess but one act of the merits of Mary I would not exchange it for the merits of *all* the Angels

and Saints—for what determines the value of our merits?

It is our *union* with the Most Holy *Will* of God, and its union with the infinite *merits* of Jesus Christ.

One diamond of exceedingly great magnitude can surpass in value numberless others of an inferior size. Oh! what ineffable splendor of merits, through virtues and sufferings, borne for Christ, adorn the celestial crown of Mary, and by far outshine the precious gems of merits of all the Angels and Saints in heaven.

What causes heaven to be heaven is, finally, the participation in the glory and beatitude of *Jesus* in heaven, and the union of the soul with *God* Himself. Now, if Christ is ready to share His glory with every soul which, through His merits, has gained salvation, according to the promise in the Apocalypse: "He that overcometh I will let sit with Me on *My* throne," in what plenitude does He not share His heavenly glory and delight with *Mary* His *Mother*!

The Church salutes Mary as the divine Mirror of Justice," the "Mirror of sanctity," and well does she merit to be saluted also as the Mirror which reflects the celestial Glory and Beatitude of Christ.

And then, when we consider the relation of the Mother of God to the Most Blessed *Trinity*! who could form any conception of the depth and perfection of her union with the three Divine Persons in heaven. She, the *daughter*, chosen of the Eternal *Father* be-

fore all ages, the *Mother* of the Incarnate *Son*, the *Spouse* of the Holy *Ghost*.

Ah! yes, St. Stanislaus, my longing grows each moment greater to behold, with you in Heaven, the Queen of heaven amid its joys, which all the Blessed share with her.

But, above all, do I long to thank her for all I owe to her as Refuge of *sinners*, and distributor of every *grace*. Oh! how I wish especially to tell her all my gratitude for having led me, through intercourse with Jesus in the Blessed *Sacrament*, of His Love, to the *personal* knowledge and love of Christ.

Yes, Mary has done this for me; she who imparted to Him His flesh and blood, through which He abides with us,—and through this Most Holy Sacrament we can taste even here on earth a foretaste of the bliss of heaven!

These are the motives which should incite us to think often of Mary in Heaven, and to imitate her example while we long to be with her. We should follow in her footsteps in zealously practicing good works, according to the duties of our state.

The Church celebrates in this month the memory of *St. Ottilia*, whose intercession is especially invoked to be preserved from blindness and all maladies of the eye.

Pray to her during this month. Say daily one Ave Maria in her honor, that she may obtain for you grace to behold, with the eyes of your soul, in a



manner most clear and distinct, the utter nothingness of all things earthly, and be led to thoroughly comprehend how precious is *sanctity* of life, by faithfully putting into practice all the admonitions I have imparted to you in the name, and through consideration, of the virtuous life of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, "THE MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL." Amen!

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