

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD : MIRRORED IN THE PERFECTIONS OF MARY

By Mother Mary Potter

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Introduction

“Tolle lege!” “Tolle lege!” Angels whisper these words to those to whom this little work is offered, God’s Human Family. *“Tolle lege,”* “take and read!” Then as they traverse the way herein pointed out, they will realise that Jesus is near,

and will cry out pleadingly, “Lord that I may see” (Mk 10:51)!

Let the soul remain thus still and calm in the Presence of God, “*Vacate et videte quoniam Ego sum Deus*” (Ps 46:10). Wait! The Hand of God, the beneficent hand of Jesus, is raised and a sweet voice sounds: “*Ephphetha*, be thou opened”(Mk 7:34), and the eyes of the soul then see. Beauties before hidden from view become visible. The Kingdom of God is at hand. You are a subject of the King of kings; you have vowed allegiance. Jesus Christ is you Lord and Master, now and forever and ever.

We were taught as children that to know God was the first end of our creation, and yet how easily this knowledge is put on one side. Our children leave the schools, where, up to the present, at any rate, the knowledge of God has formed part of their education, but for how long do they remember what they have been taught? In many cases it was but scanty knowledge which they had gained, and therefore, easily lost. There is all the greater need for works to be written that treat of God, for by the knowledge of God the heart is surely drawn to love and serve Him. We speak of the Attributes of God, but to many we might be using an unknown language; they scarcely know to what we refer or even the meaning of the word.

We search for words to express our meaning clearly, and in speaking, perhaps, they come more easily. In familiar instructions we can use simple examples, and thus bring home our meaning more clearly to our readers. For instance, you know what it is to have a loving heart, but in speaking of God, we say God *is* Love, not that He possesses a loving nature for Love, or Charity, is an Attribute of God. Where, in speaking of ordinary people, we say they possess such or such a virtue, we say of God that He *is* Mercy or Compassion or whatever it may be. God is All-perfection, and we are striving after perfection, and endeavouring to acquire virtue. As we say, it is more difficult to write than to speak of such high and sacred subjects, for fear of the slightest unintentional irreverence in treating of such mysteries. We understand the feeling Father Faber must have had when writing on these great subjects, as, in the midst of so many beautiful thoughts, he exclaimed that these were mysteries “which lips that the coal of the Seraphim has not touched dare but indicate.” So also we, as we write, pray our reader to invoke the Angel by their side to give them light, and so shelter the soul that reads, so that they may read reverently, and thus supply for any want there may be in the writing. We feel the difficulty of writing familiarly. And yet with due respect, about what is to many, and should be to all, the most interesting subject for our thoughts.

May God bless the little work sent forth for love of Him, for love of His Image on earth, our fellow men [and women]. We send it forth on the vast ocean of Divine Providence, trusting that to some, at least, it may bring one of the greatest gifts – that is, a wider and fuller knowledge of God, His Goodness, His Infinite Benignity, the Magnificence of His Mercy. The beauties that the world manifests to us give us a glimpse of the possible, probable, nay, most certain beauties that are as yet unknown to us. We have no gauge by which to fathom those depths, and can simply adore from the abyss of our nothingness.

Men [and women]! Use your minds to meditate upon your God, and let this one life, which He has given you, be lovely in His sight. First comes mortal life (let this thought sink into your mind), and then a never-ending eternity. In eternity we cannot do what we can do now. You are in time to exercise faith, and in heaven you will be rewarded for the faith you have exercised on earth. Faith in what? Faith in your God! Then, how necessary it is to know God. If you could but understand how necessary this knowledge is to you, you would seek to obtain it.

How mechanically the words are often repeated: “With desolation is all the world made desolate, because no man considereth in his heart,” yet how forcible these words are. The mind is lazy. It does not want the effort of thinking of that which an “unconscious consciousness” tells us may need some trouble, some effort, probably some sacrifice of easier and more pleasurable employment.

Let us then try with our children. And begin to lead them early to use their minds to ponder over that, which when once their minds are in tune with the invisible, will afford them as much delight as the old fairy tales or those from the Arabian Nights, which we revelled in when we were children.

“*Quis sicut Deus?*” This is our keynote. Let the parents use their power to put down the prevalent thought, “these studies, this kind of book, are only fit for priests and nuns.” Ignorantly sometimes it may be said, “I like my children to read what is practical, common-sense piety, nothing high-flown?” The Lord preserve us from the evil that is produced by such talk as this. Teach your children to fly high, for how otherwise can they reach God and live above the follies and sinfulness of the world and self? There is one thing to be especially noticed in bringing up children. The constantly recurring thought that they are to be good, because of the next world, where they will be happy or the reverse, does not always appeal to them. We cannot help young people being rather indifferent about the next world, and feeling far more interested in this. Some of us, perhaps,

forget how we, as children, felt about the other world. It was something we did not care much to think about, a long way off from this. We had formed our own ideas about it, and did not feel much attracted to it. Eternity was not yet for us a quiet, pleasing thought, and the idea that we are now in the midst of eternity, and that this world is as it were merely the curtain that hides the other more beautiful one from our gaze, never occurred to us. We had never looked at it in that light.

Our nearness to the other world would be a most salutary lesson to be impressed on the youthful mind. And also the thought that we are in this world as in an arena, where we are to perform brave and heroic actions, thus winning the applause of the onlookers, the angels and saints, to whom our lives should be as a series of *Tableaux Vivants*, beautiful living pictures. Such simple thoughts as these might help the impressionable young mind to consider both this life and the next, in a different manner. How many do we not meet with the impression firmly fixed in their minds that this life is something low and despicable? And therefore, they grow thoroughly disgusted with themselves, and not understanding how they can make their lives beautiful, and pleasing to God, they grow disheartened. [They] seek to please themselves and others, and thus to satisfy that desire for happiness which God Himself has planted in the human heart, and has given every means of satisfying lawfully. Those means of happiness on earth are not always clearly explained, and impressionable minds feel vaguely doubtful as to whether it is worthwhile making themselves uncomfortable here for the sake of being happy hereafter. Had they been taught to employ their memory and understanding to know God and His Infinite Goodness, and His intense desire for our happiness, both in this world and in the world to come, they would have looked on things very differently.

We have met so many, who frankly show you that their minds and hearts have been affected with some such thought as this, that they are to be unhappy in this world in order to be happy in the next. They seemed possessed of a hazy idea that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” They want the bird in the hand – that is their present enjoyment – now in this life, and they will risk that far-off future happiness in order to enjoy the present, not realising that God’s desire is to make them happy in this life. They do not see that His laws are framed with that intention, because He is the Great Legislator, Grand, and Wise and Just – all that is good and munificent.

This should be taught to children from their earliest youth. *Quid est Deus?* Would indeed that that question was oftener asked and pondered over, and then the study of God’s Attributes would make us cry out with that great Angelic

spirit, “*Quid sicut Deus?*” Who is like unto God?

The taste for this knowledge would fill the mind more than any other since it is inexhaustible and the intellect would be with thoughts so sweet and rapturous that the soul thus fed must grow in grace before God and man.

Oh, may God lead souls to this study – may our little work sow the seeds, which will help this study, and may God aid our endeavours to know Him, to know how to find Him. May He help us also to realise the glory that we can give Him by our life on this little orb, during this short space of time, which is part of a great eternity. Nothing can aid us more than the study of His lovely Attributes one after another. And this world will become more sacred, an arena where we can perform great acts in the sight of God, His angels and saints, meeting His approving glance and encouraging word, even in this life. Then we will realise better that life is indeed worth living, since by it we can increase the Accidental Glory of God.

CHAPTER 1 – The Trinity of God

Three Persons in one God, three distinct Persons but One Divine Essence – happy company of God, of all unions the most united, the most beautiful to contemplate! Again, a thousand times again, we must wish and pray that our minds were not so sin-stained so soiled; that they might have some of the intelligence of the angels, that we might contemplate better the incomparable Mystery of our Faith. There are clouds before us now which would not have been if we had not sinned. Our supernatural vision is dim and dark, but God will remove much from us if we ask Him humbly, and take all necessary means, as we would in any other matter in which we wish to succeed. We seek to know Thee better, our great, good God.

We are now meditating, and pray that light from Thy Holy Spirit may be vouchsafed to us, for we cannot know Thee, O God, unless Thou reveal Thyself to us. We can hinder Thee revealing Thyself to us, and we would not do this. We can assist Thee to reveal Thyself to us, and this is what we would do. Speak to Thy children, O God, comforting words. Father, show us how Thou art Father. Let us have but one thought of Thy love, inspired by Thy Holy Spirit – of Thy

love for the Eternal Word. Son of God, show us Thy love for Thy Father, that our hearts too may burn for love of Him. Spirit of the Father and the Son, join our hearts inseparably, entirely, this most supreme, this greatest mystery, the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

Mystery indeed – but why need we wonder? As we have said elsewhere, it would be more mysterious if we could understand these sacred mysteries, than because we cannot. For a little vessel cannot contain what is in a greater one. Our little minds cannot contain the mind of God. It would be a miracle if they could. ^[1] But we rejoice, nevertheless, with a great joy in these divine mysteries, these mysteries which seem more beautiful and lovable the more we ponder over them. Thank God again, that He has revealed Himself at all to our finite minds. The more we know, the more we seem to know. But this is the happiness of heaven, to see, know and enjoy God, and to be happy with Him forevermore. Please God, if we persevere, this will be our happiness. And the pleasure our minds and hearts find now in the knowledge of our God will be heightened ten thousandfold. Those, who seriously and calmly put before their minds this ineffable mystery of our faith, go through life with a halo round them. The thought of that grand light of God, the thought of those Divine Persons living Their lovely life above, in the home which They have prepared for us all. Also this thought takes away the roughness of this life, the contradictions of creatures, the weariness and sufferings that all must endure. He, who walks with the bright light of the Blessed Trinity shining, beaming upon him, cares little for creatures. Except and so far as he pities many who are in danger of never coming into that happy Presence, which he strives ever to keep before his mind, to urge himself onwards with unflagging steps, and to prepare himself befittingly for his meeting and future union with God. Who could care what creatures thought of them, that put constantly before their minds what God thought of them? O God! The words of creatures are many. What matters their praise or dispraise, if we may but hear that one word from Thee pronouncing us blessed? The very word we give to the Blessed Trinity. We know no higher word. We have our three Persons, our One God, the Blessed Trinity. We see many kinds of union on earth – the union of mother and child, of father and son, of husband and wife, of brother and sister, even of friend and friend.

We sometimes see the souls of two friends living together in bonds of love, as Jonathan and David of old. But see union in any state that we may upon earth, we see nothing to compare with the union of the Three Persons. For They are One, but One – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Three distinct Persons, living in such Divine companionship, such delightful intercourse, such calm, blissful possession of each Other's love. They have but one wish, one will, but one heart, we should

say speaking in human language. The Father and the Son are One, the Holy Spirit One with Them. They live thus for all eternity – for all eternity will continue. And we, too, if we are brave and persevere – we, too, shall see and enjoy this vision, to which we give the same name of Blessed, the beatific Vision of God. Oh, what does it mean? It means what we may think but cannot write. It means that God reveals in some special manner His beauteous Attributes to us. We shall need the light of glory to see Him, and this glorious favour has not been vouchsafed to any saint on earth. It is not on record, for the Scripture addeth, “ No man can see God and live” (Exod 33:20). But let us, with all the power God has given us, by making a right use of our memory and understanding, by bringing before our minds the holy thoughts and revelations of the saints, still more by learning all we can of the teachings of Holy Church upon these Divine Mysteries have our heart so filled with the holy knowledge, that we cannot be drawn away by the false joys and beauties of the world. This thought of the Blessed Trinity, well imprinted on our minds, would be a safeguard to us as we look up to heaven and rejoice with our Heavenly Father in the possession of His Eternal Word. We shall rejoice with the Son of His love in His happiness in the bosom of His Father. We shall rejoice with the Holy Ghost in the mutual love of the Father and Son. Then we shall think how these Three living Persons are God, our own God. They are looking upon me, loving me. They created me. O wondrous God, as I look upon these Three distinct Persons, does it not seem a foolish thing that ever I cared for any other person, so as to please another, to displease Thee?

We must keep this thought ever present to our minds, that the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are three distinct Persons though but one God. We are not to think them as one Person. We know well it would be against the Faith to think it. But our meaning is, we are not to confuse these Three Persons. They are truly distinct.

The first Person the Father, the second the Son, and the third the Holy Ghost. And the Father is not greater than the Son, neither was He before the Son, and the Holy Ghost is equal God with the Father and the Son. And thus God has existed from all eternity, one unchanging life of love, one unutterable eternity of bliss, in the possession of Himself. This is our God, and He would have us like Himself, and our lives like His. But what are they? He laid down commandments of love for our good, and how have we kept them? What is man’s life on earth but one continual jar and discord one with the other? And we should have copied the life led by God in Heaven. We should have been a large happy family with one heart and soul. And what are we? Sad indeed, most sad, must this world appear to the inhabitants of Heaven. Our dear Lord has summed up the

commandments in this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy *neighbour as thyself*” (Mt 22:37,39). Can anything be more contradictory than the way in which the children of men carry out this edit, this command of God? Ah, me! May the day come when men [and women] will induce God’s benediction upon themselves by their love of one another. May wrangling and strife cease, and may we begin to do on earth, in these latter days at least, as the Blessed do in Heaven.

Mary and the Blessed Trinity! A beautiful thought! How our hearts bound as we think of her, the fair Lily of the bright, effulgent, and ever peaceful Trinity! We seem to breathe more freely as we think of God and His working in His chosen work, Mary. As we view the work of each Person of the Blessed Trinity in her, as we view Him in and through Mary, we seem to know God better. Can we think of God without her? And if we can, do we ever see Him so clearly, and understand Him so well, as when you see His various attributes mirrored, reflected, in a wonderful way, clearer for us to see, in His chosen one, Mary? Ah, Blessed one! Blessed in all ages! We have given that title to the Blessed Trinity, and the Blessed has given it to thee, the very echo of God. As we speak of Him, there comes before our mind the sweet Virgin Mother, whom all generations shall call Blessed! The Eternal Father claims her as His daughter. Would that we knew the love of the Heart of Mary as she called Him, Father. The Eternal Incarnate Word claims her as His Mother. Would that we could fathom the depth of that sweet Mother’s Heart as she called Him her Son! Would that we were deeply hidden in the recesses of the Sacred Heart, that Jesus would reveal the secret of the joy with which He took his human life from the Heart of Mary and first called her Mother! He desires that we should honour that Heart of Mary too. Mary is Spouse of the Holy Ghost. She is wrapped in an embrace of love of which we have no conception. The Holy Ghost overshadowed her. He formed the Sacred Humanity, His greatest, most glorious work from the heart’s blood of the Immaculate Virgin. He was ever with her. The Holy Spirit possessed her in all her ways, Immaculate in her conception, Immaculate till death.

O Mother, teach us how to hold converse with God’s Spirit, and how to keep Him also ever with us. Reveal to us some of the sweet whispers spoken to you by the Holy Ghost. May your children be living temples of God’s Holy Spirit. Obtain for them some of your love, some of your knowledge of the Blessed Trinity – these three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost – our Life.

CHAPTER 2 – Unity

God is One. O Blessed Unity of God! Our hearts rejoice with a great joy as we think of Thy Blessed Unity.

There is but one God. This is a joy in itself. Our God is one, and there is none like to Him. And though but one – three glorious Persons, each in delight with companionship with the other, and though three glorious Persons yet – but One God.

“Ah! Let us bow down,” as Father Faber tells, “and let us, as we think of these high things, humble ourselves to the dust.”

He, that most saintly mind, hardly dared to write – he wrote “that lips that the coal of the Seraphim had not touched, dared but indicate such sublime mysteries.”

How then shall we think? How then shall we write?

Ah, we will cower down under the mantle of our Mother, and implore her to give us some of her thoughts upon her One, Great God.

We are often afraid to let our minds dwell upon this great mystery. It may be wise in some. And certainly we should never allow our thoughts to dwell irreverently upon this most adorable object of our faith. For God is hidden from us yet, though He hardly seems so. But thanks be to His great love, has He not made Himself known to us? Has He not communicated Himself in so real a manner, that He is indeed known to us more, we may say, than by mere faith alone. For faith is to believe what we are told and cannot see, what we have not experience of by our senses. We know the things of this world by means of our senses, by our faculties. This is not too have faith in them.

Now we know our God by faith. Many do not know Him by that sweet union, by which He draws us so closely and manifests Himself so sweetly to us, that to doubt Him would be impossible. He is as evident to us as our own existence. We must have compassion, however, on those who believe in Him simply by means of faith, and who at times may be troubled – not against the existence of God, for surely this is very rare, but against His true character, that is to say His various attributes. Who may doubt His sweet Spirit, who see not the beauty of His works, and therefore, doubt many things which are revealed to us by Holy Church. [\[2\]](#)

The whole plan of creation and redemption, the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, these Divine Mysteries which reveal so much to the true Christian of God's wisdom and the wonders of His ways, are stumbling blocks to a mind that dares to dive into these deep mysteries, leaning upon its own researches. Not trusting to the guidance of the Church, or even, if doing so, thinking of them in an irreverent, undevotional way, without prayer, and without that philosophic mode of thought, which those who are wise know to be necessary. We may not dive deeply into God's Mind. We are so weak, so little, so fickle, we may not rudely thrust ourselves into His company. But we must first, humbly prostrate, beg of Him to admit us, beg of Him to show Himself to us. We must tell Him we know our soiled and sin-stained minds cannot dwell upon His awful purity, cannot understand the greatness, the grandeur of His Being, as it should be understood. Let us be fully convinced that our highest conceptions of Him but lower Him in our minds that we fall far short of realising in the least degree that Grand Being – Our God.

We understand what it is to be one. There is but One God. Blessed thought! He has no rival. There is none like unto Him. He is Alone Supreme. O Blessed God! And He made us to be with Him, to be one with Him, to enjoy His beautiful Presence forever and ever. There is but one God, one eternity. And if we contemplate His works we shall perceive a wondrous Unity.

And about His greatest work, His greatest purely human work – His Immaculate Conception – it is the same. ^[3] Again does Mary mirror her God, her Lord. There is but one Mary, and there is none like her. Ah! Look at her, fair, Immaculate, a Virgin, a Mother. Should we like to think there was another Mary? No! As we rejoice that we have but one Father one God, so we rejoice that we have but one Mother – His Immaculate one, Mary. She is so unlike all else. She is unique in her special privileges, her special prerogatives.

We look unto that vast eternity, which looks dim and dull to us, misty and obscure, until we view it carefully, long and prayerfully. So we look into God's creation, His work in time, and it seems misty and obscured to our view until we have meditated long and prayerfully. After long meditation, in which we have begged the help of God's spirit, we see in that hitherto dim Eternity our God beaming brightly, purely, and showing Himself in a manner that we have not hitherto conceived. We see in that Eternity our One God, and yet though one, three distinct Persons, the Word dwelling in the bosom of His Father, the Holy Spirit proceeding from Both, three distinct Persons. We rejoice in this One God. We rest with delight on this thought: God is one. Look long, look lovingly, turn

your eyes, then, into time. See God's creation. What has happened in it? A wondrous being, unlike any other, Immaculate, reflecting the purity of her God! A Virgin, again reflecting Him, Whose essence is virginal! He creates maternity in her. Yes, within her, that Virgin has enclosed the Eternal Word. The *Word*, now made incarnate, dwelt forever in the bosom of His Father. Look long at these mysteries. Is Mary still like her God? Does she still more perfectly mirror Him? Do you understand better the complacency of the Blessed Trinity in this fair work of His hands? Do you see still more clearly the fitness, the beauty, the unity, and the wisdom of God's works? God is but One. His works take a certain stamp from His Oneness – His Unity – but we see this not. We understand it not, if we carelessly glance, if we skim, instead of pondering with a careful reverent mind, a mind that prays and ponders, a mind that rests not upon some unknown power. Even the heathen philosophers knew they must do this. We find in their writings that some who believed in God in a manner more resembling our own, than others less enlightened, made use of this expression – “That the Divinity would help those who tried to understand Divine things, and who applied their minds to the study of Divinity.”

This expression really puts to shame many of the so-called philosophers of the present day, who expect to understand Divine things by their own unaided reason. Most foolish, most misguided! Do we not understand material things by material means? My hand touches this table – they are both material. If I wish to understand spiritual things, I must have some spiritual power with which to understand them. We must have light from above to understand the things from above. This should be evident to men's [and women's] reason, but it is not always so. Unhappily men's [and women's] minds are intoxicated. They find that God has given up this world to the discussion of men [and women], but it does not follow that He has given up heaven to the discussion of men [and women]. This is where they make their mistake. They find how much they can discover by the application of their mind to the things of this world, and they are right in this. God has given up the discussion of this world to them, and the longer they study, the more wonderful things they discover. And the more pleasurable is such research, and commendable too, where the motive of study is pure. But let us not go beyond our power, and put our mind to what it is not fitted for by God. It is not fitted for contemplation of Divine things unaided by Divine power. It will break in the attempt, or be filled with illusions. Let us weigh this in our minds, and be wise. Let us view our God – yes, as purely, as clearly as possible, but let us view Him with His own assistance, with the help of His Holy Spirit, which He will ever give if we humbly ask. Minds divinely illuminated are very holy and very happy.

Pray that yours maybe such, and beautiful will your life be. Beautiful truths will come before you, beaming resplendently and beckoning you onward – yes, onward, onward. “Excelsior” will be your cry, in the holiest, highest sense. Higher, higher, higher to the heights of heaven!

What matter, then, the trivial things of earth? The mind divinely illuminated lives in heaven, has its conversations in heaven. [It] is in constant union with the One, Only True and Living God. This mind may not show itself much to those around. It is hidden in God.

So again we look at God’s fair mirror, Mary. Never was mind divinely illuminated like hers. She discovers it to us but once, and that is in her glorious *Magnificat*, which will live to all ages, telling of the beauty of the mind of the simple Virgin of Nazareth. Her mind had weighed the dealings of God, had studied the beauties of His works, until she would have floated into ecstasy. But the whole perfection of her being hindered this, and Mary could dwell calmly on the High mysteries of God. And though she was flooded with love as no other creature, as she thought of the great things He, the Almighty, had done to her who was so little, still she lost not, as many, the use of her senses. She became not unconscious in this ecstasy of love. Her mind was strong. It was strengthened by the All Powerful, and her wish to pass as other women was all powerful too. Therefore, this model of all women lived her life, her beautiful life, so that all women might copy it. Ah, sweetest Mother, draw all to the knowledge of the Only True God. Dispel from men’s [and women’s] minds the darkness and ignorance in which so many live upon this point – the Unity of God, the Unity of His ways, the Unity of His works. Lead them to the True Church, which alone can teach them truth. Let them see the beauty of that Church with its one Head. That Church which is the Body of Christ, its one Head with His one visible Vicar upon earth. Let them see the absurdity of imagining, as they sometimes do, that there are two bodies to that Head, that there are two ways to Heaven. Let them learn from the thought of the One God that there can be but one Church. Show them, sweet Mother, that One Lord, that One Faith, make them receive that One Baptism.

CHAPTER 3 – The Mind of God.

O wondrous Mind of our Lord! Who can fathom it? Who can enter into it? We

were in that mind from everlasting ages – long, long before our creation. But why do we speak of length of time? Were we not in that Mind from all eternity? Ah! Does not this give us a sad thought, as we must acknowledge how little we are corresponding with the idea God had for us in His Divine Mind! Beautiful Mind of God, full of all lovely conceptions through which marvelous possible creations ever seem to manifest themselves! How must we bow down in deepest adoration, exclaiming: “who hath known the Mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor” (Rom 11:34)? We talk of the mighty mind of men, but Father Faber tells us: “Is not our mind, in comparison with Almighty God’s, as little as to compare the instinct of the brute animals to our reason?” It is good for us to fill our minds with beautiful images and pictures, for we have in our minds only what we have seen and heard, but the thoughts of the Divine Mind are conceptions. Now realise the difference between a conception and something already in existence that we think of or realise in our mind.

If we had the power to conceive, and then to create what we had conceived, what a pleasure would it not be to us – what an unknown joy! Unknown to us at present, except in a faint degree, by painters and others who try to put into execution their ideas, which we sometimes call conceptions. But they really have in their minds something which was previously in existence in some form or other, and yet this is a great joy to them. They will devote their whole lives to bringing into conception some idea, or something beautiful that has passed through their minds, or some clever invention they think would be of great utility to their fellow men. Holy people, too spend their lives in bringing into execution some plan or work for the glory of God. But these have very often been inspirations they have received from God, and the work they are employed on was first conceived in the Mind of God, and impressed upon the docile mind of some soul that had been previously prepared for the heavenly message. Only to think of this, that the Eternal Mind of God first conceived us, and then created us by His Power, His omnipotence! Are we not lost in admiration? Does it seem unnatural, then, that having conceived and created us He should so love us? Now, dear God, we understand better Thy ways and works. The painter loves his picture, and takes care of it, the sculptor his statue, the inventor his invention. He would not lose it for the whole world. Then how can we understand the love of the Creator for His creatures, especially that beautiful creation, life? Imagine what it would be to create a human life! To first conceive it into one’s mind, and then to bring it into existence! For others do not conceive, as we have before said, as God conceives in His Mind.

Our conceptions are not really original. They are mere discoveries of something already existing, but through the magnificent mind of God all possible worlds, all

possible creations, are continually passing. Wonderful to think of! We have no power of thinking what another world would be like, or what another life would be like. We know our own human life. We strive to understand angelic life. We sit and meditate to the best of our power upon the one Eternal Life of God. We can go no further. We know no more. We cannot conceive more. We have not the power. Our minds sink down baffled at any attempt to imagine another kind of life than the life we ourselves lead, the life of the angels. And we strive to imagine the life of God – any other kind of life is quite beyond our comprehension. But the majestic mind of God, His Power of Conception, is illimitable as the Power of Creation. What He conceives is illimitable. With God all things are possible.

Present to His mind are the beautiful pictures of all possible creations. When we lie upon His Breast shall we, too, see them? Shall we be interested in them, and take pleasure first in the vision, the picture, the idea before us, and afterwards have the joy of seeing those conceptions brought into existence? Ah me! Does not this thought or imagination inspire us with the wish of corresponding with the idea God had of us before He created us? Indeed, yes, we see now what we have done, who have marred God's beautiful work in time, who have spoiled His lovely human creation by introducing sin! What a work we did! Can we ever too bitterly repent it? And can we strive too earnestly to repair it, possible? And then comes the happy thought, it is possible. And again we revere still more the mighty Mind of God, from which came the plan of our redemption.

How still more wonderful appears His Wisdom, as we see His Justice, His Mercy, His Compassion, His Love, all combining with this wondrous work! The sentence had gone forth, that in the day man should sin, he should die. Human nature must suffer for its sin, for its disobedience to God. Then God took that human nature on Himself. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt upon earth (Jn 1:14). The Son of God was made man, in the womb of the Virgin, and in this, our human nature, offered up His life that we might live. And by His holy life and death made reparation to the outraged Majesty of God, and has left us His merits to make use of as though they were our own. Therefore, we can repair this sad past. The fall of man [and woman] is sorrowful enough indeed. But the resurrection of Jesus testifies that we, too, may all rise from sin and death caused by the unhappy sin of Adam. Therefore, let us take heart to repair this sad sin, since it is of faith that we can make reparation, not by our own merits, but by the merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Let us be comforted, that out of the Mind of God came this wonderful thought, to send His only Begotten Son, whom He so loved into the world, that the world might be saved by Him. We have been

comparing the mighty Mind of God with its infinite power of conception, with our little minds, and their finite power of thought. We have a grander idea of God, a better idea of our own littleness and nothingness.

But there had lived one creature on earth, who has understood better than any other the greatness of the Mind of God, who saw more clearly than any creature His ideas in her regard. We need not name her. It is Mary, whom God chose to be His Mother. God has gifted her with a wonderful idea of His will concerning her, and to this will Mary corresponded. She was wise to a wonderful degree. Her mind was full of thoughts and sounds of heavenly things. This knowledge was given her by God in various ways, although it followed naturally that the Immaculate Virgin, being free from sin, was exempt also from the ignorance and obscurity into which sin had plunged all mankind. God had gifted Adam with wonderful science, with a great power of mind. Adam's descendants lost this, through sin upon sin, vice upon vice. For sin ever breeds multitudes of sins, and breaches of God's laws introduce disorders of both mind and body. And we cannot doubt but that that pure soul had a very pure, bright knowledge of matters that are dim and dull to us. Oh, the bright intelligence of that simple Virgin of Nazareth! Oh, the still clearer intellect, the still more divinely illuminated mind when Wisdom Incarnate dwelt within her. Jesus could not dwell so closely united to her, without inspiring her with heavenly knowledge. We have seen how He has raised the minds of many of His spouses to a wonderful degree. There is a Gertrude, a Theresa, a Catherine. All justly esteemed for their clearness of intellect, for their brightness of mind. If Jesus vouchsafed these gifts to His spouses, much more did He bestow upon His Mother! No saint ever so closely united to our Lord as Mary. And it is union with God which gives us intelligence of heavenly things. And we often find that those divinely illuminated minds have the clearer knowledge of earthly sciences, and are more capable of applying themselves to them than others. They may not give so much time to those studies, and appear so erudite. They know well that hereafter they will see all things in God. But they put their time to the useful knowledge of succouring those around, of saving souls – though earthly science is not to be despised, so long as we give equal time to acquiring heavenly knowledge. This would make us lead good lives, and be pleasing in the sight of God. This is too often forgotten.

Let us look now into the mind of the Virgin, the Holy One of God, this fair flower. Would that we could see her thoughts of God. If but for one quarter of an hour we could see what Mary saw all her life, how changed should we be! The world would appear less and yet more. In one sense, we should think less of it – it would seem to us little to be regarded. And again, we should think more,

inasmuch as it was *the* world in which the Word was made flesh. It was the world on which lived Jesus and Mary, which the Word Incarnate still makes His dwelling place, not leaving us orphans, but living with us ever in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, as He has promised. It was the sight of God's great Goodness, of the wonders of His Ways, His Wisdom, His Power, His Compassion, His various Attributes, which our Blessed Lady saw so clearly and in so different a manner from us, which made her break forth in a manner unwonted to her in the grand *Magnificat*. We see God's Attributes singly. Our limited capacities will not enable us to look upon Him in the grand whole that He is. We have to take piece by piece, and view His various beauties. But Mary saw Him as a whole. She saw that mighty Spirit, that grand Being, which is God. She saw Him with a mind which did not disfigure Him, as ours too often do.

We know well if we take a beautiful mirror clear from spots, it reflects perfectly the countenance looking on it. If, however, the mirror is distorted, or has blemishes, the countenance is distorted also. It is a poor comparison, but we know not how better to show what we wish to express, viz. : that we are all made to give glory to God, to reflect His beauty. That the pure soul reflects Him best, that it also knows its God best. But there is alone one creature who has perfectly reflected its God, and that is Mary, whom we are striving to show in these pages as the fair Mirror of God, on whose pure soul God may look with perfect content and satisfaction. He finds in this His own pure work. Mary also must in consequence have ever known her God better than any other creature. We, who do not reflect Him so purely, cannot see Him so purely. Let us see Him, then, in her and through her. Let us look upon Him in Mary. Let us ask her to teach us what she knows of God, according to our capacity to receive. For she knows secrets of God we may not hear. But let us prepare our souls to know all we can, for Mary will not speak to those who would make wrong use of the knowledge she would impart; and not to make use of it at all would be to abuse the knowledge she gives. *Sedes Sapientiae!* – *Ora pro nobis*.

CHAPTER 4 – The Love of God.

In considering the Attributes of God separately, the mistake must not be made of thinking that they are parts of God. The Attributes of God are Himself. Each Attribute is, therefore, Infinite. God has no parts. We look at Him in various aspects, and consider one time one perfection, and then another. If we consider His Love, we see that it is not that He *has* Love, but that He *is* Love – all Love. His very Being is Love, and there is no end to His love. It is the same with regard

to His Attribute of Mercy, and all the other Divine Attributes. God is Love (1Jn 4:16). Oh, infinitely loving, lovable, and most beloved God, how can we speak of Thee? O that the Seraphim would tell us what is Divine Love! Would that one of those glorious Angels could come on earth to tell us what he knows of the Infinite Ocean of Divine Love – the Pure Love of God. But it cannot be spoken; it must be felt.

Good, good God, then let us feel one touch of this Love. Love became Incarnate in Mary. May we then, through the Mother of fair Love taste this Love – taste and see how sweet the Lord is. Mother, we turn to thee. Thy children want to know God, to love Him with all their hearts. But their hearts are cold. Do quicken and warm them into new life. Draw us close to thy ever burning Heart of Love whilst we look up to the Ever Blessed Trinity, that, shaded by thee and by thy soft reflected light, we be not overpowered by the Bright Light of Divine Love in Its glorious Essence, the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. “It is easy and joyous to hang over the verge of this abyss in prayer, while the heart is being nurtured with Love out of its mystic deeps. Yet there is nothing out of which we can shape into definite thoughts or utter in intelligible words. All that we can see to express in that abyss are seven operations of eternal and infinite Love in exquisite combinations.

“There is first the Father’s Love of the Son, and secondly the Father’s Love of the Holy Ghost, and thirdly the Son’s Love of the Father, and fourthly the Son’s Love of the Holy Ghost, and fifthly the Holy Ghost’s Love of the Father, and sixthly the Holy Ghost’s Love of the Son, and seventhly the Love of the Father and Son from whom the Holy Ghost proceeds: Who is co-eternal with Them Both...

“Now if we think of created love, angelic love, and human love, and think that all such love, and all the possible love producible from ten million worlds then millions times more perfect than this, and more populous and more long-lived, with Mary multiplied then million times, could not amount to more than the feeblest approximation to a figure of one of these seven loves: if we think of the various kinds of love, paternal, filial, fraternal, conjugal, and the combinations of which they are capable; if we add Omnipotence to their bewildering human intensity, an imperturbable calm to this Omnipotence, and then add together all these sevenfold – we may get some distant idea as befits our darkness and our nothingness of the profound jubilee of the interior Life of God.”^[4]

How does Mary reflect this Life of Love? No creature ever possessed such filial

love, such confiding, trusting, over-powering love as did His fair daughter Mary possess, from the moment of her existence, for her Creator, God, and Father. At the instant of its creation her Immaculate soul was possessed by God's Holy Spirit, which is Love. Within her pure womb the Word, Who is Eternal Love, became Incarnate. There was her love for God her Creator, her love for God her Son. And apart from her love for others as God's creatures, her perfect love for her neighbour, there was a widespreading wonderful maternal love for those who would be made Christ's (Christians) by the outpouring of that life she gave Jesus. And marvellously in this did Mary's love resemble the Love of God, "which seems to have overflowed, and creation to be the result." Mary's love was not pent up within herself and for her God alone, but it overflowed upon the millions of souls she saw springing into new life by the shedding of the Blood of Jesus. He was her Son. And His own, His redeemed ones, were hers, and she could speak to Him of His and *hers*. She could, and doubtless did and still does, intercede for them saying to Jesus, "they are mine and Thine." The sweet intense mother-love of Mary for us seems to be in a finite way God's Own Infinite Love, made manifest. Oh, Mother, Love of God, how should we trust and love thee? How little we do so. Is not all love but a faint resemblance of God's Love? God seems to have centred His Love and Mercy in a marvellous manner in one of our race, a creature as we are. He asks us to look upon her, and learn from this perfect exemplar, His Own conception of motherhood. And as we know there is no good in creation that does not exist in the Creator. God would have us understand from the great loving Mother, the far greater, since Infinite, Love He Himself possesses for His creatures. Oh, Good, Good God, when we looked upon Thy Purity we were drawn, we were fascinated, towards Thee, but now that we understand, or look closer into, Thy Divine adorable Love, we long to possess It, we fear to lose Thee forever, dear God, Good God. Yet we may lose, as others have forever lost, the possession of this Priceless Treasure that God offers and desires to give to all – His Love, Himself. Do not let us lose Thee, do not permit it," we would cry to God, but we know it rests with ourselves. God, who made us without our will, will not save us without our will, our co-operation. Is the home in the Mother-like Bosom of god worth working for? Will it be ample reward for a long life of suffering if in Eternity we possess the Eternal and hear His voice speaking to us saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Thou art Mine – I am thine." O God, would that that day had come, but we know that though it may not be for many long years, yet, if we are faithful, come it will in the end. And the years that may have seemed long to us on earth will appear now as one day, but far, far shorter, and little shall we think of the trials that at times appeared so hard to bear, but to thank the God Who sent them. For they have brought us nearer to Himself forever – and not yourself only, but to others whom,

by the use of suffering, ^[5] you have brought to Heaven to be with you forever with God.

These souls will love you with a special tender love forever. You may almost claim them as your own. Your happiness will be increased by theirs, and they will be your glory for eternity.

You, who as you think of God and the immensity of His Love for you, are constrained more and more to love Him, and fear more and more to lose Him. Remember the words of St. James, “He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death” (5:20).

There are people you may save this very day; their eternal salvation may be secured by your prayers, by the right offering of your works and sufferings. ^[6] They may not be converted, but eternally saved by you. How can that be? You may inquire, since we are none of us secure. Yes, but pray for the good death of some dying sinner, and by your prayer, that poor soul, that was running so fearful a risk, may be saved forever. It has corresponded with the extraordinary grace obtained by your prayer, and you have done a noble work and taken a grand step towards insuring your own salvation.

Persevere in this work of love, and you are safe, since love is the fulfilling of the law. Mary, Mother of fair Love, and of holy Hope, help us so to live as thou didst, pure, full of love of God and our neighbour, that we may be comforted in life and in death, with the hope of possessing forever the Good, Good God.

CHAPTER 5 – Omnipresence.

What a comfort is the thought of the Omnipresence of God. What a pity this thought is not more deeply engraved on our minds from childhood. How it would withhold us from sin. How it would comfort us in sorrow. How it would lead us up the narrow way of perfection. How soon we should grow into saints, if night and day the thought of God’s Omnipresence was with us.

We are told that the Presence of God to the soul is as the sun to the flowers and fruits. As the sun brings forth the beautiful flowers and paints their colours and ripens the fruits, so the soul that lives ever in the Presence of God buds and

blossoms, and produces fruits most delightful to God. O happy thought that we are never away from God! O blissful thought: “we press our heads to our pillow and remember God is there.”

We cannot go from Him. He is around us. He is within us. Do we think of that? God is within your soul as a King on His throne, and you have to pay Him homage there. Ah, it is the evil of evils, this loss of the thought of the Presence of God, to put it in common words: how *rude* we are to Him. We should not be so if we remembered His Presence, and of all places where we love Him we should love Him more in our own hearts. If we had learned to seek Him there, if we knew that grand cry with which the loving soul exclaims, “God of my heart.” There are some souls who feel so clearly the Presence of God in all places, that it is a real pain to be in sinful places, that it is a real pain to be in sinful places – that is to say, places of sinful pleasure, or where worldly people congregate. But when such souls go to do good to sinful people in the spirit of the Good Shepherd, then the Presence of God within themselves hinders the pain they feel when in such places or when mixing with people who are living for the world and not for God.

The soul that is ever mindful of the Presence of God finds Him in every place. Its first joy is to honour Him in every place, to recognise Him in that particular spot, to offer Him homage there. This soul is a bright spot before God in Heaven, and to this soul God inclines Himself. To this soul He gives power over others.

If I go to the uttermost end of the world, Thou art there. Beautiful thought! What else could have supported the church’s missionaries as they left their country, their home, as they left even the comforts of religion? What could have supported them if it were not the sense of God’s Presence everywhere, and also a particular sense that they had of God’s Presence within themselves? Witness St. Francis Xavier in his lonely voyage to the Indies. See him working there alone, utterly alone, with hardly the help of even one Christian. He had certainly a native convert, but he could scarcely hold intercourse with him. Yet he was not solitary. He felt no loneliness; he had God’s companionship. He realised visibly His Presence. He could, he did, hold constant intercourse with Him. God manifested Himself to him. But God’s manifestations to His saints are often simply the enabling them to realise what others do not realise. For God would show to all, if they would allow Him, the wonderful truths in the midst of which they live.

The greater part of the people of this world is blind, and they know it not. They seek after wonderful things. They want to feed their imagination on novelties.

They want to use their memory and their understanding – they want to feed them and therefore, they seek the things of this world with which to please them. New discoveries, new sciences, are daily sought after with eagerness and please for a while, but they cannot satisfy the human mind or the human heart. For the knowledge of them was simply meant to accompany that greater knowledge of God, which it should be the ambition of all to seek and to use the means to retain. For we can acquire knowledge and lose it or forget it, as children who have been taught from infancy that God is everywhere sometimes lose this knowledge by loss of faith, or often forget it, and do not realise it, and so it gradually dwindles away. And though the Presence of God is no less real, the loss of the thought of that Presence – its realisation – is a real loss to the soul.

“Show me a place where God is not, and there we will sin.” Ah, wonderful words! Would that they were impressed on our minds. How could we venture to commit mortal sin in the very Face of our Creator? How could the mind deliberately plan evil with the thought of God’s Presence within itself?

Ah, did we realise how God co-operates in everything we do we should take a different view of sin, of God’s hatred of sin, and of the necessity of God’s punishment of sin. We know that sin is but in the will, and that of two acts identically the same, the one will be good and the other bad, according to the good or bad motive with which they are performed. Sin is not in the act, as God’s concurrence is necessary for the act, but the sin is in the will. We might take money with the intention of thieving. We may take money which is simply our own; the acts are the same. We may kill a person in the cause of justice and we may do so in anger. The acts are identical, but the intention is quite different. But we could not do either act without God’s concurrence; we cannot lift our hands but by God’s power. He must assist us – God is present everywhere by essence, presence, and power, though he is distinct from all that he has made. Think of this carefully, meditate upon it, for it is remarkable that as we grow up we often lose the sense of God’s Presence rather than progress in this realisation.

Good children have often a wonderful realisation that seems natural to them, or we might rather say is supernaturally given to them. We do not think and know enough of God’s working in children’s souls – it would be a beautiful revelation to us if we could see it. Do you remember reading of the naïve answer a little child gave a titled gentleman who inquired condescendingly of her, “I will give you an orange, my child, if you tell me where God is?” “And I will give you ten, my lord, if you tell me where he is not,” was the quick answer. The simplicity of children enables them to a certain extent to realise the Presence of God, without

any awkwardness or restraint, as sometimes happens to spiritual people when attempting to keep in God's presence. There is very often something unnatural, uncouth, ungainly in their aspect, and they are not attractive to others – they do not seem able to connect the Presence of God with the presence of his creatures. If they want to recollect God's Presence they must go away from creatures. But not so with the saints: certainly they all loved quiet intercourse with God, meditation on his various Attributes, and union and communion with him alone, but they did not lose his presence when for love of him they mixed with his creatures – far, very far from it. They realised that what was done to creatures God would take as done to himself, and that acts of charity are pleasing to God, if it be but the charity of a cheery conversation or an amusing game.

Witness a St. Philip Neri: jovial, cheery, merry, inspiring joy to all around, he lived with the most vivid sense of God's Presence. God's creatures could not obstruct the Saint's view of their Creator. Ah! Would that we had lived in the world in the time of that sunny Saint, he who in so miraculous manner had received a special visit from the Holy Ghost. We should learn from him how to comport ourselves with our fellow creatures without losing our sense of the Presence of God. We might invoke him with special efficacy for this purpose, and thus enable our lives to be far more glorious to God and edifying to our neighbours.

For it is a general cry, especially with beginners in the spiritual life, this difficulty of keeping in the Presence of God. They either show too much levity and dissipation of mind, or have an awkward restraint about them, which neither glorifies God nor is calculated to do good to others.

Our Mother Mary, as in all else, is our help and assistance in this great work. We can look to her for example, for surely no creature on this earth ever walked in God's Presence as did Mary. He was so intimately united to her that it would have been impossible for her to forget him. She could as well have forgotten her own existence – she lived so by him, in him, with him and for him. O Mary, may we imitate thee in this thy wonderful union with him, whom, as Mother, thou didst bear within thy soul, within thy heart, in a manner impossible to be spoken of, but of which God's saints have some knowledge. May we have something of it too!

Thou dost belong to all ages, for so the Holy Ghost has proclaimed by thy mouth: "For, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Lk 1:48). For if the act of love of the Magdalen was to be told of her to all peoples, what

was to be told of the Mother of Fair Love, of her acts of love for Jesus? Ah, Mary, thou canst claim all hearts, and the whole empire of the redeemed, for there is no part where thou art not honoured and blessed. And so will it be evermore, for all true worshippers of God must connect thee with him – God and Mary. The two cannot be disunited. God united himself in a wonderful manner to that Ever Blessed Virgin, and God’s gifts are without repentance. What he once gives he never takes away, unless through our own fault. Father Faber tells us that when the bodily life of Jesus and Mary were separated, their souls still remained united. God is omnipresent, and the thought of Mary is omnipresent too. It is in all lands and will never die away. “For he hath exalted the humble” (Lk 1:52), and the lowly maiden, who ever sought to hide herself and keep unknown all the great gifts God had bestowed upon her, shall be more and more exalted by him. And the day will come when Christ’s Vicar will give her her crowning title, and from the cross on which his Lord’s love for him, and his love for his Lord has placed him, he shall exclaim with his Master to the nations: “Behold thy Mother” (Jn 19:27)!

Fitting time for such a consecration – the Church, the Spouse of her lord, has followed her Lord to this hour of His Passion: well for his Vicar that he should pronounce the words of his Master, consecrating his Church to her Maternal Heart, as Jesus to St. John, who stood there the only one of the Twelve to represent the Church, that each loving child of Mary may hear her saying in her heart: “I will show myself a Mother.” Sweet Mother, we love to live in these days. Though they are days of trial, there has come light from Heaven. The Holy Ghost is inspiring us to know better, and the *Lumen de caelo* will bring *Gloria in excelsis*. We rejoice we have lived to see this day – the day in which we are taught to trust and honour more thy Maternal protection, for thou hast sent thy message to God’s Vicar: - Consecrate the Church to the Maternal Heart, and I will show myself a mother. The children of [earth] rejoice, but angels rejoice still more, for the Mother will bring to be honoured still more the treasure by which we all have life, which God will see, and will save us from the exterminating plague. Yes, as the angel passed the doors where the Blood of the Paschal Lamb was exposed, so shall we be saved when the angels see the Blood of Jesus. We shall be saved by its power, and it is thou, sweet Mother, who has given it to us, for thy Mother Heart furnished it.

CHAPTER 6 – Compassion 1.

Most compassionate and long-suffering God, we behold Thy forbearance with the long ages of this world's history, with each generation of perverse, hard-hearted, ungrateful men and wonder. Thy creatures have wronged, insulted, and rejected Thee, and still Thou hast compassion upon them. His compassion is infinite, it is good for us to know, as are all His Attributes, or surely it would have ceased long since. If we could put all the insults, the cold neglect, the indifference, the selfish offering eye of those who profess to love Him, upon one person – if we saw all this done against some one who has done good to those who were thus injuring him, we should count that person terribly wrong. And yet look at our God – no one has done us the good He has. He has created us in the first place, and created us to be happy. He has laid down rules in order to make us happy, and when we broke those rules, and thus rendered ourselves unhappy, He came Himself on earth to legislate again for us and to restore us again to happiness. No amount of neglect, of indifference, of open violation of His laws and rebellion against Himself hinders Him forgiving us when we repent; He compassionates us so greatly.

But compare the injuries against a human benefactor and the injuries we commit against our God. It is impossible. There can be no comparison. How little we realize that Divine Compassion! God has striven to make it known to us by means of his Passion. We realize it better when we think of that. But we do not realize the daily, hourly injuries, which are committed against God, which are indeed a repetition of the outrages offered Him during his Passion, and, in spite of which, He has pity upon us.

He compares Himself to a mother. We know how long-suffering and compassionate is a good mother – how each offence of her erring child makes her yearn towards it still more. Her love goes out in compassion as she sees the sad state into which the child she brought into the world has fallen. We all know this. We all have seen instances of it. Mothers will understand it best. Then compare the greatest love of any mother, the greatest compassion of her heart to the compassionate love of the Heart of God. It is but a shadow, and strange to say, though we have so many proofs of this compassionate love of God, it is the one thing men [and women] doubt most often, though He appeals to us: “Can a mother forget the child of her womb so as not to have pity on him?” (Isa 49:15). Though He says as a father He pities His children, still we do not believe it, or we doubt it, or in times of trouble and afflictions we will not strive to realise it. If in our moments of wrestling in pain and anguish and sorrow of heart, we could but realize that God compassionates us, that He is yearning tenderly to show us this Compassion, how consoled and comforted we should be. We have all of us

met some compassionate hearts. We have gone out in gratitude to some who have spoken consoling, loving words.

Do we think the creature is better than the Creator? Whence did this compassion arise? Was it not in the Heart of our God? Are not those souls whom we love so much but instruments used by God to show us – and indeed they show us but faintly – His compassionate love? Our sweet Mother Mary shows it to us most perfectly. She is His chosen instrument. She is by excellence the Mother of Pity and Compassion. We should not feel that she was our Mother, if we were not assured of her pity and compassion. But we do know this, though there may be moments in our lives – dark, drear moments – when it seems to us no one compassionates us, that we are abandoned, forsaken by all. It may seem to us that this is the case, though really it is not so.

The compassionate Heart of Jesus is on earth with us. Our sweet Mother in Heaven never ceases her care and protection of us. Her pitying eye follows us at every step. She sends loving angels to warn us of approaching evils, and often, very often, those dark drear moments are the warnings the angels give us to induce us to fly more closely to God, to pray more fervently, that thereby we may be saved from some impending calamity, which our watchful Mother in Heaven knows, but we do not. Many and many would have been the troubles we should have averted if we had taken this warning in time. And when we felt the presentiment of impending evil hanging over us, and that strange, nameless fear upon us, if we had turned to God in hopeful prayer and asked Him by His sweet Compassion to help us, if we had begged our sweet compassionate Mother by the sorrows of her heart, by her tender pity, to intercede for us, how different would our experience have been.

As we have said before, God had not left this world to chance. He does not allow everything to go on by mere routine. We are not fatalists. No! We believe that God, our Father in Heaven, is taking a lovely interest in all our affairs, is constantly interfering in them, and that His providence over us is directed by His most sweet compassion. Jesus had Compassion for us when, in looking from His Cross, He spoke to all generations, saying, “Behold thy mother!” (Jn 19:27). Ah! The pity of the Heart of Jesus induced Him in that dread hour to give us this gift. He gave her then a power, or it would have been cruel to have made her Mother, to have filled her heart with tender Pity and Compassion, if He had not given her power to console and relieve those whom she was to compassionate and love as a mother!

We do not doubt it, Mary, for, as we look at thee on Calvary's height, we know there was not a pain or a sorrow that we wrung the heart of Jesus that thou didst not also feel. We know this even within our own souls, poor and weak as they are in comparison with Mary's, and incapable of being united with God as Mary's was. Still in our degree, as we go near to the Heart of Jesus, we feel in some measure His tender Compassion. Ah! It was so immense; it was a real pain – a real agony to Him. How our hearts are sometimes torn when we see someone we love dearly in bitter grief. When we see they are inconsolable, when we know nothing we can say or do will comfort them.

Ah! This is one of the sad pains of life. We only feel it now and then, but Jesus had it always. His exquisite tender heart was constantly wrung at the sight of the sorrows of others. And if Jesus wept at the simple sight of a dead man, how did He not mourn over the far sadder sight of souls dead to grace! Death is sad from one point of view. It is the penance for sin instituted by God's justice, therefore, it is terrible, though His Mercy gives us many consolations in it. But to Jesus' eyes what must have been the sight of souls who were steeped in that terrible misery of sin? Ah! How He compassionated them and longed to rescue them from their unhappy state.

Oh! The yearning Compassion of the Heart of Jesus! Who can fathom it? Who can understand it? Mary came nearest it in understanding every throb of anguish, which that compassionate Heart endured at the sight of our many miseries, and especially the misery of sin.

God in His Glory in Heaven compassionates us, feels for us. But when He came on earth, when He took as human heart, His compassion caused Him intensest pain. In our moments of sorrow – especially that sorrow caused by the sorrow of those we love – we may make our souls most dear to Jesus by then uniting them with His. WE may throw ourselves at His feet before the lonely tabernacle, and cry from our hearts, “Dear Jesus, if I can suffer so much, what did You suffer? How could You bear it?” And then comes another pain joined to and overwhelming our own - the pain at the thought of what Jesus suffered – and this pain leads to sanctity. This was almost Mary's greatest sorrow – to see Jesus in agony through His sweet compassion for the sufferings of others, and to know that she could not relieve Him. She could not tell Him that the souls that He saw in such dire misery since they were in such deadly sin would be saved. She knew not whether they would indeed. She knew that numbers would not. How could she, then console Him? She could not, except by the sweet compassion of her heart, which, beautifying all her other graces, rendered her soul lovely in his

sight, lighting still more, if possible, her lovely soul.

This must be our work too – we must by our compassion imitate God. Well for us that our God compassionates us, well that His compassion could send His only Son to us. If God had not compassionated us, what would have become of us? It is good for us to think of this, to honour the Divine Attribute, and to honour it in the best possible way, by imitating it. We may be excused in many things in the spiritual life; many things are harder in these times than other times. But compassion, we can have compassion. We need it now as much as, or more than ever.

Ah! Look at the misery of the present age – people led hither and thither away from their God, and drawing others with them. We may sometimes feel indignant, and we might save them by our compassion. “The indignation of man works not the justice of God, neither does it invoke His sweet mercy.” “Revenge is mine, says the Lord, I will repay thee” (Rom 12:19). Who are we to be so indignant with another’s sin? Compassion is a Godlike virtue. To have compassion on others as God has on us... endears Him us to the Heart of God, and induces Him to have more compassion on us – and we all need compassion. There is not one of us but should not know in their hearts, and realise to the best of their power, what we should be if the loving eyes of our God had not rested on us in gentle compassion and taken pity on us.

Another thing we have to bear in mind – how great are God’s Attributes, how infinite, how intense. We may sit and think upon one, and then not realize it, as we strive to get some idea of it, by comparing it with something we have seen, and in this we do right. Still, we must never forget that, though there is some semblance in human virtues to the Divine Attributes of God, still at their highest heights they are but faint shadows compared with their model – compared with the Divine Attributes, of which we are now thinking, of our God. Put it to yourself now how you are thinking of his most lovable Attribute of God – His compassion. You are putting it beside the human virtue, which you have seen. Do you really consider how far, far exceeding is the Divine Compassion any human compassion we have ever seen or even imagined? If we do think this, why do we distrust our God? Why do we not wholly confide in Him? Sweet compassionate Heart of our Mother, show us how to throw ourselves wholly into the arms of His Divine Compassion, and there rest calm, secure, knowing that He had care of us, that He pitied us, and that His loving compassion longs to show His sweet mercy to us.

Compassion 2

Compassion - God's compassion! Enough seems said to rest the mind in tranquil adoration, in contented joy, in complacency and peace, as the vision of God's compassion comes before the soul, overwhelming it with love for that God, that good, good Creator, our only Good. He is a dear, good God. Thoughts rise up in our minds that cannot be written. Beauties are seen that cannot be described. Why did we begin to write of Him? Why should we attempt to describe His loveliness since it is indescribable? Why have we spoken of Him? Does it not lower Him in our minds to attempt to bring Him within their conception? No, not with a prayerful mind!

If this work does not make those who read it more anxious to know God, more anxious to seek after that knowledge in the proper way, by humble prayer, it will have fulfilled its end. God can only be understood by searching I meditation to discover His wonderful perfections. But still to make our meditation well, ordinarily speaking, we have to use the natural means of instruction by reading what theology teaches us about God. To have the mind informed by reading is a great help to meditation, even though at the time of meditation a book would be a hindrance.

Indeed, to have the mind filled with holy thoughts is a great help to leading a holy life, in the midst of the greatest distractions. Holy thoughts come from good reading in a great measure, though there are some souls, who by their union with Him, and by His Divine Presence within them, are filled with holy thoughts, and seem almost to think with His thoughts, whose Sacred Humanity is filled with all Divine Truth. Ah! That ours were so also! Oh, that our minds were filled with the holy truths of faith, ever animating our hearts to fresh hope and love, and that thus, our actions springing from love of God, our whole lives might be indeed beautiful in His sight, and the sight of the holy angels.

The mind of the first man, fresh from the hand of God, had stamped upon it the knowledge of God and heavenly things, and his own being in consequence was saturated with the deepest adoration, reverence, and love. That kneeling figure, bent low before its Creator in the garden of Paradise, feeling as few have since felt, its nearness to God, is a beautiful picture to contemplate. Adam, before his fall, had more knowledge of God than of himself. His whole being was wrapped

up in the thought of God. He could have more easily forgotten his own existence than for one instant have forgotten God's existence.

He truly lived in Him. Few persons perhaps, if any, of Adam's posterity, have more fully realized than himself that in God we live, move and have our being. Why are we so earthly minded? Why are our minds not more heavenly? Because we are selfish! It is not because as are engaged from morning to night in various distracting occupations, or because we have much business or much to think about. No, it is not that, for the soul that lives in the sunshine of God's Holy Presence, and in return for its love receives from Him the grand grace of union with Himself, can be employed like the angels in their ministries to men (and women), and yet not be distracted from God. The mind is expanded and enlarged by contact with God. It is not, as some think, rendered dull or obtuse in regard to the affairs, the duties, it has to attend to. No, it has some little of the power of God's mind, which can attend to the most minute particulars if Its earthly creation whilst engaged with the glories of Its own wonderful eternity, the marvel of His Eternal Life.

Yes, union with God opens and enlarges the mind. It broadens it, and the more the mind is filled with God, the more it becomes like God. All narrow-mindedness gradually disappears, when the soul has commenced, even on earth, that union which will be its eternal joy in Heaven. Ah! Let us put our little minds before the great Mind of God, and beg Him to open them to the knowledge of Heavenly things, and tell Him our only reason for desiring this knowledge is that it may inflame our hearts with love for what is so lovable, so entrancingly beautiful, so unspeakably desirable, so deliciously enjoyable to the soul raised above the world – raised above every earthly desire, and entirely devoted to its God, its only Good.

How shall we think of God's compassion? We can only think so, as we think of all else that we love in God by comparing it with something earthly. We have compared God's love itself to the mother love we see on earth. So with God's compassion, we can but compare it with something we have seen on earth. Have we ever met a truly compassionate heart on earth? Have we ever met one of those truly charitable souls, who weep with those who weep, who rejoice with those who rejoice, who grieve with those who grieved, who sorrow with the sorrowful whose hearts seem so overflowing with compassionate love for others, that they remind us irresistibly of that dear and compassionate Jesus, whose Sacred Heart was trembling with sensitiveness for the woes of others? It was as a tender mother's heart, which every sorrowful, stricken sufferer touched unconsciously

with its own sorrow and produced exquisite pain. Yes, there are souls, thank God, like Jesus in their sweet, compassionate love.

They are lovable souls, and yet these gently compassionate ones are hard and selfish in comparison with the compassionate God. Do we really think our God is compassionate? Surely if we did we should trust Him more in time of trial, in the dark dread hours of bitter grief, when the poor human heart is racked, and wrung, and desolate. When quivering in very anguish, it seems to feel almost a physical pain. If then, the compassionate God could be seen – if we had but one glance at that dear, good, loving Creator – if that beautiful vision of God, compassionating, loving, pitying His suffering children, were but once vouchsafed to the soul in sorrow, how differently would it think of God, how far differently it would know Him!

But the soul could not see God and continue in sorrow. It would be comforted, consoled, carried out of itself with ecstatic joy, with love so great, and delight too intense, for poor mortal frame to bear. It could not sorrow looking on the beauteous face of the loving, compassionate God. There is beauty in the human face as loving eyes are turned compassionately upon us in grief. What beauty must there be in God! How can we picture to ourselves the God of Love. The great God, bending compassionately over the little suffering creature, pitying it, supporting it, looking for the time when He may truly comfort it, heal the wounded heart, and wipe forever the tears from the weeping eyes!

The dear compassionate God looks forward to that. Poor mourners of earth, you may well look forward to it also. The day will come – it is not perhaps far distant – when this life will have passed away forever, and eternity will have begun for us. This life as a breath will have passed away – it will have passed, but not without note, for the breath that passed so swiftly, that floated on time and disappeared like a summer cloud, but has not disappeared forever. Oh, no! If it was a life spent for God, it has floated to the heavens above, and is now changed to a beautiful, radiant life, unlike its past, which is in comparison no real life. It is immortal. It is joined inseparably to the Immortal Life, that great Eternal Being who is God, our own God, our only Good, our sweetness, our joy, our Sovereign Creator and Life-giver our best Lover.

Ah! We write but foolish words, as we write of God. It is more difficult still to speak. But it gives us food for thought, and our thoughts can dwell upon what we cannot speak or write. Yes, our minds begin to think, and rest for awhile upon that grand Eternal Being, and have glimpses of loveliness, which show us what

greater beauty is to be seen beyond. We rest on the threshold and are entranced. We have food already to fill our poor little hearts to overflowing. They seem as though they cannot love more than they do. We feel almost as though we cannot love Thee more, O God, than we do. As we see Thee as, quiet in worshipful prayer, there arises before us the vision of Thy beauty, the vision, the partial vision, of some little of that Infinite Beauty which we hope to gaze upon unveiled in that glad home Thou hast prepared for us, if we persevere in the thorny path which will lead us to Thee. Though we know that even in this mortal life, by Thy grace, we may ever increase in the knowledge and love of thee.

God's beauty, the lovely vision of God! What is that vision, the vision emphatically designated beatific? Eye hath not seen on earth that grand, delicious sight, or the sight of all pleasure on earth would indeed grow dull and dim before us. The vision of our God! What is it? What do we mean by it? We stay stilled, entranced, as we think of it – God's beauty! Again, what does it mean? We have seen human beauty, we have seen various kinds of human loveliness, but we have never even conceived in thought the slightest resemblance to the beauty of our God. We know what we love. We love Love, but we do not see it. It is not visible except by its effects. We love the loving look: it is the effect of the love of our hearts, that hidden Love, which is a beautiful thing we cannot see. It is invisible. It is like God on earth. We love God, but He is hidden except by His works, His effects. What must it be to see visibly something so beautiful as Love? We say of creatures, "They have love; they possess it." But God, we know, does not merely possess it. He is Love, and this Love we shall see, not alone in its effects, its works, but in the Beatific Vision we shall gaze upon Love Itself. It will be visibly revealed to us. This is what the Beatific Vision is – to see God's Attributes visible, not by their effects, their works, but in themselves. What will it be to see His Mercy, His Patience, His Compassion, His benevolence? – to see all unveiled!

Oh, good God, our delighted eyes will drink in that beauty. They will fix themselves upon Thee with one glad, joyous look, and never more be withdrawn, but ever and ever drinking in Thy Beauty. What we now know of the dear God in sweet and hidden way, we shall then see visibly, and beauties, glories, we have never seen or conceived, will be revealed. It will be Thy great joy, sweet God in Heaven, to be our Joy. Then let it be our great joy on Earth and in Heaven Thou wilt delight, dear God, to show Thyself to us. Let us then delight to work for so good a God, and show ourselves to Him. That we need not be shamed to show ourselves, let us hide our own natural vileness in His goodness and greatness. May the graces of our God so cover us, and may the Merits of Jesus encompass

us, by our applying them to ourselves through Sacraments, through prayers and sufferings, that we may really be pleasing in the sight of God, both on this Earth, where there are so many trial and sufferings, and in Heaven, as we rest in His Arms in contented Love, and cease from care and labour, forever and ever, So may it be.

But, Sweet Mother, how is God's beauty mirrored in thee? How dost thou appear in God's creation in thy place as mirroring the Attributes of God in thy own sweet perfections? What has an author, not a Catholic, said about thee, dear Mother? That, "Never has any virtue, never has any mind, conceived anything as beautiful as the Catholic idea of the Virgin Mary." What said the once Pagan Dionysius, but that, if faith had not assured him to the contrary, he should have taken her for a goddess? What more beautiful thought has human mind ever rested upon, next to the thought of God? A Virgin, a Mother, and such a Mother, of the great Creator! What romantic tale ever ended in such a wonderful exaltation of its heroine, as that of our Sweet Virgin Mother, in being made Mother of God, Mother of God's Children, Queen of Angels and of men [and women]. Can any human mind conceive anything more lovable, more beautiful, more satisfying, so to speak? Can the mind rest upon anything with more contented joy? Our eye delights in gazing upon beautiful scenery. The mind rests peacefully, contemplating the many lovely sights in God's beautiful Creation. God's creatures are lovable. Their pleasant smile, the reflection of their good hearts shines in the faces of many, and human eyes are lovely. We love to look into them, when they are true. Yes, we do love one another. But do we love as that Fair One of God? What is there so beautiful as she? What so lovely a vision, after the Beatific Vision, after the sight of the Sacred Humanity, as the vision of the Virgin Mother of God, our own Mother Mary? "*Dignare me, laudare te.*" "Vouchsafe to accept my praise, O holy Mother of God," sings the Church. Yes, we may well pray for other words, for other lips, for another tongue, to extol that Sweet Mother, who is above all praise.

Think, then, upon Heaven, the hidden beauty of the Blessed Trinity. Love most in comprehensible, shedding rays of light and love. God's Patience, Mercy, Compassion, all that is so beautiful to us, so loved, when seen but in its effects! All, by the light of glory, made visible there, we are dazzled by what is simply incomprehensible to us in our present state. Sweet, effulgent, resplendent Trinity, we are blinded by thy beauty, Beatific Vision. God grant we may one day enjoy it!

Our Mother is there in Heaven, reflecting, as ever, her God. Sweet beautiful

Mother, Fair One of God, thou seemest more wonderful the more we think of thee, the longer we linger looking on thy loveliness. It is wonderful to us the thought that thou art from this earth. This sad earth of ours has produced the most beautiful of all created beings, our own Mother Mary. There is her throne in Heaven. There is the Virgin Mother, the Immaculate Conception of God, mirroring His Loveliness. There is God's beautiful one reflecting the beauty of the Most High. There, we see Love, Mercy, Patience, Compassion, combined in one sweet expression of the face of Mary, in that look of Mary, unlike any other but that of Jesus. May she look upon us, Sweet Mother. May her gentle eyes be fixed upon us in love. Her hands outstretched to welcome us. And may her lips speak comforting words, saying: "Come, Child of Earth, come, be comforted for evermore. Come to Jesus, the Eternal Joy. Come from the world of sin and sorrow, to the place prepared for you by my Son, Jesus." And the Heart of the Mother of [human]kind will be bound with untold joy and love, as she pronounces the name of her *Son*, Who is the delight of the Angels and Saints. And she will look upon Him, upon Jesus, Who became our Brother, as she leads her Child of Earth towards Him to receive from those dear Lips of His the kiss of Everlasting Peace.

CHAPTER 7 – The Mercy of God

The Mercy of God! We apply through custom two meanings to the word. We say, "Have mercy on us," meaning, spare us, pardon us. But there is another meaning given to the word when we use it as expressing some great outflowing of bounty on the part of God. Beautiful Attribute! What would creation be without the Mercy of God? Nay, Creation itself is an effect of God's Mercy. Creation is a means by which God shows forth His Mercy, as indeed it is a means by which He shows forth His other Attributes, but especially His Mercy. The interior life of God is Love, but within Himself God does not exercise Mercy – He cannot do so.

Creation glorifies the Divine attribute of Mercy, and would have done so even if Adam had not sinned. It then would have been an outpouring of God's Love upon His weak and dependent creatures. O the depths of the riches of the wisdom of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways (Rom 11:33) – in a fallen world, as is this world of ours, Creation glorifies still more the Divine Mercy. The enemy of God can never gain his end of robbing God of the glory he envied. It is impossible. The inventions of

God's Wisdom are Infinite. All things must ultimately tend to His greater glory. We learn a lesson from this thought, never to be troubled when things do not succeed as we desire. The enemy of souls, desirous of undoing good work, may raise persecution against us. He may succeed so far as to stop it, but a greater good will come from this seeming failure. The greatest apparent failure the world ever saw was Calvary, and yet that was the greatest triumph that ever was, or ever will be, achieved in it.

To show mercy is the prerogative of sovereignty. We need not fear to ask God for great mercies. The more He gives, the more glory He receives. The wonder is, we ask for little favours, as though we were afraid to ask too much. People who are not ignorant, and know full well that God has promised to grant whatever we ask, still fall into this mistake. Though not quite so bad, they put me in mind of what I once heard of some people, who evidently understood very little about God or prayer, and who, being in great danger, put up the following petition (following the natural instinct implanted in [the human] heart to pray when terrified. "O God, we are not like those people who are always troubling You. We are poor and ignorant, and know not how to pray, but help us this time, and we will never ask You for anything any more."

People sometimes speak, if they do not pray, almost in the same manner: "O, if God would only grant me this I should be content, but it is too great a favour to be expected." Is it easier for God to grant a small favour than a great one? Has He a certain stock of great graces or favours that may be exhausted if He grants them too readily? Assuredly you know He is infinite in all things, and is spoken of by the Psalmist as "rich in mercy," as though (but we know this could not be) He were greater in Mercy than in His other Attributes.

Therefore, if you wish a great favour, ask for it humbly, but boldly. Do not say you will be content if you obtain it, but say that you will be emboldened to ask for something still more. God desires to give. He loves to be entreated to give. It is His nature to be ever giving. And regarding ourselves it has been said, "There is nothing more godlike than to give."

Again, we say we are not worthy, God will not hear us. "I will pray for you," said one charitable soul to another, whom she wished to be good to, "not, however, that my prayers will do you any good." Now it is well of course to be humble – that is, to know and acknowledge, as we may with truth, that we are not worthy to be heard, but it is a greater humility, and far more pleasing to God, to be sure of His Mercy that, relying upon it, and upon the merits of Our Lord's prayers,

and Sacred Passion, you readily undertake to pray for another. The efficaciousness of our prayers does not depend on our union with God. Therefore, the prayers of a Saint are more valuable than the prayers of a sinner. But “we all touch our dear Lord’s robe, and get virtue from Him” (cf. Mt 9:21). Therefore, let us have faith, and boldly approach God for mercies – not only small favours but great ones, making use of the Treasures of the Church to attract Mercy from the Most High. We have Mercy Incarnate on our altars, in the Blessed Sacrament – Jesus, our Mercy, dwells with us on earth; of His fullness we have received, and may receive still more. In the Mass the Heart of Jesus pours forth Its Treasure of Precious Blood. Would that we were more anxious to receive, that we had stronger faith, and verily we should receive in some measure as Jesus desires to give. He has given us His Life, His Blood. Now, has He not with It given us all things, even His Mother?

Mother, we ever come back to thee. It is thou who wilt teach us to use the Gift of God, the Precious Blood of Jesus. From thee, dear Mother, It was taken. Thou art Its dispensatrix. It is by the Precious Blood that the Almighty shows Mercy, Thou art the Mother of Mercy, the Mother of the Precious Blood. Thou dost dispense Mercy. Thou dost dispense the Precious Blood. Again we see thee reflecting God. Mercy becomes Incarnate in thy womb. Thou gavest to the world Jesus, our Mercy. Thou art His Mother. He was formed by thy substance. He was thine, and He ever will be. In Eternity He will delight to be called Son of Mary. In time, when Jesus called Himself Son of Man, it was out of respect for thy name, and regard for thy wish to be hidden, and unknown. But this will not be in Heaven, where He delights to honour thee the more, in that thou wert so lowly and so unknown on earth. Mary, thou wast indeed the throne of God’s Mercy of Earth. Thou art indeed the throne of His Mercy in Heaven. Let us, then, approach this throne of Mercy, and obtain whatever we desire.

Mary is our attraction to the Mercy of God. Come, then, Sweet Mother, let our hearts beat with the love of thy compassionate heart, that we may draw down God’s Mercy upon earth. Mary, we look upon thee and thou lookest as a fair Fountain of Mercy, running from the Ocean of Uncreated Mercy, Mercy Incarnate. The waters of the fountain are made white as snow. Thou art in truth like the most High in pouring forth Mercy upon the world. God watches thee, O Mary, as thou performest the Office He has given thee, for there is no past with God. Thou hast not fulfilled thy office once, and laid it down. No, thou art ever before God in the position in which He placed thee.

Even with the work of the saints it is thus. No good work ever dies. No, their

works follow them. Thus, Immaculate One, most Holy Mary, thou art ever giving us Jesus, and by the life Jesus gives, thou art ever giving birth to innumerable souls, ever a Mother, ever fulfilling God's design by being a perfect type, ideal, model, of His Conception of a Mother. And what is this Conception? It is His idea, His Eternal Thought. But is there a difference between this Thought of God's mind and others? Yes, and may God purify our minds, who dare to penetrate thus into the Mysteries of Divine Love. But we do it that we may be inflamed with love. The difference in this Conception of God and other Divine Conceptions, that became afterwards creations, is this, that beautiful, grand Office of Mother is such an exemplification of God Himself. Many of the Conceptions of God appear to us, if we may so speak as created thoughts, but this one to be a picture of Himself.

There are many offices in creation that do not appear to have a counterpart in God. They appear emanations from the Divine Mind, having no resemblance to anything in Him, although we know that they do exist in him in some eminent way (*eminenter*). The two most prominent conceptions of God mirroring Himself realized in creation, are the human soul and the office of mother.

Both are tarnished in the Fall, but both are perfectly exemplified, beautifully, grandly, perfectly (as far as God gave power to created being to represent His Infinity) in the soul and maternity of Mary.

Here again we may call attention to the great truth that the machinations of the Evil One only result eventually in some greater good. The office of Mother was corrupted – but who could have imagined that office raised so high, endeared to God so greatly, as it is by the Divine Maternity of Mary?

The beautiful human soul, created by God with so great love, was disfigured, spoilt by God's enemy. But, behold, a greater good appearing, loved by the Eternal Father infinitely more – the Soul of Jesus. God's Love is Mother-love. God in Heaven speaks to us, comparing His Love to the love of a mother.

“Can a mother forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb?” (Isa 49:15) (Scarcely could an unfallen mother do so) are the words of God. And, then, as though the remembrance of the Fall reminded Him of the sad truth that in her present state a mother can forget her child, so as not to have pity on it – so as to forget the immortal soul committed to her care – God continues: “And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isa 49:15).

God speaks again on earth when Our Lord tells us plaintively of His love for us, which we so little think of. God, speaking in Heaven, compared His love to created motherhood in its fallen state. But on the sinful earth, with mothers everywhere forgetting their dignity, sinful in themselves, therefore sinful in their fruit, and careless and forgetful – grossly negligent of their real good – Our Lord could not appeal to the maternal example of that day to show His love. Neither could He of this. To impress those around of the tenderness of His love, to what did He appeal? Listen (and let us be ashamed, sad, fallen race of women) whilst Jesus points out the love of a brute creature for its young, and tells us, “How often would I have gathered My children to My breast, as the *hen doth* her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not” (Mt 23:37).

O Jesus, that we might come to Thee to remain forever. It is the longing of our heart. “As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God” (Ps 42:1). When wilt Thou say, “Come?”

“Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, because Thou art with me” (Ps 23:4).

It will be seen that in speaking of the Divine Attribute of Mercy, it led naturally back to the Attribute of Love, and likewise in speaking of Our Lady as reflecting the Mercy of God, we were led back, almost without intending it, to our former subject of her Maternity. At first I felt inclined to regret I had not kept each subject more distinctly separate. But on consideration, I leave it as it is. It is only natural, in viewing God from one point of view, that the subject of our contemplation should flow into and become blended with another, since, as I have said, “God has not parts.” It is likewise natural that, in meditating upon her whose perfections mirror the Divine Attributes, that the same thing should happen.

We look upon Mary pouring God’s Love upon the earth, and lo, as we gaze, that stream of beauty changes, and we see Mercy, Compassion, Peace, Truth, fresh beauty upon beauty, and yet it is the same stream, the same fount, that God is pouring forth. It is best so. They cannot be separated, though, in truth, the fountain seems to intercept our view of God’s Justice. We see it not as we look on Mary. Indeed, a saint has said it seems (in the sense of retributive justice) entirely absent from her.

Ah! Is it not because, having brought into the world Him who has fully satisfied the Justice of the Eternal Father for a guilty world, and because His Mercy is

above all His works, that Mercy of God's perfect work *Mary* appears ever hiding justice, so that it does not show itself in her, except inasmuch as Justice and Peace kiss each other in her (cf. Ps 85:10)?

God, indeed, is just as well as merciful. Therefore, Justice is truth, a terrible truth, and one necessary to be thought of, but one more difficult to realize when we are looking upon *Mary*. She is indeed the Mother of Fair Love, and of fear. But the love comes first, and makes us fear, because we so greatly love.

The Peace of God! God's Peace! All the troubled heart of [humankind] can desire, he will find in God, when from the stormy ocean of life he enters upon the coasts of everlasting Peace.

What is Peace? It is the contented possession of all Good, which is but to say, in other words, the possession of God Himself. It is not Peace to be so contented with earthly goods that we do not desire still more the things of heaven. This is a false, delusive Peace. The Scripture tells us so: "Woe to the man who hath Peace in his possessions" (cf. Lk 6:24).

No! We can have Peace, whether in this world or the next, only in the possession of God. God, possessing in Himself all good, is essential Peace. Nothing can ruffle, nothing disturb that Peace. God is now as tranquil and peaceful since He created – though a part of that creation has fallen and failed Him – as He was in the Eternity that preceded creation, and as He will be in the Eternity that will follow, supposing God ever ceases to create, as to which we know nothing.

Time is a growth of an ungrowing Eternity. There may be many growths, or there may be growths of Time continuing to sprout, so to say, for all Eternity. Time has also been called articulate. It may never cease speaking. We know not. God does not tell us these things. We may speculate upon them, but there is no certainty. Our minds cannot fathom more than God allows. People who find difficulty, as all must in certain things – such as the thought of Eternity – will find less difficulty if they ask themselves whether they could more easily understand the contrary of the difficulty? Could they more easily understand everything coming to an end, and there being no Eternity? Decidedly not! It would be still more difficult to imagine. My meaning must not be misunderstood, as though I would imply doubt in our minds regarding an Article of Faith. But we may simply ask ourselves the question: such and such a thing is difficult to understand, but could I more easily understand the contrary? Or would it not be a still greater difficulty? Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.

Whenever God visits the soul, He gives Peace. The Peace of [humankind] on earth is not the Peace he will possess in Heaven. Peace has been defined as “the tranquility of order.” The order God has established on earth is that [humankind] should possess Himself, but not with the satisfied possession of Heaven. Since on earth we cannot fully possess God as there, or so securely possess Him, so [humankind’s] Peace on earth is not as perfect as it will be in Heaven, though it may be perfect after its kind, even on earth.

The grand Peace Our Lord bestowed upon the Apostles, even, was different from the Peace of God in Heaven. In Heaven the Peace of the Son of God was unsuffering. On earth it was suffering Peace – Peace in the midst of excessive suffering. Thus, indeed, is earthly Peace most perfect. When it suffers, it suffers acutely, but with entire Patience. Thus Patience has a perfect work. “In your patience you will possess your souls” (2 Peter 3:15).

Patience and Peace are ever linked together, and, as with the Attributes of God, when we speak of one, we are insensibly led to speak of the other. How does Peace come to [humankind] on earth? As all other heavenly gifts do – by means of sanctifying grace! [Humankind] cannot be in peace when he is not in the order God has laid down for him – namely, in a state of grace, consequently in a state of Peace. By his sin he lost grace, and therefore, Peace. But through the merits of Our Lord, he was restored to his former order, viz. the state of grace, and therefore restored to Peace. This the Angels announced at the birth of our Lord as they sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and Peace on earth to men of good will” (Lk 2:14).

Does Mary reflect God’s Peace? Both the Peace of heaven and earth! At the instant of her Immaculate Conception, her soul was flooded with the Peace of God, since she possessed Himself. Again, being in perfect order – that is, in perfect conformity to the Will of God – she possesses Peace, and yet again Peace became Incarnate, and dwelt within her truly and substantially. Truly may we call thee, Mary, Mother of Peace. Thou possessest Peace thyself, and thou givest it to us. Ah, ye who thirst, come to the fountain (Isa 55:1)! Thou givest us Sweet Fount of Peace, the promise of the Angels. Thou hast brought Peace into the world. None need thirst, for thou givest to all who approach thee the Living Waters, whereof if any [person] drink he shall not thirst any more. The waters are ever flowing. They are drawn from an Infinite Ocean, from God Himself. Inaccessible to us, as yet, is that far-off Ocean, but we hope one day to reach its calm waters and there repose, whilst the Eternal God imprints upon us the kiss of

everlasting Peace.

CHAPTER 8 – Gentleness

“Gentle Jesus,” we often say – sweet, gentle Jesus. This is how He comes before us, and as we imagine Jesus in his Sacred Humanity, so we are to look upon our God in Heaven, for Jesus has Himself said so. When one of the Apostles asked, “show us the Father,” our dear Lord replied, “so long a time have I been with you, and you say, ‘show us the Father’” (John 14:8-9). When we would wish to know our God in Heaven better, we look to our dear Lord in His mortal life, and He teaches us, by His example and words. We could not have known our God so well if we had not seen him walking this earth in human flesh, speaking human words, and performing human actions. Who of all the Saints appears so gently as our sweet Jesus? Looking upon our God to learn to know Him better, we see His gentleness in His works, in His dealings with [human]kind.

Quietly, gently God performs His works of love and mercy. We cannot imagine Him otherwise. Could we imagine our God haughty and imperious? Like so many of the great ones of the earth, can we think of Him imperiously commanding His servants, speaking harsh, bitter words? Ah! If we meditate properly, we see Him so sweet, so gentle, that those who meditate, long to become like Him. Watch His gentle dealings with our rough human will, our perverseness, our stubbornness, our open rebellion against Him – read in Scripture His gentle words, His gentle acts – watch Him in all His works from the dawn of Creation to the present day – and you will see that though His justice must have its way, for one Attribute of God does not interfere with the working of another, you will see he is ever gentle, ever meek, ever quiet, ever sweet, in His dealings with such as we.

Thus is our God – He will not speak harsh words to us. He will not be hasty. He will not put us on one side when we come to Him to make known our wants, to speak to Him of our difficulties, but He will listen to us gently. He will soothe us, and we shall feel, if we will but quiet our souls in His presence, the soothing calm of His gentleness. Who goes for His blessing in a proper spirit, but comes away more tranquil? See God in the Creation, and the gentle way in which He performed His works on the different epochs of time, which the Scripture names a day. See the gentle Spirit of God moving upon the waters, then look upon our gentle Lord in His cruel death from the sinfulness of His creatures. See how

gently He breathes His last words. It is the same God Who so sweetly and gently spoke at Creation's dawn, "let us make [humankind] to our own image and likeness" (Gen 1:27).

Let us view God in His dealings with ourselves individually. Has He not been gentle with you, more gentle than your own mother? Gently God created you, O soul, - gently and quietly He performed His wondrous work in Baptism. It is done so gently, so quietly, that we scarcely realize the grand work He then performed. How gently He has washed away the stains you have since contracted. How gently He came to you in your first Communion. Does He seem aught but gentle to you in the quiet tabernacle, where He waits for you to visit Him? Is He not gentle in His Omnipresence? You know He is everywhere, but how marvelously gentle. The Almighty God, the All-powerful, Who rules everything, Who governs all, dwells in His universe so quietly, so gently, that He is not noticed by many. He is passed over, and is unperceived. The Gentleness of our God is embodied in the words, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). This is the term emphatically given to our dear Lord the Son of God, the Word of the Father.

Is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, gentle? Does she in this mirror as faithfully as ever her God? See Mary in the Scripture – see what the revelations of the Saints, the writings of holy people, tell us. Look into your own hearts and say: "Can you imagine her aught but the gentle Virgin, the gentle Mother of Jesus?" We have often sat and meditated on Mary's love. We have seen her in the Temple. We have seen her at the moment of the Annunciation. We have thought of her, the blissful Mother. The Church daily in her Office cries out - "Virgin of all Virgins, to thy shelter take us: *Gentlest* of the *Gentle*, chaste and *gentle* make us."

O Mary, impress upon thy children thy sweet spirit of Gentleness. We have said that one object of our creation by God is that He may view His own perfections in us, that He, the Infinite, Eternal God, may see mirrored His own beauties, as far as possible to our finite, created nature. His Attributes are indeed lovely as we view them. We cannot but long to be like our God. Then let us go to the one who did mirror so faithfully the beautiful, everlasting God. His beauties dazzle us; they are so resplendent, so bright. But we see them in His fair mirror, Mary. We can copy them in her. We can beg her to teach us to obtain for us some little of that grace with which she was replenished. We beg her to obtain for us some little of that fidelity to grace, which made her so pleasing in God's sight.

We all indeed receive grace, but are we faithful to it? Let us look into our lives.

Let us examine and see. We may receive the Holy sacraments. We may go to our devotions. We may come away with God's sweet grace in our souls. We are tranquil. We are disposed to be gentle with all. But how long does this grace last? How soon are we not dissipated and unrecollected? How soon have we forgotten our good resolutions, and the grace that has made us kind and gentle to all has disappeared, and our own nature has made its appearance above the grace which had made us closer to God, and therefore, more like Him – our own gentle God!

Now put Mary before you. Contemplate that fair model for us all. Look at her where or when you will. Can you imagine her aught but gentle? Would Jesus have put himself into her hands as He did if she had been otherwise? No, we cannot imagine it. The fair, white Lily of God grew up sweetly and gently in this world of ours – the fairest sight, the sweetest perfume, that God has had from all creation. A want of gentleness would have tarnished all this beauty, and God would not have had the pleasure, which He has had, and ever will have, thanks be to His sweet Mercy and condescension, from His Immaculate Creation, Mary.

Ah! She is Immaculate. She is pure. She is merciful and most loving. She is compassionate – she is all this. And in all and over all we see this sweet gentleness shining round her other perfections, adding to their lustre in God's sight, and making her more like to Himself, and therefore, more dear to Him. Why should we not, to the best of our power, strive to imitate her in this, that we may also grow more dear to the Heart of God? It is an age of hurry and bustle, people looking to their own interests, jostling one another, and behaving in anything but the gentle way taught to His disciples by the gentle Jesus. We must withstand this by our own example. We must not be drawn into the world's ways, but we must draw a distinct line between our ways and the ways of the world.

The followers of the gentle Jesus must be gentle and loving to all, but especially loving and gentle to one another. They must be known by this mark. For Our Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35). If you are especially loving and gentle to one another, it does not do to say, "I do love others, but do not know how to show it to them." How do you wish it shown to yourselves? Do you wish to be dealt with brusquely and roughly, or do you value a kind word and gentle action? Has such a word or action ever comforted you? Then go and do likewise. Pray for this grace, for it is a great one, keeping us very close to God, enabling us to keep His graces when given, enabling us to deal with others as He does with us, making us thus to resemble Him more, Whom to resemble is all Perfection.

Let us oftener turn our minds to it than we have done before. We may be very attentive to our own interior progress and imperfections, and somewhat too much neglect to examine our exterior words and actions. We are so given to go to extremes. Some, neglecting their interior progress in virtue, lay exclusive stress on their exterior, which causes affectation. We must unite the two. We must try to be gentle in thought. Gentle words and actions will follow conversation with Jesus, Who remains so gently in the tabernacle. If we sit often at His feet, most certainly we shall grow like to Him, and Mary Our Mother will give us this great grace to know how to hold converse with Jesus, how to keep in His company, how to hold communion with Him. And, looking upon His life, we shall still more study how we may acquire His virtues.

See our Mother at the wedding feast. It is the gentle Virgin asks Him to perform His first miracle, who so gently tells the servants to obey him, for they know not that He is God, as evidently she has more authority there than He. “Whatever He shall say to you, do ye” (John 2:5). How did Mary say this? – with a sweet smile, with a manner as we say “Do ye”? Has it been like Mary’s? – and if not, shall it ever be dictating or domineering again, or shall it be a gentle “Do ye,” like Mary’s?

Ponder now, and, though time does not permit us to look through her life and view each of her perfections, do it in your leisure moments, and learn to love her who reflects so beautifully her God, without blemish, spot or wrinkle. And as you learn to love her, learn also to strive more closely to imitate her, that you may remove from your soul spot after spot, blemish and wrinkle, that God’s fair eyes may not be offended as He looks upon your soul. But that it may be pleasing to Him and lovely to behold, for you have taken pains with it, and you have done this from pure love of Him and a desire to fulfill His Holy Will.

Gentle Mother, we commit to thee now our bodies, our souls, our whole beings, that you may prepare them and make them pleasing in the sight of God.

CHAPTER 9 – The Happiness of God.

God's Happiness is indefinable. It would seem if God delighted more in being Father of the Word, looking at it in our human way, than in being God, although, of course, in God there is neither more nor less, where all is Infinite. God's great happiness, it would seem to us, must consist in possessing His Beloved Son, and the happiness of the Son, to be in His Eternal Generation from the Father. Their mutual love and happiness is the very Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. Thus we see the Spirit of God is Essential Happiness. Let us simply, forgetting ourselves, try to put before our minds the eternal happiness of God. Let us consider how His very Being is Happiness. Let us quietly place ourselves in His Presence, hoping He will give us some little understanding of His interior Life, not from any selfish desire, but because we wish to rejoice with Him, to praise and glorify Him.

Eternal possession of Himself by God the Father in the Person of His only Begotten Word, from Both the Holy Spirit proceeding – mystery of mysteries, transcending all mystery! In prayer alone to be considered! O God, how can we thank Thee for the mind Thou hast given us, by which, thinking of Thee, we may inflame our hearts with that fire which Thou so desirest should be enkindled in them. Let man [and woman] but use the mind and heart well, and by the grace of God love will be produced within them. Though the happiness of God cannot be understood, since it hath not entered into the heart of [humankind] to conceive what their own happiness even in Heaven will be, nevertheless let them taste and see how sweet the Lord is, even on earth (cf Ps 34:8). They will then rejoice in God's happiness, even though they understand it not. If ever a pure creature came near to understanding God's happiness, it was Mary, flooded with happiness in her conception - in life, in death. Consider what follows from the thought of the joy of the Eternal Father in possessing His Word. "This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt 17:5).

Mary was Mother to that Incarnate Word. Mary too could indeed speak of untold happiness. Her children with her can say that their dwelling in her is as of those that rejoice. Mother, thy secret cannot be spoken. But draw to thee those that are weary, who labour and are heavy burdened (cf Matt 11:28). "Come children of the earth," your Mother calls to you. "Come, I will refresh you. Children of the earth, I love you. Believe in my love. Trust to it. Cast your care upon me – I will care for you. Long you have called to me '*Monstra te esse Matrem,*' but do you show yourself children? A child would never doubt a good mother, but my children on earth have doubted me. I would do much for them if they called upon me. But what I would, I cannot do, for they invoke me not as they should. They act not as Jesus did, for they trust me not as Jesus trusted me. Therefore, I may

not use the power my Son has given me. I long to show myself a mother, but my children must call upon me.”

Let one common cry rise from earth to heaven, praying as Jesus wills. The angels who carry the prayer above will return to earth with sweet words of joy: “Mother, we answer thy call – what can we do for thee? What does Jesus will? Jesus, what dost Thou will? Tell us, that nought may be left undone that we can do for Thee.” In the stillness of the soul, Jesus whispers. An unspoken word is implanted in our heart – “Honour the Heart of my Mother.”

Angels chant around us. We feel their presence, though we see them not, but their sweetest hymn is not to be compared to the voice of Jesus. The Eternal Word has spoken. A word is uttered; a work is done. Let us work this work, and plead to God the Father, saying simply, “As Thou willest” (cf Matt 26:42). Not as we will, but as Thou willest, O God. We will pray with the holy angels thus, dear Jesus. And though we see not all thou willest, we feel that thou Thyself hast taught this prayer to Thy servant, the true child and devoted one of Mary, ^[7] and it shall ascend from our hearts daily:

“Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation! The thought alone that it is pleasing to Thee, will urge us to it, for we long to serve Thee, and make atonement for the coldness of the world towards Thee. We are Thine, dear Lord. Mary’s Own are devoted more to Thee than others. May we be what our Mother desires we should be on earth, as well as in Heaven, the delight of Jesus’ Heart.”

CHAPTER 10 – The Patience of God.

Now we shall consider the most adorable Attribute of our Good God, - His patience. How shall we consider it? Where shall we commence? How shall we bring rightly before our minds this lovely, loving, lovable Attribute of our God, His patience? “O God,” each soul can say within itself, “God has indeed been patient with me. God is indeed gentle, mild, patient, long-suffering with me.” Further, behold God’s patience. See how He is neglected. How He is left to the last. See how in all things God, Who should be first, is last with those who should think of Him before all. God is patience itself. How shall we begin to speak of God’s patience? Look upon the daily conduct of those who receive benefits from God. Look upon them, they are living upon the daily gifts of God. They could not live without the help of God; they receive every breath of air

from Him, and yet not one thought of thanksgiving for the daily gifts of their Creator crosses the mind of, perhaps, half of His creatures, and, sadder still, of those who profess to love him, even those who make public profession of being wholly His, of belonging wholly to Him.

He is the last, rather than the first, to be considered in His own Creation. This so often, so very often, happens almost without intention. God seems put on one side, as though His very patience made His creatures take liberties with Him. He is misunderstood. His motives are misinterpreted. His favours are received as rights. He is questioned in the most impertinent manner regarding His doings. He is judged, suspected, reasoned with, argued with, treated one day with a degree of worship, another day neglected, as His people's devotion (or we might say fancy) inclines them. Yet He bears with all.

He is patient with all, patient in slights, patient under affronts and gross insults, patient with a patience God alone can possess since God alone could be so injured. Ages pass, He bearing with them. Creatures created by a Creator of infinite Love, loved by Him with an earnest, burning love nourished with more than the fondest care of a mother, provided for with the love of a most tender Father, these creatures come into existence every hour of time. They pass from unreasoning infancy to the age of reason. They know God. They are taught to speak to Him. They lisp out a few childish words to Him; their little innocent faces look up to Him with a smile of love, but they have scarcely cast their look of love on Him. Their faces are still upturned, when the look changes, the eyes grow cold, a look of indifference follows, then disdain, and God is put on one side. God is forgotten. God's very name is an unpleasant sound, and the child grows up to adulthood openly defying his God. If he has a kind heart, perhaps he is kind to all but God. Until sin has hardened his heart, he lives year after year enjoying God's gifts, but disliking the God who gives them. And then without some extraordinary grace, dies at open enmity with that God Who has followed every step of that sinful life, offering to his sinful soul pardon and peace if it would do penance. Yes, every step has been watched.

Angels have been sent on earth upon missions of love, with messages from the tender Heart of God. God has knocked at the door of that sinner's heart, time after time, and stood paternally listening, waiting as if wearily waiting, as if timidly. God seems to knock knowing that if there is no response His justice will demand a stricter account, a more severe penance. Therefore, it seems almost that we see God hesitating as He stands knocking. That though His mercy prompts His appeal His patience keeps him waiting whilst He is not listened to, yet His

tenderness fears for the poor soul that His justice will punish more severely for that neglect. But his patience keeps him. He must wait a little longer.

Dear patient God! And too often the sinner presumes upon this patience. How little it matters to many souls that God is hurt by their delay in being reconciled to Him. The marvels of the Incarnation, the patient suffering of the three and thirty years, all this is lost on the sinner who has hardened his heart against the urgings of grace. And the tremendous drama of the Passion, with its heights of love and depths of suffering, hardly move him. Where in all the history of God's dealings with the human race He so loved do we see His patience more wonderfully manifest than in that sacred Triduo of the Passion? And Mary's patience seems more than ever the beautiful reflection of that of her Divine Son. What superhuman grace of endurance was needed when she met that Sacred Face, disfigured, and stained with blood, which she had so often seen lit with a heavenly light, the eyes through which Jesus' human soul shone so beautifully, so visibly, so grandly? But how what meets the eyes of Mary? She has seen Jesus' glory. She has seen Him and worshipped Him with the Apostles on Thabor. She has seen Him in moments vouchsafed to no other. She has seen Him when the Godhead seemed piercing through His Human Nature, and making a halo of glory round it, whose various rays seemed to distil the sweetness of the Godhead in her soul. She had seen Him, the God Man, when at times He had not hidden Himself as from other mortals. He had no need of reserve before His Mother. Why should He not rejoice the heart and soul He soon would so terribly pain?

Why should she not participate with Him in her measure, in His joys on earth, who would so bravely follow and participate with Him, in her measure, in His griefs? Therefore, as Jesus drank in, with ineffable sweetness, the bliss, the Beatific Vision, bestowed upon Him, the joy radiated from Him upon Mary. He was her Beatific Vision upon earth – glorious, magnificent, loving, lovely, Love itself. Jesus saw that glorious Vision of Beauty, the beatific Vision. Jesus tested its joy on earth. And, as the moon receiving the light of the sun, Mary drank in from the Presence of Jesus. The light of that Vision she could not see in life, but which she now, dear Mother, at this moment enjoys with those same sweet eyes, which looked upon Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem. Looked upon the Man of Sorrows, the Holy One of God, her Son, her very own, with love she had never had before, even in the moment when He had appeared to her most beautiful, most worshipful, most adorable – when the eyes of the Mother met her Son.

And Jesus, we turn to Thee. Is Thy Heart really tender? (We had almost asked

this.) Can it really be a Heart of Love, and yet meet the gentle, sorrow-stricken face of that Immaculate Mother, that look in which there was no reproach, in which there was nothing but love – love and sorrow - love too deep to be understood, sorrow co-equal with the love? Jesus how couldst Thou have met that Mother thus? Why not have used that Almighty Power and broken through the cords? Why not have withdrawn Thyself, as before, from them, and Thy Mother with Thee, far, far out of the reach of that rude populace, and comforted that poor, sore Heart of hers, and thrilled it through and through with ecstatic joy, as Thou didst know so well to have done?

Why tread that sorrowful way to Calvary for those who cared so little for Thee? Why wound Thy Mother's Heart thus? Why not change her sorrow into joy? We know ourselves, who can suffer in so limited a degree to what the magnificent, sinless nature of Mary could and did suffer. We know ourselves what a sudden relief from a terrible grief, from some anticipated calamity, it is to know it is all gone, that what we so dreaded has passed away, that the weight which pressed us to the ground is removed, that where there was dense, black darkness there is shining a bright clear light, that the world which looked so drear to us, as to Cain, an outcast upon it, has changed, and appears to us beautiful as when God in the beginning said that it was good. When the past seemed burned, the present and the future without hope, then God has sent a message. He has whispered, perhaps Himself has changed the circumstances. He has arranged our present, and we see a beautiful future. We confess in our hearts, He hath done all things well! We have been tossed about in life by rude winds and rough waves, and He has commanded, and there has been a great clam. He has spoken peace, and deep stillness has ensued. We have been left lonely, drifting along the waters of life, when One has come to us, and borne us company, Whose presence shed such sweetness that we have shed tears of joy and spoken from the fullness of our hearts, "I said in my abundance 'I shall never be moved'"(Ps 30:6).

CHAPTER 11 – Immutability

The immutability of God, God's unchangeableness! We live in a world of changes. That here we have no lasting home is constantly brought before us. People change – whole countries change, and we ourselves change too. As we often think to ourselves as we look back upon some time of our lives, when we knew little of sin, when we knew little of the world's ways, and when we thought little and knew little of the life we should hereafter lead, many bitter things have

happened to us, many sad changes. But the only change we do not regret, perhaps, is when we come to consider God's unchangeableness, when we come to meditate on God, to realise that grand Immutable Life, that great God, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things, Who was, Who is and Who ever will be.

Lowly, fitful beings we seem as we bow down in prostrate adoration before that great unchanging Life of God, that life by which we live. Kingdoms come and go. Creatures are born and live and die, but there is our God, unchanged by the transitory things of time. As He was when the angels first looked upon Him, so is He now, so will He be when the day of doom is passed. He is there the Eternal God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost – the Son ever wrapt in the embrace of His Father – the Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and the Son. This is the immutable God upon whom we meditate. Well, we cannot but be drawn to imitate and love. It is the Immutable Life of God upon which holy contemplatives have framed their unchanging life. Day after day have they looked, in their meditations, and found fresh beauty, fresh joy and peace and comfort to their souls, in this thought of God's Immutability – that He has never changed and never will.

That which He has promised He will perform, He has meant all the good things He has told us by His Word, and according to His Word so will He perform. He will not think of us for a while, and forget us. He will not alter his decisions. He will not think better of His decrees. What He has promised that He will do. He created us in His love for heaven, and created us for heaven with Himself. It is our own fault if we do not obtain the places He has ordained for us in heaven. He will not change. That place is ours if we will have it. We have but to will with a strong, firm will. We have to look upon our God, the strong, living God, and think that we are walking toward Him, that every step of this mortal life is bringing us nearer to our unchanging home in heaven.

Why then should we worry? Why then should we fret so over the trifles caused by the changes of this life? Look up! There is One waiting for you Who has never changed in Himself or in His merciful designs in your regard. His care, His providence over you never changes. His compassion, His patience are ever the same, on, on, through long years – years of iniquity and sin.

Behold your Immutable God providing, forgiving, compassionating, bearing with a patience that God alone can have. Even His justice has not changed. He demanded death from human nature in penalty of sin, and behold His Son made

man and dying to satisfy that immutable justice. Long may we linger as we think, one after the other, upon the lovely attributes of our God, and gain a clearer idea of Him in our minds. Let us remember that all these beautiful characteristics of our God are immutable. They will never change. When this world has rolled away, and time is no more, we shall, we trust, lie in the Bosom of our God. [We will] gaze upon Him, and our joy will be that He Whom we rest on will never change.

Let us look forward to that day to encourage us in our weary strife in this world. Times are indeed bad. Never in the history of the world can we see such constant change, such mutability in kingdoms and people. There seems no security; every dynasty seems upset. All rule of law seems to be reversing itself. Those who should obey seem to wish to be obeyed.

What used to be thought dishonourable is not thought so now. Properties are not safe; homes are not secure. Surely heathen times almost seem better in their stable rule and discipline than many so-called Christian countries in the present day. Love of change and excitement fill men's minds. There is but one thing just on earth – that is God's Church, but to that changeableness and fickleness of [humankind] will not allow full scope in her working. They would change her too if they could, but they cannot, for she is immutable like her Author. The unchangeable God dwells in His unchangeable love for the human race, despite its cold ingratitude and changeableness to Him.

The Heart of the God-Man beats on our altars with unchangeable love for the human race, despite its cold ingratitude and changeableness to Him. The Holy Spirit dwells in His Church as its very soul, and ever will without change. Happy those who in these changeable times take hope and comfort in the thought of the Unchangeable God! Well for those who dwell in the bosom of His unchangeable Church. Those alone are safe who sail not with the times, but who live in God's Ark, and are secure in the midst of the common deluge. Emperors may be dethroned. The Sacred City of Rome may be invaded by the sinfulness and fickleness of human beings, but the immutable God is above all. He changes not on account of our changeableness. He still loves the world He created. His patience is not exhausted with this accumulated crime. He created us for heaven with Himself. He will have us there. Therefore, He permits the changes and fickleness of creatures to detach us from the things of time. That we may fix our hearts upon those which are eternal, upon Himself, and that we may rejoice with a great joy that there is One living, a strong, loving God, Who will never change, and Who ever lives His unchanging life of love for us. Let us not change, then, in

our love for Him. He has planted love for Himself in our hearts. He knows that love for Himself alone can make us happy, and that when we change, our love from Himself to creatures we have but unrest and unquietness.

But He has given us one of our own race as a pattern of a life of unchanging love of God. Look upon the meek, modest Maiden. See the calm grace of her life, and imagine if you can how she never changed with other creatures. Was she ever fickle or inconstant so that she ever wavered – that some days in her life she gave to God, some days to this world? No, we cannot imagine it. We see her patiently persevering, pursuing her path of pain, and yet the path of peace, for all who walk in the footsteps of the God of Peace have pain. From the moment that God stamped His image on Mary's soul, from the marvelous moment of her Immaculate Conception, Mary never wavered, never changed, and God never withdrew His loving smile from her. He ever saw His Divine Attributes mirrored in her soul as faithfully as could be in a creature, Mary's perfection simply lies in this – the faithfulness, the unchangeableness, with which she ever mirrored in her pure life the beauty of her Creator. The more we think about her, the better we know our Lord, as the more we look upon a lovely statue the more we praise the sculptor whose work it was.

Therefore, as we look on Mary we turn to God in rejoicing tones, and proclaim that she is indeed blessed, for the most High hath done great things to her (Lk 1:49). We praise the Father for the purity of His beloved Daughter. We praise the Son for that sweet Mother, to whom all ages will ever turn. We praise the Holy Ghost for her spotless virginity, and that through her He worked His greatest work, and gave us Jesus, our Life, our Love, our only Lord and King. Ah! Those know not God who know not Mary! She teaches us so much of God, and she teaches us, too, how God loves us to resemble Himself, and she shows us how we may do so in the simplest, easiest way. She asks of us nothing extraordinary. Her life was not extraordinary. She asks of us simply one constant effort, to fulfill the Will of God in all things. She asks us not to waver, not to be fickle, not to change with the times, not to drift with the stream, but to battle bravely against it, to pursue the uphill way, and if we fail occasionally, through human nature, if we do change for awhile, let us remember that God does not change if we unhappily have been false to Him. Let us remember that He is ever true to us, ever ready to receive us back, for so He has said: "It is not My will that the sinner should die, but that he should be converted and live," and again, "If his sins were as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow" (Isa 1: 18).

These are the words of God, and He changes not. Blessed, then, be the

immutability of our lord, and blessed too be she who shows us in her sweet life how we too might imitate this seemingly Immutable Attribute of God. [\[8\]](#)

We may say it is not in human nature not to change, but God has superadded to our human nature, and we may live a life of grace, a supernatural life, if we only keep close to God. We cannot do it otherwise. Restless, changeable, capricious, indeed we are since the Fall – unstable as water. Vain will be our efforts unless we seek help from on High, whence the unchanging God is showering down upon us grace upon grace to enable us to fulfill His Will, to follow His footsteps, to resemble Himself, and thus fit ourselves to be with Him in that unchanging, unending Home of Happiness, where He is waiting, longing to receive those who, co-operating with His Grace, have striven to live on earth such lives as the Blessed live in Heaven.

CHAPTER 12 - Fecundity

O most fruitful God, ever producing new works, new creations! We are lost in wonder as we look round and see what He has already produced, and still more when we think on that impenetrable vista of works that He could produce, and that are not produced. God has but to conceive, and He can breathe His conceptions into existence. Can we understand that there may be innumerable works, indeed it is most certain there are innumerable works, of God of which we have no conception, of which we can have no idea because we have nothing analogous to enable us to form an idea? We sit lost in wonder as we consider that God has but to conceive an idea and it can be brought forth immediately.

All fruitfulness is but a faint idea of God's creating. All that we see, temporal and spiritual, can give us but a faint idea of this work of God. All good that we know is but an effect of God's fruitfulness. God loves to create and bring forth but His fruitfulness is unlike ours, with one exception – He brought forth His only begotten Son into the world. His Son and Himself are one. He *created* us, but we are no part of Himself. We must carefully guard this distinction, or we shall fall into error. We make use of the expression, "We came from God, and we go to God." It is a pleasant thought, but we must not let it lead us to the idea that we are part of God. It is well in looking upon God's fruitfulness to impress this upon

our minds, for heresy has sprung from this pleading thought, that God brought us forth, and that therefore, we are part of Him. But though it is true God is with us, our nature is distinct. God is in everything, but distinct from all. Wonderful God! What will our Eternity be like when we are wrapt to Thy Bosom, and, our minds, grown capricious, are capable of understanding Thee better? Shall we be able to see Thy wonderful conceptions, or wilt Thou show them to us as we are told Thou showedst to the angels the idea of this world before Thou created it, which is called the “morning knowledge” of the angels. And then when Thou hadst created it, the angels saw this world in existence, this being called the “evening knowledge” of the angels?

Shall we have knowledge thus, and will God go on creating, and will it be part of our happiness to view the new creations He will bring forth? And will they be peopled with beings, either human or angelic, or some other beings to which we can give no name, because we can form now no idea of what they will be like? All this we know not. But this we know, that God is all-powerful, and that He will to create, that He can create. That He loves to give, that He is beneficent, and that the creatures He brings forth He loves to do good to, for He is their God and God is good.

Can we form any idea what it is to be a creator, and the link between the being created and the one who created it? Of the love there must be, when we think how good God is, how different from us? For we know the love of good parents for their offspring gives us but a faint idea of the love of the Creator for the creatures, for parents know well they do not create their children. They are but instruments used by the Creator.

God is indeed prolific, fruitful. When He has created beings, He works in them wonderful works. It would be too long for us to consider the wonderful works of God’s Holy Spirit in souls. Behold the fruits produced by His Spirit! We have dwelt upon them at length elsewhere. Charity, joy, peace, and the rest, these are the beautiful fruits of the Holy Ghost. God loves to pour them upon us. God loves to give of Himself to us, and make us fruitful also. For when we have virtue ourselves, we, unconsciously as well as consciously, give it to others. God loves to make use of us to work His works in souls, and wondrous powers has He given to mankind. Indeed, far more wonderful are the spiritual works of grace, the God-like virtue born in the soul by means of the sacraments and holy exercises, than the fruitfulness we so admire in plants and flowers. We are too earthly to understand this. We are not sufficiently spiritual to view as the angels view, and still more, as God Himself, His working in souls. How He loves, too, a

docile soul, one that is pliant, and that He can bend at will. He often speaks to such. He reveals secrets to them. He may make use of them even to work miracles. He would work greater works even, if there were more such souls, for His love of giving induces Him to sow seeds in souls that they may bring forth fruit for Him, but the Gospel tells us how this seed is lost.

God's fecundity induces Him to work in souls to make them like Himself. He calls us His children; we should then act and live as children of God. We should learn all we can about our God, that our minds may not be engrossed with the things of this earth, for, as we have said, what a wonderful thing this fecundity of God is! Without it we should not be, and because of it we are. Yes, if God were not fruitful, we should not be created. He might have dwelt alone with no creatures, Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and been just and happy. But fecundity is a Divine Attribute, and therefore, God loves to create; He loves to bring forth, and therefore, do we love Him more as we think of this Divine Attribute.

He has all in Him that we can desire; there is no craving of our hearts left unsatisfied. If we only sit and quietly think, we shall find that everything our hearts could wish of desire we find in our God. He is all beautiful, all lovable. There is nothing we could wish Him to have that He has not. He is not only all lovable, but He is all *Love*. This is the great thing for us. He loves us. He made us on purpose to pour His love on us. He loves to bestow His gifts on us. Ah! Why do we not value His gifts more, and make fruit of them, fruit for God, fruit for eternity? God loves such fruits, but we often take God's gifts and use them to produce earthly fruits – fruits pleasing to ourselves, but not pleasing to God – we abuse rather than use His gifts as He would have us. Why do we do this? Why do we think more of what God would have us do? Why are we so blind, so wrapt up in the things of this life, that we cannot see the beauties of the spiritual life? Only consider how God wishes to make use of us to bring Him fruit for all eternity, and we will not.

There was one that would, and did, and again we look at Mary. Again this fair Virgin mirrors her God, and is proclaimed “Blessed among women” (Lk 1:42). Indeed she is wonderful in her likeness to her Creator. Was ever creature fruitful like Mary? Behold the fruit of her womb, “Jesus.” He is the Word Who dwelt eternally in the Bosom of His Father. Wonderful is thy likeness to thy God, O Mary, Virgin of Virgins, and though a virgin, a mother. We see thee with the Fruit of thy womb. Virgin and Child are loved and blessed in all ages, and the Fruit of thy womb has brought forth fruit abundantly for all ages.

The Eternal Father is ever receiving in Heaven the fruit of the Passion of Jesus, His Son, our Lord and Love, and we hope to be part of that fruit through the same Lord Jesus Christ. And shall we not look to thee, Mary, who gave Him to us? Is not Jesus our Brother? Has He not made himself so? And art not thou, therefore, our Mother, and hast thou not a mother's love for us? Thanks be to our Father in Heaven Who has made thee so like to Himself! We rejoice as we call our God, Father, and we rejoice, too, Mary, as we call thee Mother. Yes, thou art fruitful because of the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Thou art fruitful, Mary, because there are so many who love to try and imitate thee, who love to copy thy virtue, who love to think of thee with Jesus within thee, and who love to keep Jesus in them by another sweet presence which thou, dear Mother, has taught them. Yes, children of Mary there are in all ages, who cluster round Mary, and from her example learn to love Jesus better. The Holy Ghost still makes use of Mary to bring forth fruit in souls. She is His chosen instrument. Docile was she, when she lived on earth, to His sweet influence. All His gifts were well employed, none were left idle; fruit was produced from all, and Mary teaches her children how to value grace, and how to bring fruit to God from it. Ah, precious grace of God! Would that we valued it. Sin would lose its power over us. God would reign triumphant. His kingdom would have come upon earth. It is because we neglect grace that we are sterile, barren, and bring not fruit to God.

Begin to value grace, and there will be an entire change in your lives. Hard things will become easy. Indeed in many things you will seem to cease to act yourself. God's grace will work so powerfully in you when you have begun to value every grace, when you tread warily and carefully for fear you should lose grace, when you have well prepared your heart to receive it, and by this we mean emptied it of *self*. For, as we have so often remarked, we may live in the midst of grace and yet not receive it, for as we may have an abundance of water near at hand, if we only bring a small vessel to fetch it, small will be the quantity of water we receive. So when we hear Mass, and go to the sacraments, visit Holy Shrines, the grace we shall receive will be in proportion to the dispositions we bring. If our heart is emptied of self-love, God will fill it with the gifts of the Spirit of Love. He will give It to us, not for ourselves only, but also for others. Then we shall begin to know what those sweet words mean: "I live, now not I but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Jesus will live in you. He will work in you, by you, and you will be fruitful to God in all good works. It is Mary who teaches us best this secret of grace. We want to give glory to God. We want to bring fruit. So did the young Virgin in the

Temple, and so is fulfilled her wish to the present day. Is Mary not fruitful in God's Church? Does not the very thought of her inspire love for God? Are not churches built in her honour? Is not her name sweet to the ear, making us think of Jesus – Jesus and Mary: can we disconnect the two? Are not men, women, and children banded together in confraternities to do good for God, and bring forth fruit to God under her protection? Are not numbers of communities living to imitate her, and to work as she did when on earth? O Mary, most fruitful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, make us imitate thee and to be fruitful too.

CHAPTER 13 – The Humility of God

The humility of God! What a strange expression! Can God be humble? He humbles Himself, taking the form of a slave (Phil 2:7). “He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.” Yes, God can humble Himself. God indeed has humbled Himself. God is humility itself. It is humble of God. It is condescending of Him, to reveal Himself to us at all. So it is likewise humble of God to hide himself as He does. The general opinion of the virtue of humility is, that it is a virtue by which a person thinks worse of himself than he deserves, but this is not humility to think worse of ourselves than we deserve: besides is it possible? But humility is a virtue which gives us a true idea of our own unworthiness, of our fallen state, and this knowledge, this humility, is increased by, is drawn from, the consideration of God's worthiness, God's high state. It makes us see truly our own nothingness and sinfulness, our weakness and misery. It makes us see God's grace in ourselves apart from ourselves. Humility makes us value grace and thank God for it. The fruits of humility are hiddenness, the desire to hide what we do, likewise a penitential spirit, a mortified nature, a longing to be humbled, a holy indignation, a love of hidden acts.

All this springs from the beautiful virtue of humility. God's saints seemed – only seemed – to go to excess in this matter. They hated themselves. They had a holy indignation against themselves. They were violent, but it was from a truthful knowledge of what they were, and what they should be. They understood God's nature; they knew God better than we do. They saw His beauty His perfections in a dim, dark manner. They saw enough to know how little they did see, and they were ravished with the sight. The view of God's nature turned them to consider themselves, and they burned to expiate their sinfulness, to punish that body which had so fallen away from that union and likeness it should have with the beautiful, immortal, everlasting God. And what the saints see of God they seek

to hide, like God. The soul knows that to be good. It looks upon its God, and sees its God so hidden – (if we may use the expression) so humble – seeks to imitate its Creator.

Oh, look upon your God, you who seek to show yourselves before the eyes of a corrupt world, and see how unlike you are to Him. God hides himself. God works, and lets others seem to do His works, so much so that the instruments whom He makes use of to work, often think they themselves are the authors of the work, and forget they are the instruments in God's hands. God is indeed a hidden God: when our Lord came on earth, how little He showed himself or manifested His perfections.

Father Faber tells us in his beautiful book, “the Blessed Sacrament or the Works and Ways of God” – how wonderfully God hides Himself, and how we have to search to find Him. This is so manifest; we need scarcely dwell upon it in writing. But we should meditate long and seriously lest we be led away by the world to forget the God Who made it, Who rules it, Who upholds it, and all so quietly, so gently, so humbly, so unobtrusively, in so different a manner from His creatures, when they are placed in power.

And Mary, the humble Virgin! How does the Creator view Himself in the pure soul of His Immaculate one? How does the fair Fountain mirror the Most High in this respect? Does not she herself tell us that “the Most High has regarded the humility of His handmaiden” (Lk 1:48-49). Do not all writers tell us that it was Mary's humility that so endeared her to her God, that it induced Him to pour grace upon grace upon her, and make her blessed amongst all women? Look but briefly through Mary's life, and you will see how she imitated her God in her love of hiddenness. The holy Virgin hid from St. Joseph the miraculous grace that had been vouchsafed her. She hid it from the world. To no one did she tell her marvellous prerogative of being, though a mother, yet a virgin. She was thought a mother yet a virgin. She was thought to be a wife. She passed before the world as a married woman, the wife of a poor carpenter, while she was ever the purest Virgin, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mother of the Word Incarnate.

She knew herself to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate, the Son of God, but nothing in her words or actions (but the single time the Holy Spirit inspired her Canticle of Praise – Lk 1:46-55), nothing betrayed any sense of superiority to other women. She was ever the lowliest, the least; she placed herself last. She had ever before her the greatest sense of her own nothingness, of her utter

dependence upon God. She could not indeed see herself, as other creatures, sinful, but she saw her own nothingness as none ever have. She had no good of her own. She was simply a creature of God, upon whom He had lavished his gifts.

Our Lady seems to have almost lost the sense of her own existence. This is hardly an appropriate term, but we scarcely know how to express ourselves better. Mary lived so in God, took her life so from Him, that we can only imagine her acting by herself in an independent manner. Our Lady ever leaned her whole weight on God so entirely, that we fail in contemplating her apart from Him in any particular, and thus was she in her own interior life. She saw herself complete nothingness without her God. She had never made for herself, or gradually grown into some character, as we have.

[Mary] never thought of herself, never planned. She never shaped her life upon some pattern of her own designing, as most of us do. No, the humble truthful knowledge of her own nothingness kept her from this, and made her indeed the Mary that claims our homage, unlike any other. And it was her humility made her thus. Yes, we may think it was her great prerogative, her special privilege that made her so unlike any other of God's creatures in this world. But it was her humility, for without this humility God would not have given her these graces. How could He?

Then, again, the humility that loves to be hidden! Is there anything we know more than the hiddenness of Mary? Ah! We have written it before. We cannot imagine anything of that fair Violet of God but a desire to hide herself, her beauty, and her graces from the gaze of [humankind]. Sweet Mother, we love thee ever, always. Each perfection we look at makes us love thee more, but thy sweet humility is the beginning and the crown of all that is beautiful, in thee – God's fair flower, who art indeed passing fair, lovely to behold!

We love to look upon the lowly Virgin, sweet humble Mother. But what is our delight to God's? Ah! If we could enter into the Heart of God, and learn His love for Mary! Some there are whom Jesus has drawn close to His Sacred Heart, who drink of His Precious Blood most deeply, who are inebriated with the sweetness that dear Heart pours upon all who draw close to It, who learn Its Love, who rest with delight in love of Mary, as that Sacred Heart in Its peaceful rest, close to Its Mother's Heart listened to the beatings of that pure immaculate Heart as to the most sweet earthly music. Such souls could spend their life in ecstasy, in contemplation of that great work of God, the Immaculate One, Mary.

It is the souls most united to Jesus that love Mary most, It is Jesus within the soul that causes its pleasure in seeing Our Mother's pictures, her images, her medals, in speaking often of her. Jesus rests in the soul He has invited to Himself. The soul feels God's presence everywhere, but Our Lady's is not everywhere, therefore, we love to multiply her images and gaze upon them. This thought has struck me in answer to some foolish, ignorant remarks about having more pictures of Our Lady than Our Lord, and so on. Those who speak thus little know that to some Jesus seems ever with them, is indeed within them by a marvellous operation of grace. They never forget Him. He is ever vividly present to them.

They may perhaps *show* greater devotion to a statue of our Lady than even to the sacred Heart, but they have the Sacred Heart within them, and they run to Our Lady's statue as the Infant Jesus often ran, and buried His head in His Mother's lap. They say, "Mother, sweet Mother," as the dear Jesus repeated that loved name. They love the name of Mary. They gather flowers for her. They present them as Jesus loved to do. And yet, love as they will, their love but shows them how they love like Him. They know God is gazing upon Mary. These souls gaze too. They cannot speak; they cannot write. They can keep near to their God, look upon His wondrous creature – look and long for that time to come, when they may behold clearly what they see now so dimly, in so dark a manner.

We are looking now, sweet Mother, upon thy humility. We cannot watch thy earthly life without seeing thy love of hiddenness. We see our own dear Mother passing for an ordinary woman, submitting to a rite only instituted for ordinary, sinful women. We see her carefully hiding from all her graces. We are even told that she had a gift of miracles, though she never used it. That her knowledge of science, her wisdom exceeded that of all the learned of this earth, and yet she showed it not. Her knowledge of spiritual things – what must it have been? Could any theologian, however much enlightened by the Holy Ghost, have been as illuminated as Mary was, whom the Most High had overshadowed, who was indeed taught by God? Yes, beautiful things of God could Mary have told us, but she spoke not of them. Or what she did speak to the Apostles, comes to us not as from her, but from them. There must have been much regarding the Incarnation and Infancy of our dear Lord that the Apostles learnt from the lips of Mary. And it is almost inevitable to suppose, also that she warned the Evangelists not to mention herself more than was absolutely necessary. We need not enter into each detail of Mary's life. We have thought of it before. We have dwelt upon it in our meditations, in our Rosaries. She is ever the same, sweet and hidden.

What lesson, then, should her children learn from this? What but the same love

of humility and of hiddenness, and, if called upon to do some work for God, to let others seem to do it. Let them not bury their talent, whatever it may be – let them not hide it. Let them work well with it, but at the same time let them still keep, as much as possible, hidden from the eyes of [humankind]. Let them, when possible, allow others to have the glory of *their* works. Let them work, as God worked, without seeming to work. Let them imitate their Mother in this. Let them, above all, sink deeper and deeper in the knowledge of their own nothingness, and then they are safe, even if God, for His own wise purposes, should bring them prominently forward in His Church. The world can but see their works. Their interior life it knows not, and it is in their interior life that their beauty lies. “All the beauty of the King’s daughter is within.” Our beauty before God is in a truthful knowledge of our own nothingness. Let us strive for this, and God will be with us in thought, in word, and in work.

CHAPTER 14 - The Providence of God

God’s Providence! How many of God’s creatures, daily supported by His good Providence, His continual thought and foresight of their wants, live and die, without the least imagination of how much they owe to Him? There are some who do not believe in Divine Providence at all. There are some who implicitly believe, but nevertheless their thoughts and conduct are at variance with what they believe. If I might use the expression, they will not trust God an inch farther than they can see Him. Nevertheless they are not unbelievers. The words of our Lord are respected. They know, perhaps, but never think, how our Lord spoke those words of sweet consolation: - “Be ye not solicitous, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things” (Mt 6:31-32).

The great God in Whom we live, move, and are, is near at hand, ever ready to give us what is good for us, if we will trust Him, if we will show ourselves true children by trusting Him as a Father. Do we believe that God wishes us well? And if we do believe, why treat Him as though we thought that unless we are very careful He will deceive us? Should we treat our own parents in this manner? Our Lord appeals to us Himself upon this ground. “For which of you if he asks his father [for] bread will he give him a stone, or for a fish will he give him a serpent, or if he ask [for] an egg will he reach him a scorpion? If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him” (Mat 7:9-11)?

A poor woman was once relieved from great distress by using these simple words with great earnestness:- “God *can* provide, God *has* provided, God *will* provide.” She repeated them over and over, again and again, and God heard her in a remarkable manner. It is astonishing how good people – I mean people aiming at the perfect life – forget the Providence of God. We, of course, cannot expect worldly Christians to look at things in a supernatural light. They are leading a merely natural life. Supernatural things are hidden from them. But it is very sad to see how even religious people seem to forget this Divine Attribute. How they sigh and lament over the occurrences that happen, as they consider, accidentally. How they are fidgety and uneasy when, after they have tried their very best, certain matters will not turn out as they had hoped they would. When they do not do so, when some accident happens to prevent it, their disappointment knows no bounds. There is a great want of faith in all this, and of hope as well.

Divine Providence overrules all things. How well we know it! How sinners themselves work out the Divine decrees! How the effects of sin produce certain results, which are decreed by God, without the sin, which occasioned them, as in the crucifixion of Our Lord! All these mysteries we cannot fathom. We have the happy duty of daily, nay hourly, putting ourselves under the shelter of the good Providence of God, and there resting secure, happy, peaceful, conscious that no harm can come to us without His permission, and knowing also that the seeming harm, the permitted evil, is but an occasion of greater good.

The very hairs of our heads are numbered. Nothing can happen to us that God does not see and permit. All things work together for good to them who love God, therefore, though the storm of human evils, unkindness of friends, bodily sufferings, poverty, trials of every kind, fall pitilessly upon us, never let us lose our trust in the good God Whose Providence will certainly bring good out of all these evils. It is, indeed, in such times of trial that we must learn to trust Him most confidently. If all things are going on smoothly with you, you may well trust, and say, “How good God is! How He has protected me, and provided for me from my youth!”

But nevertheless He may have protected others, who are walking in the thorny way, from more ills than you whose life has seemed so bright, so free from ills that have happened to others. If we could see all that God does for us, if we could see the loving interference of His Providence on our behalf, how we should love and praise His Holy Name! But we are heedless like children, or rather we have

not that trust little children have as they lie in their mothers' arms. We are like them in that we really are carried and provided for, and tended with more than motherly love by a good God, while we are unconscious of all the care lavished upon us. If we saw all our mothers did for us when we were infants, how much more we should love them! We are in the same position now with Almighty God. We are really carried in His arms, protected by Him, caressed, fed with His own substance. We draw our life from Him as a child draws life from its mother's breast. We know this; we believe it firmly. We are Catholics, but yet we do not lie happy and peaceful in the thought that we are environed by a love so great that human language has not words to express it, no human mind thought to conceive it. But we have a faint resemblance in the love and care of a mother for her new-born child, of the love and care of God for us. And yet we are unrestful, desponding, anxious, doubtful, thought he good God has wedded our nature to Himself. "The Bridegroom shall rejoice over His bride, and thy God shall rejoice over you" (Isa 62:5).

We fail miserably to trust Him, though the great God feeds His creatures as a mother, with His own Substance. "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me and I in him" (Jn 6:55-56). "Can a mother forget her infant so as not to have pity on the child of her womb? And if she shall forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa 49:15).

Our good God, we will trust Thee wholly. We will worship Thee by our confidence in Thy infinite goodness and loving Providence over us. Yes, times may be hard – they are hard for many of us. But greater then will be the opportunity for trusting in Thee. We will not cry out. We will not fear, but in the greater distress we will say: "Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me" (Ps 23:4).

If the veil that hides the spiritual world from us were but lifted, and we saw all that God was hourly, momentarily, doing for us, for each in particular, as though each particular soul were the only one in existence – if we only thought over what we know for certain God has done for us - we should surely think differently of Him and trust Him with the care of ourselves, our children, all that we have, knowing that His care over us is infinitely greater than that of our earthly parents, however, good they may be, have been, or could ever be.

Take the dear saint's advice. Cast yourselves upon Him. He will not withdraw so as to let you fall. Let us, then, resolve to work in this spirit, and with this thought, that we are to work, because it is the Will of God, not merely for our own

interests, or because success depends upon our efforts, but because, if we do not do our part, God will not do His. And it is His part to crown His creatures' efforts with success, when He sees fit – and He does not always see fit, even when they have done their best. We must, then, always observe the happy mean, between relying too much upon ourselves, on the one hand, and, on the other, presumptuously expecting God's assistance without fulfilling our own part.

The Jesuit principle is to trust entirely to God as though we could do nothing and nothing depends upon us, but at the same time to work as though all success of what we do depended upon ourselves alone. We must work as though it did, but we must not think it does.

Now let us look upon our dear Mother, and see how she reflects and honours the Providence of God. We pause, lost in admiration and delighted wondering love, as we see the Providence of God manifesting itself for mankind's sake in Mary's Immaculate Conception, and in all her splendid privileges. Yes, His loving Providence to mankind is shown in Mary in such numberless and such magnificent ways, that we know not where to begin to narrate them. Holy Angels, continually absorbed in admiration of the marvellous inventions of Divine Providence and Love in its dealings with the children of earth, assist us in our endeavours to make them more known to the children of mankind! Mary, as we have said, seems to be the creature whom God especially makes use of in His works of Mercy.

The whole world shows forth and gives honour to the Divine Attributes in a particular way. Mercy and Providence go together; the one works for the other. As we have said before, God's justice seems entirely veiled and concealed in Mary. His mercy, which is above all His works, and His Providence, are wonderfully manifested in Mary's self, and Mary is the great instrument made use of by God, to show His mercy and Providence to mankind. Need we take the trouble to prove this? God wishes to show mercy, and He provided us with Mary, Mother of Mercy. He wishes to show mercy, and He creates a being who, as it were, attracts that Divine Mercy. He makes her the Mother of those to whom He wishes to show mercy. Mary, one of a fallen race, is herself unfallen. She may, therefore, pray with confidence in the power that Immaculate Purity has, with the all-pure God. Mary, as one of their race, must pray for her fellow creatures with unspeakable power. Her charity would make her do so. We, selfish as we are, feel we must pray for others, but she, the Mother of us all, how does she pray? What does she not do for us? She who grieved to see her friends mortified by their want of sufficient wine for their guests at the wedding feast, is

touched far more by all miseries and sufferings endured on this earth. She prays for the sufferers, and inspires her servants to work with her in providing, as a mother for her family.

See how a good mother's constant thought is for her little ones. What they require? What they are doing? If they are sick, what can be procured for them? If any are in trouble or pain of any kind, how she can comfort them? Read the account given in the Scripture of the valiant woman, and then think of your Mother Mary. What woman, what mother, is like her? Is Mary active in heaven? Surely, surely, she is watching her children. She is guarding them from ill. She is indeed God's Providence to mankind. She corresponds with His eternal designs in her regard. She is represented to us with hands from which heavenly grace is constantly following, and thus again we see her, the Fair Fountain, receiving from above, and pouring on us below gifts, untold mercies, which the Providence of God has ordained should come to us, and come by the channel which He has chosen for bestowing His graces – our Mother Mary. If any who read this are tempted, or have been tempted to doubt God's Providence (and certainly His ways are inscrutable to us), I would ask them to consider quietly, would it be according to God's way of working to do so much for us, to give us His Only Son to die for us, to live for us in the Blessed Sacrament, to make a pure sweet creature, who, being pure and sinless, who, being the Mother His Son, has special power to plead with Him, that He may show the mercy He desires to show, to give us patrons who have a special power to intercede for us – to have done, I say, these wonderful things for us, and yet leave us to chance in our daily life? For this appears to be the practical belief of many Christians.

Oh no! It could never be. God is everywhere. God is providing with minutest care for everyone, for everything, on earth. God is everywhere. God is working everywhere. God is providing with minutest care for everyone, for everything on earth. And what we cannot understand may in fact be more adorable than what we do. It is not the less adorable because we do not understand it. Our poor little finite minds cannot understand it. Our poor little finite minds cannot understand the Infinite. We are no more capable of it than a cup is of holding the waters of the ocean. And in the same way the ocean is far more beautiful in itself than the little cupful of water we hold in our hand. No, we must imitate the apostle, who, in searching God's ways appears almost to break down, and wisely, as it were, finding himself out of his depth bursts forth into the beautiful words which Mother Church put into our minds on Trinity Sunday: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways" (Rom 11:33).

God's Providence is a constant, unvarying, loving protection, and I have said elsewhere that the little acts of His Providence seem to touch our hearts more than the greater ones. Those who are spiritually enlightened to see God everywhere are ever making acts of love and gratitude for the numberless proofs they have of His constant care over them. Though even those who are most in the habit of recognizing God's presence everywhere, even these happy souls see not one-half of what He really does. They see more than they ever thank Him for, and they beg from Him new hearts that they may love Him as He deserves to be loved, and as they know their hearts (such as they are at present) never can love him. But they do not see all the good God is doing for them, and still more, they do not see all the evils from which His loving Providence has preserved them.

This then, is what all should endeavour to do who wish to be holy and to please God – to see Him everywhere. Not by mere imagination, but as He is, the one great Fact, the One Reality. It has been said that “the constant thought of God's Presence is, to the virtues, what the sun is to the flowers.” But people want to know how they can keep in God's Presence. What is the best way of being recollected? They sometimes try certain plans, which are rather a hindrance than a help to this. Let them pray humbly. Let them keep close to Mary. Let them feed spiritually upon the Blessed Sacrament, and gradually the mists, which arise from self-love and the world, the darkness, which the Devil causes by his temptations, all these will vanish, and the soul will really live in God.

Live by Him, live for Him – “God and I” will insensibility become our constant thought. Not a selfish one, since all persons being likenesses of God, being the creatures of God, are loved as oneself is loved, respected, worked for. “Your neighbour shall be to you as the eye of God.” This is no mere imagination, which has no basis of fact. Why imagine, when truth is so beautiful? Therefore, now, begin to realize the constant Providence of God, and you have taken a great step in the spiritual life, a heavenly life on earth.

Let your consolation be in heaven! Yes! It can be so even on earth, for the heavens are bowed down to earth in the coming to earth of the Son of Mary. How will you begin to practise this constant recognition of God's loving Providence over you in all the occurrences of life, in all the little circumstances that daily happen to you? You may have had some trouble, and a friend sends you a little book of comfort to the sorrowful, or it may be a prayer for strength for those in trouble, and you remark how strange that it should come at this time. But rather you should say, “How good God is to think of me and send me this to comfort me.” Or again, you may be intending to go to a certain church to hear Mass, and

a friend happens to visit you, and mentions that the priest is absent, and there will be no Mass. You say, “How fortunate I have seen you, I should have lost Mass tomorrow if you had not come in.” But do you ever think to say, “How providential was your visit. Surely your good angel brought you?” That would be the most remarkable thing to say. Yes! God’s hand is over all things. He sees, knows, provides for the most minute circumstances. He is everywhere, and He is everywhere loving, merciful, beautiful, fatherly, adorable, and we, who are plunged in His immensity (to use the old familiar expression) as the fish in the sea, do not realize this truth, or surely we would trust and love him more.

But we will, henceforth, when trying circumstances arise, strive to repress our vexation; we will adore the loving Will of God. We will show our faith and trust in Him by prompt union of our will with His. And we shall in time welcome these adverse circumstances as opportunities of showing to God that our wills are united to His, that we have in fact no desires of our own, but simply desire that His Will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. This was Mary’s perfection: “Be it done to me according to Thy word” (Lk 1: 38).

This, she said on Calvary with as perfect submission, with as ready acquiescence in the Divine Will, as she did at that ineffably peaceful, joyous moment, the happiness of which is known to God and Mary alone – the moment of the annunciation. In that glorious moment when the Creator drew His fair, spotless creature to Himself, and that lovely one drew her God within her, when a union took place in time that will continue for eternity, when Mary felt within herself all the joys of all the saints, of all the angels. Her will was united to the Will of the God of all joy and happiness, but not more perfectly, not more closely, then, than at the time of when she stood on Calvary, grief, anguish, uttermost sorrow piercing her heart, her whole being, body and soul aching with sorrow as unknown to us as the joy that at the moment of the annunciation inundated her whole being. Her soul, with its whole faculties, was then as firmly as ever riveted to the Will of God. Yes indeed, God tried Mary, and she was not found wanting. She saw God. She adored His Holy Will on Calvary with as absolute a perfection as at that supreme moment of her existence which made the spotless Virgin the Immaculate Mother.

This then we will resolve to do – to recognise the Providence of God in all things, by acknowledging in all difficulties that nothing could happen without God’s permission, and that therefore, what happens is the Will of God, and that God’s Providence has permitted it.

Again we will honour this Divine Attribute by ourselves being, as it were, a part of it. We will be, as it were a providence to others. We read in the life of Mere Marie de la Providence how specially she loved this Attribute of God. How she honoured it by being as it were a providence to the holy souls. She said; “Justice required that they should make satisfaction to Him for their offences, but His good Providence inspired others to pray and make satisfaction for them. I will be that providence. I will pray and beg the prayers of others that the debt of these holy souls may be paid.” And fully did this holy woman carry out the resolution with which God had inspired her, so may we each do in our own little way. We may be God’s Providence to all around. We may go in the name of Divine Providence and bring God’s mercy to bear upon the most hardened sinners. And God has special gifts of Divine Love for those who thus give Him honour and glory.

CHAPTER 15 – Magnificence

All that concerns God is grand and magnificent. The words “little,” “mean,” parsimonious’ – do not they appear to us as the very opposite of God, the direct contradiction to Him? When God acts, He must act grandly. It is contrary to His nature to act with littleness, to be niggardly. He is grand. His gifts are most glorious, and where it would seem sufficient to do little, His goodness and His greatness overflows in a way that dazzles and astounds our minds. His magnificence is so great, and we are so little. We are simply overwhelmed with His favours, and yet we sometimes seem to cavil at God’s ways of working with us as though He did not treat us as well as we deserve.

Oh! Most ignorant and foolish! Oh! Blindness of mind and heart! What is it that God has not done for you? He may have withheld from you some temporal prosperity, power, or honour. But it is for our good, that He may the more gloriously reward you in heaven. God indeed has a great way of working, and when we consider this we cannot but see that as He is so magnificent in rewarding us, in honouring us, in loving us, calling us His children, so, to be true to Himself, He must also be magnificent in His punishments, and that it is due to His character that the penance His justice extracts should be terrible and eternal as His rewards are also eternal. Even in this God shows that mercy which is above all His works, and the wonderful way in which He has been enabled to exercise it, for we do deserve hell, and we could never deserve heaven. But yes, blessed be His sweet compassion, we shall possess heaven eternally – possess that home where God shows His magnificence so regally, so supremely. We shall

possess that home of unending happiness, so far above our deserts, through no merits of our own, but through the sweet merits of Jesus.

Magnificently did God act in the creation. He would prepare a place for mankind to dwell for a time, and gloriously He fitted it for poor creatures of flesh and blood, as though we had been grand princes of His court. How every want was provided for, all pleasure that the heart of humankind could conceive granted to [each], all that the [human] spirit could desire vouchsafed to [each one]! We can have no idea in our present sinful state of the joy that a sinless creature would find in creation. Every pleasure then could be enjoyed without fear of sin, and the creature would be doing God's will in enjoying all that God had made. There could be no such fear as now unhappily there is. An innocent creature would have God's joy to a certain extent – within itself share God's joy in creation. God's presence is joy itself, and God's creation, as it was in the beginning, must have been a very heaven on earth. Imagine this beautiful world, beautiful now, but still more beautiful when first created, for sin has set its mark even on inanimate creation though not so deeply imprinted as on mankind. Ah! God lavished with profuse hand, as His magnificence dictated to Him, gift upon gift.

What a wonderful act was the creation of the soul of mankind to God's own likeness! How magnificent that gift of free will which ennobled him so gloriously! This gift, though mankind used it so fatally, is a great grand gift, and one that gives great glory to God, Who would rather have the free will of the few than the forced will of the many. We can appeal to our own hearts, and find an echo of this sentiment. Behold God exclaiming to mankind, "I have said, you are gods" (Ps 82:6). Yes, God made mankind very great. We do not realize our own greatness. We know not our own power. We see the grand work of the apostles – we see them men [and women] renewed, regenerated, endowed with splendid gifts – but there is no reason why we, too, should not be great in our measure.

We see each saint, one out of thousands of souls. Why should we not be one out of thousands? That the numbers of these great saints are few may be inferred by the words of the evil one when commanded to speak, that if there were ten such as the Cure d' Ars in the world his reign would be at an end. This is very similar to the speech of St. Philip Neri, "give me," he says, "ten men entirely detached from the world, and with them I will convert the world."

Forgive me for repeating these often-quoted sayings. May they inspire some soul to make one of those ten who would glorify God so greatly, who would reflect His beauty in themselves, and have such power over the evil one. We need not be

extravagant in order to be a saint. It is very often a subject of doubt with young beginners, what they should do and what they should not. This matter is easily settled where we can have recourse to obedience, and in small matters, where we cannot always have this, a little thought as to what would please God, what is His Will, with a “Hail Mary,” would bring us the answer. And God rewards every little act that we do for His love with a magnificence truly His own.

This is most certain: do a little for God and He will do a great deal for you. One little act done for God in this life is rewarded in a most magnificent manner by God, for a chain of graces follows reaching into eternity. Let but a cup of cold water be given in God’s Name, and a special glory will be given us in heaven for this simple act (cf. Matt 10:42).

Oh, do not our hearts bound as we think of our magnificent God? Are we not happy in belonging to Him, in being His creatures, in being adopted as His children in living in this world of His? Surely our lives should be bright when we have so great, so good a God, Whose gifts are so grand, and Whose gifts are without repentance – Who never gives to us as we give to Him. We give, and take back again. He is ever adding to what He gives in a manner beyond our calculation. Behold how He has acted with Mary, His fairest work, and we shall learn how God’s magnificence can act when we give it free scope by our co-operation. Not a grace that God gave to Our Lady was left unused, and so higher and higher God uplifted that Fair One, who belonged to a sinful world and yet herself was utterly unspotted and unstained by its defilements, by her immaculate purity making reparation to God for the rest of sinful humankind. And so by her Assumption into heaven she is placed by God in the midst of angels, who lovingly acknowledge her as their Queen. Even unstained and unfallen, this human nature is lower than the angels. And yet she is there, a creature of flesh and blood, a creature that came out of a fallen world. She is placed higher than Cherubim and Seraphim. She is proclaimed Queen of Heaven and Earth. She is called blessed by God because she fulfilled perfectly His Will, and thus is she magnificently rewarded.

And is our Mother Mary herself magnificent? Magnificent in herself, in her prerogatives, in her dealings with God and mankind – nothing little about her, all great and grand and generous – there is no self-seeking about her, who is ever seeking to do good to all, and in such a royal way. Ah, if we did but trust her more, we should see wonders. But we do not see all the wonders she does now, we are so wrapped upon self. Let us trust her more, and Mary will act with a magnificence worthy of the Mother of God. God has given her the power to do

this, and she has the will, sweet Mother that she is.

We speak of her chiefly with regard to her magnificence in her dealings with us because we better understand her thus. But if we look at her within herself, how glorious she is! If she mirrors God in all His other attributes, has He not (to speak in human language that cannot properly apply to Him) exhausted Himself in the magnificence of His gifts to her, the splendour with which He has rewarded her patient suffering and love of Him on earth? O Mary, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of humankind to conceive the magnificence with which you are surrounded in heaven.

We hinder her from giving to us as richly, as profusely, as she would wish, by our little faith, our feeble hope, our still feebler love. She is our Mother. She loves to give to us; her charity reflects that of God Himself. God has given His treasures into her keeping. Let us appeal to her confidently. Littleness, nearness, parsimony, are not in the nature of our Mother, and no one can be like her, or like God, who gives way to such a defect – a defect that renders humankind so despicable. There never was a saint yet who was mean, and there never will be. If we would be saints, and if we find this imperfection within us, we must valorously combat it, or we shall miserably fail.

But this thought belongs rather to generosity. Constantly as we write, we find ourselves wandering from one attribute to another, and are led by speaking of one virtue to introduce another. Thus, too, they are mingled in our lives, for in striving to gain one, we obtain others, unconsciously almost to ourselves.

Let us look again to heaven. Behold God's magnificent court, the splendour of the angel choirs, the glory to the saints who have attained to His eternal peace. Will we be in their number? The magnificence of His mercy holds out to us the Precious Blood of His Son. Will we receive it on our souls? Will we be washed and bathed and so attain even to our Mother's purity? It is God's desire and hers. Please God, we will make use of that Blood which He has shed so prodigally, so magnificently – shedding every drop when one drop would have saved numberless fallen worlds. The magnificence of the Godhead displayed by the Eternal Word in His Sacred Humanity would need a separate chapter. You must follow this thought for yourself, and resolve to the utmost of your power that the magnificence of His Love and Pity shall not be lost upon you. That you will fight the good fight, that you will live for God alone, that you will strive to make Him known in an age that is striving to forget Him, that it may better forget that He Who so magnificently rewards the little good we do punishes also, as becomes

Him – the Infinite God – when we do wrong.

O Mother, thou art our hope. To thee we turn, fearing and trembling lest we too should be drawn away like so many by the false magnificence and pleasure of the world, and thus lose that God Whom, the more we think of, the more we long to possess. That God Who satisfies our very heart's desire, Who is magnificent beyond conception in Himself and in His work, and Who has made thee, His Mother, to be our Mother also by a stretch of sweetest love. Thus He has given thee to help our poor humanity. Gratefully we take the gift vouchsafed to us. We take thee to be our own, with the Beloved Disciple. Mary, be near us now, and at the hour of our death.

CHAPTER 16 – Generosity

Our Good God, Who is infinitely rich, is also infinitely prodigal in the way in which He dispenses His riches. God is generous to a degree – indeed so much that it is said to those who wish to imitate Him that there is nothing more Godlike than to give. His nature urges Him to bestow His gifts in a Godlike manner indeed. He gives us all that we need in soul and body. Whatever poverty and distress there is in the world has been brought about by sin. God seems to have searched His gifts, His treasures, to find what he can bestow upon us, He appeals to us: “What more can I do for you that I have not done” (cf. Micah 6:3)? Last and greatest of all, He gave Himself in an unheard of manner, unconceived, undreamt of by humankind, but not too much for His bounty. Lavishly had He bestowed gift upon gift, grace upon grace and finally He gives us His Only Son, His Holy Spirit. What more indeed can God do for us?

Ah! We have not thought of these things as we should. For if we had been looking up to God, studying His ways, and seeing in what we could imitate Him, we should have seen that though His omnipotence and so many of His attributes are far beyond us, yet there is one in which we could, and should imitate Him, and that is His generosity.

It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive: do we always think this? If we would be like God, we must put this into practice. Continual acts, even if we are not naturally generous, will bring us the virtue of generosity. Let us at once strive to acquire it if we have it not, since we cannot be in union with God, as He desires, without it. Anything miserly or self-seeking is entirely opposite and foreign to God. We rightly estimate God's character in this. It seems impossible

to think that it ever entered into one's mind to imagine that God is miserly, or regretted parting with His riches, or that He did not give generously. We may not, we certainly do not, understand the intense joy of God in giving to us. We see the prodigal manner in which He gives, but it is so common we do not notice it.

Again, when we give, we think there is an end. We are not required to give any more, and we are really hurt if we are asked again and again. How different from God! The more He gives, the more He loves to give, and He gives too so beautifully, so very differently from us. He seems to make as though He were honoured by giving, and as though we honoured Him by receiving. Ah! Would we imitate Him thus when we give to the poor and those around us – how we should enhance the value of what we give, if this was the way in which we gave. This brings to my mind a circumstance that occurred in one of the largest towns in England. A pauper, having received a night's lodging, left an inscription the next day on the cell that he had slept in. It was as follows: -

And Jesus wept, and well He might,
To see us poor folks in such a plight –
A piece of bread thrust in our hand,
They call that charity in this Christian land.

Ah! Poor fellow, it would have been happy for him to have lived in those Christian times when the poor were really venerated, when princes of the Church and princes of the State vied with one another in waiting upon the poor, serving them with their own hands, and being sometimes rewarded by the fulfillment of the words of Scripture that those who have used hospitality without grudging have at times entertained angels unawares. In the lives of the saints we see this often happen, God thus showing His pleasure in the pure intention with which they performed these acts of charity, for they were done in loving imitation of Himself. This gives brightness and beauty to our actions, and makes them valuable in God's sight, for all our perfection consists in imitation of our God. Without this intention our virtue is no more than that of the philosophers of old.

The object of this present work is, first, that we may know our God better. Second, that we may see Mary's greatness better, as we see how gloriously her perfections mirrored the various attributes of her God, and third, to see how we too may imitate her in our degree, and likewise mirror them in our souls. To see a pure creature of our own nature thus reflecting God should encourage, and should show us how we too may imitate her, and through her example imitate the Eternal God Himself. But we are progressing in generosity in these days?

Certainly there are many bright examples. Many who give up themselves and all they have to God's service. But those who do not do this, who remain in the world, are they as generous as they might be? Ah! The show and the dress of the present day, the desire to be what they are not, makes people very scanty in giving, and certainly there is no comparison with the generosity of ancient times. And yet our standard of perfection is nothing less than the example of the Word Incarnate, Who walking visibly among us has shown us more clearly than we could see directly in the God head (for we are overwhelmed by the greatness and grandeur of God, dazzled as when we look on the sun) the perfect example of all virtues that we may copy them in Himself.

In ancient times many holy ones divided property into three parts – one for the use of the Church, one for the poor, the remainder for their own use. I think we should have to look long in the present day to find such, and yet if they only knew the good that would accrue to their own souls from giving lavishly and largely in imitation of their generous God, from Whom they received all the gifts they have! The Holy Ghost tells us that almsdeeds cover a multitude of sins. Is this not a consoling thought? Then if we consider the good done by the many good works we give to and the share we shall have in such, surely this should urge us to give.

We may not feel we have the grace to be apostles, to be missionaries, to preach, to instruct, to nurse the sick – we may not be able to do all these things – but we can enable others to do them. And God has given us our riches for this purpose, that by them we may reap benefit to our souls. Earthly possessions may be a talent God has given us, as He has given others spiritual riches as their talent. If you give not your temporal riches, if others give not their spiritual riches, both talents are not used as God intended them – they are laid up in a napkin. If one who has the gift of preaching or instructing, or who may be drawn by God to attend the poor or nurse the sick, does not use these talents as God desires, they will lose grace both for themselves and others, and will fail to give to God the glory that is His due.

Ah! Give you treasures generously, lavishly. Give like God, and much will be given to you again, richly will you be rewarded. There are little children in heathen lands, infant souls who may never see God if you do not give your money to help the Catholic Missions that are to lead them to Holy Baptism and the knowledge of the faith. There may be some dying at the present moment whom you might have helped in this way by your alms, who might have had beside them a priest who would have given them the sacraments which would

have poured the Precious Blood of Jesus upon their souls, cleansing them from a lifetime of sin. But you did not give as you might have done. You are keeping your money for your own pleasures and amusements, and what will it profit you hereafter? Nothing! And you do not have from the pleasure of giving to God, of seeing the good works to which you gave fructifying on earth, and of knowing that they were bearing still more fruit for heaven. Ah! You, who have never tasted the sweetness of giving, and of giving as God gives, try it at once and you will resort to it again and again.

You will feel that Jesus is with you as you give, and that you are giving to Him, your God, who has given all to you. Happy are those who, in imitation of God, giving himself to us, give themselves, together with their riches, to Him, wholly, utterly without reserve. And you, who have made this act, seek not yourselves again. Remain thus offered up to God. The strain upon nature may at times be painful, but persevere – you know not how pleasing your sacrifice is to God. Generously you have given; generously God will give back to you. Trifle not with this great grace. Make not rapine in your holocaust. Having given much, give still more! God requires that this perseverance in your first fervour should never decrease, but continually grow in generosity to Him.

Amuse not yourselves with trifles. They are not for you. What have they to do with the living sacrifice offered to God? No, you must be perfect – having given yourself to God, remember, when self-love again makes its appearance, if you yield to it, you are taking back what you once gave. The faithful Virgin will help you to persevere. She who gave herself so generously to God, so wholly, so entirely, will give you help if you seek it from her.

What do we say? We say she gave herself. We say she was generous with God. We know that every thought and word was for Him. Never was there one so utterly generous to God as Mary, or so utterly generous to those around her. She had not temporal riches to give, but what she had she gave. She hastened to take her Divine Treasure to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, that she might participate in her joy. She is ever anxious now to give to all who call upon her. God has given her the means to do so, for He loves to see His creature imitating Himself, therefore, He has given His riches into her hands that she may dispense them generously. He knew how she longed to give to Him, and He enabled her to give in a manner in which no other has ever given, or could ever give.

How does Mary then, mirror the Eternal Father? He gave His Only-begotten for us. Mary gives her only Son, Jesus, God and man. She offers Him to His Father.

She offers Him for us all. She consents to be deprived of Him, of His sensible presence. She consents to see Him die a cruel death. Ah! Wonderful sight – we see our God giving to humankind gift upon gift, and finally Himself. We see Jesus, the Incarnate Word, stretched upon His cross, raised above this earth, having given to it for thirty-three years His best and perfect gifts, His every act, His every word, His every thought – treasures unknown that He has vouchsafed to this sinful world. We finally see Him giving the last drop of His Precious Blood. He has kept nothing back. He has given us even His Mother, though He would have loved to have taken her to heaven with Him, and we see that fair one beneath the cross giving more than herself, giving with a wonderful generosity wholly sublime, giving her Jesus, Who was likewise her God.

Oh, heroic Mother! We hesitate at trifles. We linger over what we shall give to God, and what we shall take back, and yet you have given us a royal example of how we should give to God. Why should you part with Jesus? Why should you give Him up to that shameful death? Why should our own heart be broken? Why should you have to remain on earth when He was gone? It was that you might resemble your God, and give to Him as no creature has ever given, and thus give Him more glory, more delight, than all for all eternity. Generous Maid and Mother may we, imitating thee, set no bound to the generosity with which we give to God. If we give ourselves wholly and entirely, we give all we have, all our temporal and spiritual gifts, what ever they may be.

Let us search into ourselves, and see what are we keeping back from God. What are we giving to the world, to self, perhaps to God's enemy? Let us not deceive ourselves on this point. We are not yet wholly given to God, as we should be, according to our state in life, that is, according to His Will. If we are married, let us live in that state to fulfill the Will of God, not for our own pleasure. If we have children, let us give them generously to God to do with as He pleases; let us look upon them as God's property. Why should we not consecrate ourselves, our families, our property to God? How much holier and happier would our loves be! And giving ourselves to Our Lord, we give ourselves to His Mother too. God gave His best to Mary – He gives His treasures into her keeping – on the cross He gave us to her Maternal Heart. Why should we not imitate Him, and consecrate our whole selves, with all that we are and have, to her keeping, to be disposed of as she wills?

For what she wills is ever, and only, the Will of God.

CHAPTER 17 – Tranquillity

We, with our poor dark minds are striving to look on the bright and all-Holy God. We are striving to know Him better, Whom we cannot fully know, but must love.

As we think and meditate, as we quietly ponder, such vistas of beauty open out upon us that we are dazzled – our minds are bewildered. Look now upon our God, and look upon this world with its various changes, its eventful histories, its constant rebellion against its Creator, its ingratitude. Is He disturbed by this conduct? Does it tarnish His happiness? No, our God is all-tranquil: His creatures rebel against Him, break His laws, and openly defy Him, but He remains tranquil as the quiet lake.

Let us look upon our God that we may learn from Him. He has said to us, “Be you holy as I your God am holy” (Lev 11:44-45). He desires that we should imitate Him. If we were speaking of a human being, we should say, “How can we do so if we do not think upon his character?” But we are speaking of the Eternal, and we, therefore, strive to know Him by viewing His various attributes, as far as possible, one by one. Ah! How amazing is that tranquillity! He creates a host of beautiful beings by one silent act of His Divine Will. He sees a great part of that beautiful creation rebelling against Him. He punishes and casts them from Him forever, but He is tranquil. There is no shadow of disturbance in His Eternal Being. He creates a world in which He places humankind. His new creation also rebels against Him, but He is not ruffled. His tranquillity remains the same. This is so unlike what we ever see on earth, that our unquiet spirits thankfully rest upon the thought of our ever tranquil God. Would that we were like our God. That we would tame our minds that so fret and fume, that we would pass our lives, making them beautiful in God’s sight by *tranquillity*.

This attribute of God is not inimitable: we might well say we could not imitate our God in His power, His wisdom, in some of His wondrous attributes, but we can strive to imitate Him in His tranquillity. We live in an untranquil age. Nations and peoples seem to be rising one against the other and doing their best to disturb the tranquility of even those who are striving their utmost to obtain this gift. But let us not be disheartened. The more we are tried, the more opportunity there is for practising this beautiful virtue, and so imitating God. The more terrible the afflictions that may come upon us, the brighter, the more clearly, may shine our virtue. We may be tried to the utmost point of endurance, more need, then, to look up our all-Holy, Tranquil God.

There are some few lives we meet that do seem to reflect this beautiful attribute of God. Some quiet souls that are thus fashioned after the pattern of their good Creator. It is not that they have not been tried. It is not difficult to distinguish between the untried virtues of a naturally quiet soul, and the virtue that proceeds from a soul that is in perfect union with God – a grand soul, that has fought on and on to regain that position in God's sight that was lost through the sin of Adam. Such a soul looking on God, had longed to be like Him, had grieved and mourned over its original sin, had entered into God's design in its regard, had trembling accepted the union offered with Himself by God, had looked and feared, and yet longed and resolved to attain it with a firm, unwavering resolution. And thus it battled with itself, still achieving, still pursuing, onward, onward, until the time that its inward storm ceased, disturbances and troubles grew lighter, a tranquil peace possessed it, and then when some great blow from God fell upon that soul, it was prepared and did not fail Him.

Look into still saintly Rome, enter some desecrated monastery where soldiers are quartered in the best parts and the worst rooms are left to their owners. See those happy homes, where souls have learnt to know and love God, thus ruthlessly invaded. Look upon the faces of those holy monks. Are they spending their days repining, are they fretful, unhappy? No, a sweet peace is painted on their faces – they are tranquil, even joyous. Their conduct is divine. They are like the all-Holy God, for Whom they entered those walls that they might imitate Him better, and Who has permitted them to be tried that they might the more resemble Himself.

Thank God, we have souls in the present day to whom we may look for imitation, but still more may we look to the Fair One of God, His Immaculate Creation, Mary. We know it is God's delight to look upon His creatures, and see His Own Perfections mirrored in them. It is to give God this pleasure that saints try so hard to erase the least spots from their souls that can tarnish them in His sight. They want God to have pleasure from them. They daily regret they cannot give Him more pleasure, and it is daily looking upon His Divinity, and daily looking upon themselves, and realizing how far they fall short of what they wish to be, that makes them so humble, and speak with that utter self-abasement we so often find in them. But God has one in whom He views His own attributes mirrored in perfection, and that is the soul of Mary. O holy, spotless one! Praise and thanks a thousand times be to our good God for His grand work in thee.

Let us follow Mary's life, and see how it reflects this grand attribute – God's tranquility – this most difficult virtue for human nature, which is so unstable, so

unsettled, so inclined to change and excitement. Mary was tried both by excess of joy and excess of sorrow, yet ever remained *tranquil*. She was never elated or disturbed. The bright messenger could come from heaven and salute her as full of grace, could declare her future greatness as Mother of the Messiah, Mother of the Son of God, and through it all Mary remains *tranquil*. There is no elation, no excitement. There is a certain trouble arising from her humility, a perplexity because of her dedicated virginity, but there is no disturbance. Quietly, peacefully she inquires, “How can this be done” (Lk 1:34)? And as tranquilly answers, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word” (Lk 1:38). Yes, as tranquilly as the Divine Fiat went forth, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3), so tranquilly came the Virgin’s Fiat, “Be it done to me according to thy word” (Lk 1: 38). And calmly as the light shone forth at the Word of God, so calmly at the word of Mary, God became Incarnate. O Blessed One of God, teach us how to follow in thy footsteps. We can never have joy like to thee, who was brought so close to God, but in our measure in our joys and sorrows, we may learn from thee.

Let us look at Mary in sorrow. We can better imitate her thus than as we view her in her grand, and to us unknown, joy. The angel had departed. The months flew on, and Mary held Jesus in her arms. She looked on the Desire of all nations. She gazed with a love that we can but dimly guess at. She is feeding Him at her breast, Who brought herself into existence. Vain is our attempt to guess at the Mother’s joy. The years roll on – she stands at the foot of the cross. Her beautiful Babe is there. They have pierced His hands and feet – those tender hands that have pressed her breast, and in the veins of which she had seen the Precious Blood. They have opened those veins now, and the Blood is trickling forth. They have crowned that head that she had laid to rest so tenderly. They have pressed thorns into that brow. She sees the lovely Infant as she first saw Him in the stable at Bethlehem. He comes not before her mind as she stands on Calvary’s heights. She looks up, poor Mother! What would she not give if she might take that wan, bruised figure from the cross, and hold Him in her arms as of yore – as she held her Babe? What would she not give to soothe His wounds, to take tenderly away the thorns, to remove those large sharp nails, and, washing away the blood and dirt, lay him at rest, and by her love strive to make Him forget this inhuman treatment of His own creatures, His own children? But it may not be – It is not the Will of the Most High, and Mary remains tranquil. She *stands* calm, though her heart is breaking. She gives way to no loud cries, no despairing words. She speaks not unless it might be to breathe a word of consolation to the few faithful ones around the cross.

Ah me! How am I like to thee, Mary, my Mother? I am disturbed at trifles. I consider myself ill-used by a sharp word, I who am born in sin, and have since committed innumerable actual sins, for which I know full well I can never make reparation to God. Yet when an opportunity comes of bearing a little for His love, of making some satisfaction to His Divine Justice, how do I act? In the great sorrows of life that come to all whom God loves, that are sent with such love, that we may imitate Jesus and Mary, do I leave God, and go to creatures for sympathy, and thus render my burden unbearable because there is none to help us in sorrow, but God alone? Let me look back on my past life, and prepare for the future. Have I in past sorrows been fretful, impatient, irritable? Have I lost my composure, my peace of mind – have I in the least degree imitated Mary?

Let us look at another phase in Mary's life. The weeks have rolled on, and Jesus Glorified stands on Mount Olivet. Mary is there too. The same tranquil, peaceful One, and yet Jesus, her treasure, is about to vanish from her sight. She has borne all her sorrows with Him but she is not now to enter with Him into His Glory – she is not to witness that glorious welcome when Jesus enters heaven with the souls of the just, and the elder children of God make joyful melody as they greet their brethren, and they follow their King to the right hand of His Father. It is a grand, glorious sight, but Mary was not to be partaker in it. Her peace, her patience were to be still more tried. She was to remain on earth when Jesus in His Sacred Humanity had left it. No more was she to see that beautiful face. No more would His voice sound in her ears. He was to go, and she was not to go with Him. She stands there to watch His departure for heaven, calm, peaceful and tranquil as ever. She fails Him not at that moment when, if there had been any imperfection in her nature, it would surely have been seen. He bids her farewell and ascends. She receives together with the disciples and the holy women His parting benediction – His last act on earth – and He is gone. A cloud hid Him from her sight.

Ah Mary! Where is now thy Love? What is earth without the presence of Jesus, that living, loving presence, which had indeed made it heaven on earth for her? She had watched Him at all times. She had seen Him in all actions – sleeping, walking, teaching, praying. She had watched Him, and loved Him daily more and more. But she will not see Him now. She will not hear the tones of His voice either in His public teaching, or in speaking to herself, as was His wont, sweet words that He spoke to none other. She is not to hear them unless He works a miracle on her behalf, and she does not look for that, but still she is content. Go and learn from her. Learn to imitate your God from viewing His work in His favoured one, Mary. Be peaceful. Be tranquil, and the all-peaceful God will

dwell with you on earth, and hereafter you will dwell with Him in the peaceful home of heaven.

CHAPTER 18 – The Truth of God

Hear the great Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, in his beautiful “Acclamations in Praise of Mary”: “O most sacred Virgin Mary, O Queen of angels, how beautiful, accomplished, and perfect has heaven made thee! Thou art so beautiful and gracious that with thy beauty thou ravishes hearts. When thou art seen everything appears deformed. All beauty is eclipsed. Every face is lost sight of, as the stars disappear at the rising of the sun.

“When thy tenderly devoted servant, St. John Damascene, contemplated thee, and when he saw that thou wast so beautiful, it seemed to him that thou hadst taken a flower, and that which was best in every creation. And therefore, he called thee the loveliness of nature, the grace and comeliness of every creature. St. Augustine, the bright light of Doctors, contemplated thee, and thou didst appear to him so fair and beautiful, that he called the countenance of God, and it did not seem to him adulation. Thy devout son, Albert the Great, contemplated thee, and to him it seemed that all the graces and gifts which were in the most celebrated women of the old dispensation were all in a much bigger degree in thee.

The golden mouth of Sara, which smiling rejoices heaven and earth, the sweet and tender look of the faithful Lia, with which thou dost soften the Heart of God, hardened against sinners, the splendour of countenance of the beautiful Rachel, for with thy beauty thou dost eclipse the sun, the peace and demeanour of the discreet Abigail, by which thou dost appease an angry God, the vivacity and strength of the valiant Judith, for by thy power and by thy grace thou dost subdue the most ferocious beasts.

“In fine, O Sovereign Princess, from the immense ocean of thy beauty, the beauty and grace of all creatures flowed forth as rivers. The sea learnt to curl its waves and to wave its crystal waters from thy golden hair, which gracefully floated over thy shoulder and ivory neck. The crystal fountains and their transparent depths learnt their tranquil and steady flow from the serenity of thy beautiful brow and placid countenance. The lovely rainbow in full beauty learnt with studious care its graceful bend from thy eyebrows, thus better to send forth its rays of light. The morning star itself, and the sweet star of night are sparks

from thy beautiful eyes. The white lilies and ruby roses stole their colour from thy lovely cheeks. Envious purple and coral sigh for the colour of thy lips. The most delicious milk and sweetest honey are distillations from the sweet honeycomb of thy mouth. The scented jasmine and fragrant Damasc rose stole their perfume from thy breath, the loftiest cedar, the most erect and fairest cypress, were happy when they beheld their image in thy erect and lofty neck. The palm tree, emulous and jealous, likened itself to thy noble stature. In fine, O Lady, every created beauty is shadow and trace of thy beauty. And thus I wonder not, O Sovereign Princess, that heaven and earth place themselves under thy feet, for such as they are, and thou art are so great, that to be under thy feet enriches them, and they esteem themselves happy and blessed in kissing them.

Thus did the moon rejoice when the Evangelist St. John saw her under thy feet, and the sun increased in splendour when it clothed thee with its rays of light. The Evangelist, blinded by the brilliancy of thy light, was lost in wonder and ravished out of himself by so stupendous a miracle of beauty, in which the beauty of the heaven and the earth are concentrated, and he said, “There appeared a great sign in heaven” (Rev 12:1). A great miracle appeared in the heavens, a miracle which filled the angels with astonishment and caused the earth to tremble.

“That miracle was a woman clothed from head to foot in light and splendour. The resplendent Sun Himself chose her for His Mother and placed Himself in her womb. The fair moon covers her feet as sandals edged with silver. A multitude of stars cover her brow, and, emulating one the other, bind her locks together, and form upon her head a diadem of precious gems – ‘and on her head a crown of twelve stars’ (Rev 12:1).

“Thus, O most sacred Virgin, the saints considered thee, in the midst of such splendour, more beautiful than the sun, and more fair than the moon, which are the ornament and concentration of all beauty. And, considering the acclamations of joy which attend thee in heaven, can never cease their astonishment at thy beauty, and can only exclaim and burst forth in acclamations of wonder and astonishment. St. Peter Damain exclaims in his admiration: ‘O holy and most holy of all the saints, richest treasure of all sanctity.’ St. Bernard; ‘O admirable Virgin! O Woman, honour of all women, the best, the greatest the world ever possessed.’ St. Epiphanius; ‘O heaven, greater and vaster than the heavens themselves, O Virgin, truly full of grace.’ And the Catholic Church in the name of all exclaims: ‘O most clement, most pious, and most sweet Virgin Mary.’

“And I also, O heavenly Princess, with thy permission, although I am the least of

they servants, I will also make my acclamations of wonder and astonishment. O gracious and beautiful heaven, more vast than the heavens themselves, for they cannot contain God, Who is immense, but He concealed Himself in thy womb. O richest of all treasures in which was deposited the Treasure of our redemption. O Mother of sinners, under whose mantle we are defended! O Consolation of the world in whom all who are afflicted, infirm, and disconsolate find consolation! O beautiful eyes which steal hearts! O coral lips, which imprison souls! O generous hands, filled with titles, and which always distribute graces! O pure creature, who appearest divine, and whom I should have taken for divine, had not faith taught me that thou art not so – although thou hast a splendour, and I know not what, of Divine Sovereignty. O great Lady, Empress of Heaven, enjoy for a thousand eternities the greatness of thy state, the immensity of thy greatness, and the happiness of thy glory. We only beseech thee, O compassionate Mother, not to forget us who glory in being thy servants and children. And since in thee are deposited all graces, and the best and most privileged of all created things, grant, O Lady, that we, thy devout children, may be favoured more beyond comparison than all other [people] on earth.

“The whole world should know that the dear children of Mary are the best of heaven and earth. They are the spoilt children who enjoy all the choicest possessions of their Mother. They are the beloved Benjamins, who, being caressed in the bosom of the Queen of Heaven, are doubly favoured and doubly caressed by the Majesty of God. This I hope, O most beautiful Rachel, and this I am confident that thou wilt do, O Sovereign Princess. For the name of what thou art, do it. For all heaven, prostrate at thy feet, beseeches thee, and with importunity asks it of thee. Say only ‘yes’, pronounce only a loving consent, ‘Be it done,’ Be it done’ – Fiat, fiat!’ (Lk 1:38)

“O [people] what are you thinking? How can you love earthly, deceitful, and lying creatures, which betray you, and cause you to lose your soul, your bodies, Paradise and God? And why do you not love the most loving, the most amiable, the most faithful Mary, who, after having enriched you with consolations and graces in this life, will obtain for you, from her Divine Beloved Son, the eternal glory of Paradise. O Mary, Mary, more beautiful than all creatures, lovely after Jesus above all loves, most dear than all created things, gracious above every grace, pity this miserable heart of mine – miserable because it does not love thee, and it ought to love thee – an grant that after God I may love no other but thee, most gracious, most amiable Mary, Mother of Jesus, and my Mother.”^[9]

God is Truth Itself! Do we not thirst after Truth – Truth that cannot deceive us,

that cannot betray our trust in it? God is Truth. He cannot deceive nor be deceived. That is our comfort. Yes, our God is true. Our God is the Truth itself. We cannot think of any good, any perfection, any beauty that there is not in God. All that is beautiful, all that is good, all that is, in other words, *true*, is in God. We cannot exaggerate when we speak of God. We cannot, as we exultingly praise Him, utter greater praise than is His due. All perfections is in Him. All the good we speak of Him, or that thoughts too high for words think of Him, is true – true indeed that it is not exaggerated, absolutely true as far as it goes, but falling far short of the great reality, for we could not understand the true things of God angels could reveal to us. We could not understand what our Lady could tell us. Our conceptions, then, fall short of the Truth of God. God Himself alone knows Himself. His Eternal Word is the only true expression of Himself.

How we forget our Good Angel! Day and night he is at our side, watching us, loving us, praying for us, warding off evil, bringing gifts. Beautiful spirit of God, what can I do for Thee? How can I show my love? We must remember that our Good Angel loves us to think of him, loves us to speak to him, to invoke his aid, to trust his care. He is always longing to help us, but we must repeat again what we have so often said, he cannot help us as he would, unless we ask him, and ask him confidently.

We read in ancient history that two courtiers, having displeased their king, asked a physician for poison for the purpose of destroying him, so great was their fear of the punishment he might inflict upon them. But the physician, having a better knowledge of the king's generous character, gave them instead a draught that would do no harm. And the king, coming to hear of the circumstances, was pleased with the physician's trust in his mercy. We must honour God by trusting Him implicitly as regards ourselves. We must likewise trust Him regarding others. We must honour Him by inducing others to trust. We must trust Him regarding others, by hoping against hope for those for whom seemingly there is no hope. We must pray perseveringly for all. We must hope for all. We must try to inspire others with hope. Those who are bent on drinking the poison of despair must be hindered and revived by the restoring draught we administer to them, by inspiring them with our own trust in the loving providence and mercy of God. Out of evil ever comes good. If the devil raises terrible temptations, if times are growing worse and worse, if even the good seem sometimes inclined to despair on account of what seems so inexplicable being permitted to happen on this earth, if even in the Church of God things occur that try the faith of the faithful, here is a grand opportunity to practise hope, to practise it more perfectly, than we could in brighter times.

And though some may seem inclined to doubt the providence of God, or may indeed fall away from the Church, saying, “We had hoped she was the redemption of Israel,” God forbid we ever should. We will ever cling to our Mother, the Sure Anchor of Hope, the Sure Providence of God, the Mother of Mercy. And we shall be saved by our dear Mother from the almost entire shipwreck of faith that may come for a time to harass the inhabitants of earth, and in which so many souls may be lost. Mary! Fill us with hope, thou who art the Mother of Holy Hope, and replenish the hearts of thy children with holy trust in God, that they fail not in the day of His wrath.

We look up to thee. We love thee, sweet Mirror of the perfections of God. We see Him in thee. We love him in thee. We see Him best in thee, for thou art our own Mary, a creature of this earth, one born in a fallen world yet unspotted, one who ever lived unstained – Mary undefiled, Mary who belongs wholly to us, Mary whom we may well be proud and say to God: “Behold thy handmaid!” We indeed have sinned, but our Mother never. For Mary’s dear sake, who brought Justice, Truth, and Mercy into the world, spare us. She is one of us. She belongs to us. She gave us love and life. She is earthly, and yet purer than the heavens. She is a mother and yet a virgin. She is the lowly one of earth yet Queen of Angels, Mother of God. Blessed in time; blessed in eternity. Blessed above all on earth. Blessed above saints and angels in heaven, blessed forever and ever. Blessed in thy children. Blessed immeasurably above all, in thy Divine Child, Jesus. Blessed as the Fair White Lily of the bright and peaceful Trinity for endless ages and ages. Amen. Amen.

[1] The Censor suggests it read: “It is impossible that they should.”

[2] Notes by the Censor – “The faith by which the author here speaks is not supernatural faith, as is evident from the habit of doubt, which the author associates with it.”

[3] Notes by the Censor – “The author evidently means ‘the Immaculate Conception’.”

[4] Father Faber, *The Blessed Sacrament*, (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1855) 245-246.

[5] By the words “use of suffering,” I necessarily mean, not alone the patient bearing, but the employment of it, the prayer said during it, &c. There is a world of suffering all around us, but how much of it is sanctified? Oh, would that it were borne in a good and very good spirit. Would that it were borne for God, all borne for souls.

[6] I do not mention that the value of our actions to do good to ourselves and to others comes from their union with those of Our Lord. This is understood well by Catholics, but any readers not of the Church might misunderstand that all the good worked in this world is done through the merits of Our Lord; but His rule is to give us in proportion to what we give to Him. “Do a little for God, and He will do a great deal for you.”

[7] The saintly Father Faber.

[8] For “Immutable” read “inimitable”.

[9] “*The Glories of Mary*” 666-670.