

The Message Of The Rosary

Part 3: The Glorious Mysteries

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THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES.

The Glorious Mysteries give us a preview, so to say, and a foretaste of the glory that awaits us in the life to come, which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and the human heart has not experienced. For this reason, they most powerfully stimulate Christian fervour and perseverance. Now, and not only in heaven, must we rise in a spiritual sense with Christ from the death of sin and walk in newness of life; now our thoughts and desires must dwell in heaven and delight in the company of angels and saints; now we must prepare our body for its glorified life by giving unstintingly of our physical strength to the service of God. In the light of these mysteries, we recognize the important role which bodily pain and hardship plays in the Christian way of the cross and we learn to mortify the body with all its evil inclinations now so that it may live eternally. Not only in heaven but now, must Mary be our Queen in whose service we glory and the imitation of whose virtues we make the ambition of our lives. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, these mysteries convey invincible courage, patience, peace and joy. The Holy Spirit has made us His temples and dwells in us now, so that full of the Holy Spirit we shall rise in glory on the day of resurrection.

THE RESURRECTION.

“If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are,” according to Saint Paul “of all men most miserable. But now Christ has risen from the dead” (1 Corinth 15:19-20). The Resurrection is a postulate of God’s justice and love. Jesus glorified the Father in His life and Passion, now the Father glorifies Him; Jesus humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death upon a cross, and therefore the Father has exalted Him and has given Him the name which is above all names, so that in the name of Jesus, the knees of all must bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. The same principle holds, with due proportion, also for us. If we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified with Him, and if we die with Christ, we shall rise with Him. The mystery of the Resurrection ushers in our Saviour’s glorified life; it is a life of inspiration, power, strength and victory.

Jesus has died on the cross and the soldier has pierced His side with a lance, so that there can be no doubt as to His real death. To forestall any attempt on the part of the disciples to steal the body of Jesus, the tomb is sealed and a guard of soldiers is placed in front of it. These soldiers keep watch in front of the tomb the whole Sabbath and the following night. No disciples have come into sight; all has been quiet and peaceful. But as the morning of the first day of the week begins to dawn, the scene suddenly changes. An earthquake shakes the city, an angel, resplendent with heavenly light, rolls back the stone from the tomb; it is an empty tomb — Jesus is there no longer. The guards are hurled to the ground terror-stricken; as soon as they recover, they hasten to the city as fast as they

can to bring the news to the authorities at Jerusalem. The report comes to those men like lightning and thunder from a clear sky; consternation is written in their faces. There can be no denial of the fact reported by the guards, and so they have recourse to an expedient to extricate themselves from this embarrassing situation and to prevent a popular change of attitude in favour of Jesus. They bribe the guards, charging them to spread the news that whilst they were asleep, the disciples had come and stolen the body. Poor, deluded Pharisees, who childishly think they can stop the triumphant march of the risen Christ by so silly a lie.

Let us now look at the figure of our risen Saviour. He is all light and splendour; He moves about with speed of light, neither walls nor door nor locks can stop Him. The wounds and disfigurement of His body have given way to immortal beauty and vigour; but in His hands and feet and in His sacred side He keeps the marks of the nails and the lance. They will forever be the sparkling gems blazing forth the truth that, as we were saved through the cross, so through the cross we must attain to light and glory.

Jesus who had loved His own who were in the world even unto death, does not forget them in His glory; He hastens to bring to them the joyful news of His Resurrection. Though not mentioned by the sacred writers, it must be taken for granted that Jesus appeared first of all to His holy Mother; we could not imagine anything else. (Saint Ambrose knew of it and preached it.) What a meeting this must have been of Mother and Son on that Easter morning. Rejoice, O Mother of Christ, be glad, O Queen of heaven, for your Son is risen from the dead. As in His mortal life, so in His glory He remains her Son and she His Mother. Then followed the many apparitions of Jesus to His apostles and friends, confirming their faith and speaking to them of the Kingdom of God.

The Resurrection of Christ, and the glorified life following it, is Christ's decisive victory. He had foretold it and referred to it as proof of His divine Sonship and authority, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19) By rising from the dead Christ has proved that He is God, His teaching true, His promises certain of fulfilment. And so His cause shall be victorious in the Church as a whole as well as in the individual soul, though in either case the way to victory leads over Calvary.

Christ's victory is above all victory over sin, and in this victory, we must share in this life already, if we wish the glory of the Resurrection to be ours in the life to come. Baptism is the beginning of this victory, "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death? For we are buried together with Him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). In order to guarantee ultimate victory, in spite of possible falls due to human weakness, Christ has left to His Church as His most precious Easter gift the Sacrament of Penance, which He instituted on the evening of Easter Sunday, "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20:23).

The ideal of the Christian is the new life in Christ, free from sin. For that reason also holy Mother Church insists upon confession of all mortal sins at least once a year, and upon the reception of Holy Communion during the Easter season; thus the life of grace is restored if it should have been lost, and if it has not been lost it is strengthened and more intimately conformed to the life of Christ through the power of the bread of life. This new life, according to the intensity of its fervour, shows forth even whilst on earth the immortal vigour of Christ's glorified life. It is a life of spiritual beauty, resplendent with the light of virtue. There is promptness and determination in obeying the

call of duty and the inspirations of grace, courage and confidence in the profession of the faith, a holy pride in following Christ our victorious Leader, a joyful readiness to go with Him even unto death. Hardships and privations, fear of men, threats of persecution cannot alter its course. Deep and living faith in the Resurrection is incompatible with timidity and half-heartedness in our allegiance to Christ the King, and will never compromise at the expense of truth and loyalty. “Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer... Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more, death can no more have dominion over Him... So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus Our Lord” (Romans 6:6-11).

Our blessed Mother requests that we meditate on this mystery. She knows the conditions of the times and the growing danger to souls, the growing intensity of the Christian warfare as we approach the consummation of all things. Therefore, she wants us to be fortified with the invincible spirit of the Resurrection. The mystery of iniquity is at work, it can be overcome only by the mystery of a new, a holy life with Christ, the Victor over sin and death abiding in us, and we in Him. In His Resurrection, Jesus speaks to us as He spoke to the apostles, “Have confidence, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

THE ASCENSION.

As Son of God Jesus possessed the beatific vision from the very first moment His soul was created, and, in consequences the glorified state of the body with heaven as His dwelling place were due to Him. However, the saving mission which He had taken upon Himself called for suffering which was incompatible with the glorified state; so Jesus hid His glory and took the form of a servant, to labour and to suffer until His mission was accomplished. When He arose from the dead He assumed the glorified state of His body, but for our instruction and encouragement, He remained on earth for another forty days. When these days had come to an end, He gloriously ascended into heaven.

Saint Luke paints a lovely picture of Our Lord on His way to Mount Olivet on Ascension Day. The same road which had taken Him to this place only a few weeks before, there to begin His passion with His bloody agony, now sees Him return to the scene of battle as glorious conqueror. As on that evening so He is now surrounded by His apostles, but their number is swelled by many other friends and followers of Jesus. Jesus gives them His last instructions and answers their questions until they arrive at the place chosen by Him. The great moment of His departure from them has come. He speaks to them His final word of parting; it is the apostolic commission, “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20). With a last blessing for the ungrateful world for which He had died, with a Father’s blessing for all His faithful friends, with a last loving and grateful look to His holy Mother He begins to raise Himself into space, higher and higher, until a cloud hides Him from the sight of human eyes. And whilst His friends are still looking towards heaven two angels appeared, assuring them that this Jesus, whom they had seen ascending into heaven, would come again such as they had seen Him on this day.

With holy joy in their hearts the apostles and friends of Jesus returned to Jerusalem; even though they would miss the presence of their beloved Master, they rejoiced over His glory. Their thoughts henceforth dwelt in heaven; there they found the inspiration to a holy life, strength and consolation

and joy in the midst of their labours and even in the tortures of a bloody death. And how often during the course of centuries, especially in periods of persecution and distress, did the followers of Christ look to heaven, there to discover a sign of His coming; but even though He delayed, their faith remained unshaken. Their thoughts were with Him in heaven and the certainty that one day they would share in His triumph and glory, gave them new courage to persevere to the end.

Jesus entered heaven, but not alone. A wonderful scene was enacted when Jesus had vanished from the sight of His friends on earth. Limbo gives up the souls it has held for thousands of years and they join Jesus in His triumphant entry into heaven. At last, their prayers and hopes have been fulfilled. When Jesus had died on the cross, His soul descended into Limbo and brought these holy souls the joyous news that soon the days of their waiting would come to an end. Now the great moment has come; they join Jesus in a glorious procession of light and splendour. As they approach the gates of heaven, their joyous cries announce the coming of heaven's King to the blessed spirits of the heavenly Kingdom. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in." From within the heavenly gates comes the question, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer goes thundering back from the multitudes of Limbo, "The Lord, who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in" (Psalm 23:7-10 in the Vulgate, or Psalm 24:7-10 in the Hebrew). And now the gates of heaven are thrown open, the choirs of angels pay homage to the glorious King, and welcome into heaven their new brethren, the first human souls, to be their companions forever. Then mid them, Jesus enters the eternal Holy of Holies and takes possession of His royal throne, and of His kingdom, there shall be no end.

The Apostle's Creed describes the heavenly life of Jesus as sitting at the right hand of the Father. This signifies His eternal rest, the absence of warfare and suffering, the possession of undisturbed joy and peace. True, He also remains the Head of His Mystical Body, the Church, and the Church continues to labour and to struggle, to carry on the warfare, for souls to the end, but the malice of men does not reach Jesus any more, enthroned as He is in heavenly glory. Yet Jesus' life in heaven is not only rest. In His farewell address Jesus assured the apostles that in His Father's house there were many mansions and that He went to prepare a place for them; having done this He would come and take them to Himself, in order that where He was they, too, would be. So Jesus in His glory prepares those mansions, and as His faithful servants arrive in the course of centuries, they find their place prepared according to their works. Saint Paul reveals another feature of our Saviour's heavenly life when he tells us that Jesus is always making intercession for us. He remains our Mediator at the throne of His Father, praying as the Head of His Mystical Body, the Church. His Mediator's work culminates in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. As Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, He offers Himself through the instrumentality of human priests as the clean oblation, and feeds the faithful with His own flesh and blood, the bread of life. Remaining in heaven and without detriment to His glorified state He has in a most intimate manner united Himself with all the members of His Mystical Body even whilst on earth, and made true His promise that He would remain with us to the end of the world. In the Blessed Eucharist, the heavenly life of Jesus and the earthly life of the faithful meet in the most wonderful manner. We have heaven in our very midst.

Here on earth, "We have not here a lasting city but we seek one that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14); we are strangers and pilgrims on the way to our eternal home. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the

things that are above, not the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1-2). Heaven is our goal, and if we wish to reach it, we certainly must keep it in mind, never to lose sight of it.

Heaven-mindedness is characteristic of the true Christian and lover of Christ. Alas, it has grown cold in many Christian hearts; the thought of heaven hardly ever enters their mind, it does not influence their lives, they show the same love of the world, the same concern about its possessions and pleasures, the same flight from the cross as those that do not know Christ. It is indeed a timely and practical petition that Holy Church puts on our lips on the feast of the Ascension: that with our minds we may always dwell in heaven.

Looking down from those heavenly heights gives us the correct perspective of things of this earth. How small and insignificant they all appear and yet also how great and precious, since it is by them that we merit the everlasting, all-exceeding glory of heaven. The thought of heaven makes us fervent, zealous, patient, generous; it detaches us from what may be as dear to us as life itself. Saint Ignatius filled with the thought of heaven could say, “How I loathe this earth, when I look up to heaven.” Heaven is worth every sacrifice, and therefore Our Lord exhorts us to lay up for ourselves treasures there, where moth and rust do not consume them and where thieves cannot steal and carry them away. The loss of heaven is the greatest loss, because it is the loss of our soul, the loss of God Himself; therefore no earthly possession or pleasure can make up for it, “For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26). The thought of heaven inspires a strong and fearless love of the cross, “For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinth 4:17). The Christian imbued with the thought of heaven knows no real sadness; he radiates spiritual warmth, heavenly joy, which cannot but influence his fellowmen for the better.

The thought of heaven is a most effective remedy against earthly-mindedness, the strongest bulwark against the materialism of the world, an ever present incentive to a fervent Christian life; it will, in a very particular manner, lead us to the altar of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and perpetual presence. We shall come, more and more, to love the beauty of His house and the place where His glory dwells. And so through this mystery of the rosary our blessed Mother leads us to her Divine Son, now in the Eucharist and, in due time, in His eternal heavenly glory.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Christ’s earthly mission came to an end with His Ascension. The Holy Spirit was to bring His work to final completion. For that reason, Jesus sent Him to the Church, and to prepare for His coming He commanded the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they would be endowed with power from on high. So the apostles and friends of Jesus, having seen Him rising into heaven, returned to Jerusalem and “with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren” (Acts 1:14).

Pentecost of the Old Testament, the fiftieth day after the Jewish Easter or Passover, commemorated the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; Pentecost of the New Testament, the fiftieth day after the Christian Easter, commemorates the establishment of the new Covenant of love. Nine days had elapsed since the Ascension and the day of Pentecost had arrived. The apostle and friends of Jesus were assembled for their customary prayer in the Upper Room, when all of a sudden a violent wind began to blow, arousing the attention of neighbours and passers-by. Within the house, another startling event took place. Tongues of fire appeared and settled on each one present, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with diverse tongues, according as the Holy Ghost

gave them to speak.” Then there rose up to God a mighty prayer of praise and thanks in many languages for all His wondrous deeds. In the crowd that gathered around the house, there were Jews, “devout men from every nation under heaven,” who had come to Jerusalem for the celebration of the feast of Pentecost. They were greatly surprised to hear the apostles speak in the languages of their own countries; their amazement grew when they found out that these men were Galileans, whose native tongue was Aramaic. And, “They were all amazed and marvelled saying, ‘Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how have we heard every man our own language wherein we were born?’ They were all astonished, and wondered,” (Acts 2:2-11 and 12).

So impressed were the crowds by this miracle that on that very day three thousand persons came to believe in Christ and received baptism. The fact that the apostles praised God in many foreign tongues and that representatives of many nations joined the Church on her first Pentecost marked her as the Church of all races and peoples. From now on, the Church will grow and spread; even to the ends of the earth; the apostles and their successors will preach the Gospel and be witnesses to Christ their Divine Master.

Wind, though not seen itself, is seen and felt in its effects. It possesses tremendous power; it can sweep before it all obstacles, clear the atmosphere of poisonous germs. So the unseen power of the Holy Spirit overthrows the strongholds of ancient and modern paganism and clears the atmosphere of the poisonous germs of godless philosophies. Having thus prepared the ground the Holy Spirit begins the positive work of enlightening the minds of men with His truth and warming their hearts with His love. This, His work is symbolized by the tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. To the hell-inspired philosophies of the present day, to the insincerity and pride of dictators and tyrants He opposes the truth of man’s nothingness and God’s sovereign majesty. God is the creator and man the creature, God is infinitely perfect and man is limited in every way; man comes and goes and his work falls into dust, but the word of God remains forever. As Our Lord said, the Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin and justice and judgement.

But the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of love, and love must accompany truth, if the world is to be gained for Christ. Without love selfishness reigns supreme. This explains why mutual distrust divides individuals and nations, why hatred has reached a degree of intensity and a depth of degradation and savagery that only Satan can have inspired. Satan hates God and whatever is loved by God, and if he cannot destroy, he will at least cause as much suffering and harm as possible. The love of the Holy Spirit unites. The love of God has made men His children, members of the same family. “Our Father, Who art in heaven,” is the prayer taught us by our Divine Saviour. Where the love of the Holy Spirit has been poured into the hearts of men, there they are drawn into the living and loving union with Jesus as the members of His Mystical Body, there they are one with Him as the branches are one with the vine. One body, one spirit, one bread, one hope for all. It is the love of the Holy Spirit that has called into existence the wonderful works of charity that are the glory of the Catholic Church.

In doing this work, the Holy Spirit employs the Church as His organ. Though adapting herself to the conditions of the times and the character of the peoples to whom she ministers, the means employed by the Church throughout the centuries are essentially the same as those used by her on the first Pentecost. She gains her converts by preaching, not in the words of human wisdom but in the power of the Spirit, not by deception or violence but by the persuasion of truth and love, symbolized by the tongues of fire. But realizing her dependence upon the Holy Spirit, Holy Church unceasingly prays,

“Send forth, O Lord, Your Spirit, and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.”

In the work of spreading the faith, Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, holds a most distinguished place. The Holy Spirit overshadowed her with His power at Nazareth to make her the Mother of Jesus, and through her to give the world its Saviour. She is to accomplish her mission not by the labours of the apostolic ministry but by her intercession and example. She is the suppliant omnipotence, strong and mighty as an army in battle array. Holy Church says of her that she has brought joy to the whole world, and that through her all heresies have been overcome. She implores for the preachers of the word of God a more profound understanding of what they preach as well as the method of presentation that convinces and gains the good will of men. Through her Immaculate Heart flow the streams of love that issue from the depths of the Godhead into the souls of men so that, detached from the fleeting things of the earth, they may fix their hearts upon the things of heaven. This precisely is the need of our time, when millions of men, overwhelmed by the flood of secularism have lost all appreciation of spiritual values, think of nothing, strive for nothing but the good things of this world. Great, therefore, must be the desire of our heavenly Mother that men would turn to the Holy Spirit, accept His truth, be inflamed with His love and become her loving children.

We, too, have received the power from on high to be witnesses unto Christ, though not under the visible symbol of fiery tongues. The Sacrament of Confirmation, in particular, is the Sacrament through which the faithful receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit's grace for confessing and spreading the faith. Not all the faithful are called to preach the word of God officially, but all can and must do it through words that enlighten and deeds that arouse love. The holy lives of the faithful are tongues of fire demonstrating the power of love and truth. A halfhearted practice of religion, a life infected with the spirit of the world will impede the renewal of the world in Christ.

This Pentecostal mystery then calls for more truth and love in our lives, more interest in the cause of Christ and the Church, more courage and unshakable confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady of Fatima expects this of us. Though she was not sent to preach like the apostles, we cannot imagine that in dealings with her fellowmen she spoke of anything or did anything that did not have for its ultimate object to bring others to a knowledge of her Divine Son and to the ways of salvation opened in the Church. We must heed her requests, follow her example, if the world is not to perish but to be saved, if the Kingdom of Christ is to replace the kingdom of Satan. Do we realize our responsibility and use the opportunities at our disposal for bringing about such happy results?

THE ASSUMPTION.

The last information the sacred writers give us regarding our blessed Mother is that she was united with the apostles and friends of Jesus, in prayer preparing for the coming of the Holy Spirit. After this, no more mention is made of her. Whether Mary, after the Ascension, stayed in Jerusalem or left it, whether she died soon or lived for many more years we do not know. One thing only is certain and that is that the rest of her life was devoted to prayer and to work in the interests of her Divine Son. We may also assume that, though she was fully resigned to the Will of God as to the duration of her earthly life, she longed for death. If Saint Paul could say that he desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ because of His ardent love of the Master, how much more Mary, who loved her Divine Son with an immeasurably greater love. Desire consumed her strength. As Jesus had died in atonement for the sins of the world, so Mary, wishing in all things to be like Jesus, also desired to

die and to offer her life as a holocaust of love for the same purpose. At last, the day arrived when Jesus came to take His Mother home, “Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one and come... Come, you shall be crowned” (Canticle 2:10; and 4:8).

It has been the faith of the Church from the beginning that the body of the Mother of God was soon after death again united with the soul and taken up into heaven. In memory of this event, the Assumption was celebrated probably as early as the Fifth Century, and on November 1, 1950, was solemnly proclaimed an article of faith. The Assumption is in complete harmony with the place Mary holds in the economy of salvation. She has been conceived without sin, was never touched by concupiscence, never entertained an inordinate thought or desire, the eternal Word of God has taken His flesh and blood from her, and for nine months she was a living tabernacle of the Most High; our Christian feeling shrinks from the very thought that her body should have become a prey to corruption. It is also a fact that never were any relics of our Blessed Mother’s body exposed for veneration, as is the case with relics of other saints. The Assumption of Mary is a confirmation of our faith in the resurrection and glorification of bodies, a new link between us and heaven, a new bond of love and hope that unites us, her children in this valley of tears, to her who is our Mother, our sweetness, our life, and our hope.

The body plays an important part in working out our salvation. No good work can be performed, not even a thought can be in our minds without some co-operation of bodily organs. It is the body that tires under the strain of prayer and work, feels the hardships and privations of the Christian warfare, is mortified by works of penance. The body, too, therefore must have a share in the reward enjoyed by the soul from the moment it enters heaven. Our Lord tells us, “The hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs, shall hear the Voice of the Son of God. And they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but they who have done evil, unto resurrection of judgement” (John 5:28-29). And Saint Paul assures us, “Behold I tell you a mystery...for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality. But this mortal has put on immortality, then shall come to pass the word that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory, O death, where is thy sting?’ Now the sting of death is sin.” (1 Corinth 15:51-55 and 56.)

The thought of the resurrection and glorification of bodies inspired the martyrs in their tortures and death; it is a source of strength in temptation, of consolation in tribulations. We shall rise with a body immortal, spiritual, resplendent, with glory, under the complete control of the spirit. Indeed, this body of ours, though falling into dust, is not destined for the corruption of the grave forever, but through death and corruption, it will pass to immortal and glorious life.

The mystery sheds wonderful light on the place the body should hold in the Christian life. The Christian, looking forward to this glorious transfiguration of his body, will zealously guard it as the temple of God’s glory; he will not abuse it, degrade it, desecrate it by sin. Even now, the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and it is because of this Holy Spirit dwelling in Him that God will raise it up on the last day. Since the body with its natural inclinations can become a great hindrance and danger to salvation, the Christian will mortify it; he will not pamper it, but rather make it an instrument for his own sanctification and merit. The daily labours and hardships imposed upon us by our vocational duties mortify the body, the patient endurance of the manifold sufferings sent by God subject it to the rule of the Spirit, and works of penance, demanded by the Church or freely chosen, will further curb the rebellion of the flesh. Thus, the body more and more becomes a willing

instrument of the spirit in the service of God, and to the same extent merits its own glorification. The saints did not spare the body; their works of penance may at times make us shudder, but they knew what they were doing. They agreed with Saint Paul and acted in the spirit of his words, “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worth to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Such a view of the body will mightily contribute to make the Christian life more spiritual, more supernatural, abounding in zeal and merit, in patience, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. And would such a condition among the faithful not have a beneficial influence upon their fellowmen? Would it not be a joy for our heavenly Mother? Indeed, we have good reason to rejoice and to give thanks for the light and inspiration offered us in this mystery, “Let us rejoice in the Lord and celebrate a festive day in honour of the Blessed Mother of God, over whose Assumption the angels rejoice and praise the Son of God, her Son.”

CROWNED AS HEAVEN’S QUEEN.

There is nothing in tradition or legend to give us definite information about this mystery, yet the rosary is recited throughout the world and approved by Holy Church. This fact alone is sufficient proof for the substantial truth of the contents of this mystery. The dignity of Mary, as the Mother of God and our Saviour, and the all-surpassing holiness of her life, give her incomparable pre-eminence in majesty and glory over all the angels and saints. It is altogether in harmony with our holy faith to suppose that her entrance into heaven should have been the cause of a special joy and should have been celebrated according to our human way of putting it, by a festive ceremony at which she was crowned as Queen of Heaven. Let us picture this feast to ourselves; the invocations of Mary as Queen, in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, give us so to say, the numbers of the festive programme. The feast, however, is timeless and will continue until all the children of Mary have been gathered around their heavenly Mother and Queen.

The good angels never sinned but remained loyal to God when Lucifer rose in rebellion. Though not their Saviour, Jesus is nevertheless also their Mediator in virtue of His soul, by which He stands between God and all created spiritual natures. Mary is the Mother of their Mediator. Like the angels she was never stained by sin, her will never troubled by any stirring of concupiscence. Her mind is more penetrating than that of the Cherubim, her heart burns with warmer love than the Seraphim ; she rules over vaster domains than the angelic Thrones; the grandeur of the mystery, which God wrought in her makes the Powers thrill with wonder, the Archangels standing before the throne of God now also stand before her throne, as she has taken her place next to her Divine Son; the Angels humbly admit that all their services to men are outdone immeasurably by the share the Blessed Mother had in the work of redemption. And so all the angels bow before her and offer her the diadem of the Queen of angels.

Those holy men, that lived at the dawn of human history and are mentioned among the ancestors of Christ, saw the Saviour of the world from afar, as they hoped and longed and prayed for His coming. Mary has given Him birth and calls Him her Son. And the patriarchs greet her as their greatest daughter and Queen.

These seers of old saw and foretold the mysteries of man’s redemption. Their prophecies found their fulfilment through Mary. As the splendour of the noonday sun outshines the early dawn, so the dazzling splendour of the Virgin Mother of the Saviour shines above the twilight of the prophet’s visions and humbly do the prophets pay homage to Mary as their Queen.

The Apostles, they were the chosen companions of Jesus; they remained loyal to their Master and were entrusted by Him with the continuation of His mission. The sound of their voices went out into the world. Mary was the Mother of Him whose Gospel they preached. She crushed the head of the serpent and through her prayers and merits the Kingdom of Christ has been extended, fortified, and protected more effectively than by all the apostles and their successors in the apostolic ministry. So the apostles approach and present her with the crown and sceptre of the apostolic college.

That which makes the martyr is not the mere fact that he died for Christ, but that he loves Christ unto the shedding of his blood. There are also martyrs of charity, and their martyrdom may be more excellent as it lasts longer and calls for greater endurance. Hidden labours and sufferings of the soul may consume life's energy like a holocaust. Mary did not die a bloody death, but she endured sorrows of the soul greater than all the tortures endured by the martyrs of blood. Holy Church endeavours to give us some idea of the greatness of her sorrow, when she stood beneath the cross of her dying Son, by applying to her the words of the prophet, "O all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow...To what shall I compare you? Or to what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem; To what shall I equal you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion (Sion). For great as the sea, is your sorrow" (Lamentations 1:12, and 2. 13). And all the holy martyrs resplendent with the fiery red of charity or the bloody red of martyrdom wave their palms in exultation, acclaiming Mary as their Queen.

These saints have faithfully followed in the footsteps of Jesus, some in lowliness and hidden from the world, others as the teachers, leaders, the firebrands of their generation. But there is hardly one among them that did not pay the tribute of human weakness in regrettable faults and failings; what distinguished them and made them saints was their determined, persistent, and successful effort in striving after perfection. According to their character and the conditions of the times in which they were living, they excelled in the one or the other virtue. Mary alone was without fault or failing, excelling not only in one or the other virtue, but possessing all in the highest degree, since she was always full of grace. All the holy confessors are filled with delight to behold in Mary the ideal of the virtue, after which they have striven; there is among them all not one equal to her; she is their Queen.

The very designation of the Mother of God as the Blessed Virgin, the Virgin Mother, points to her towering position among all the virgins of the Church. She is the blessed one among them, as she is the blessed among all women. Not simply the fact of her virginity gives her this pre-eminence but the intensity of the love with which she consecrated herself to God. Mary's love and devotion to God cannot be measured by human standards. She is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, all spiritual, all holy in body and in soul, and so the choirs of holy virgins lift up their lilies in rapturous acclaim to greet and honour their Virgin Queen.

Not only the angels and all those saints that distinguished themselves by their heroic virtue and are venerated by the Church as saints, glory in having the Blessed Virgin as their Queen, but likewise all the other blessed inhabitants of heaven. They are lesser stars, humble, little souls, who though not achieving heroic sanctity, served God with an upright and loving heart; among them are also the penitent sinners, eternally grateful for having been saved from eternal ruin. Whatever their condition may be, there is not one among them that does not owe a debt of gratitude for his salvation to Mary, the Mother of the Saviour, Mediatrix of all Graces, Mother of Mercy, Refuge of Sinners, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. And if they form if we may say so, the outer fringe of

the heavenly Kingdom, they raise their voices the more humbly and gratefully from their distant places to greet her as their loving and merciful Queen.

Mary is Queen not only of the saints in heaven, but also of all the children of God on earth. By giving her the love and loyalty of our hearts and following her leadership we, too, shall reach our heavenly goal. The foregoing considerations point out the way, in which this can be done.

Sinlessness is the first and foremost requisite for the subjects of our heavenly Queen. Ours is not angelic purity, but it can be baptismal innocence, and if that has been lost, it still can be the purity of penitents.

Like the patriarchs and prophets of old, we can pray and long for the coming of the kingdom of God. "Thy Kingdom come," we were taught to pray by our blessed Saviour. Let us pray for the coming of God's Kingdom into the hearts of men through grace, for the spread of the Church, the kingdom of Christ throughout the world, for the second coming of our Saviour with power and majesty so "That transgression may be finished and sin may have an end and iniquity may be abolished and everlasting justice may be brought and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled" (Daniel 9:24). This is the grand object for which our heavenly Queen prayed, worked and suffered, for which she now intercedes and for which she desires our co-operation.

The apostles, and in them also their successors, were chosen by Jesus to carry the message of the Gospel to the nations. The harvest is great and many labourers are needed; therefore, we are to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send labourers into His vineyard. Loyal to the Queen of the apostles we shall endeavour to foster missionary vocations and to support the education and the work of missionaries.

Even should we not become martyrs of blood, the spirit of martyrs can be ours. If we cannot lay down our lives in one great act of martyrdom, let it be done through the many acts of devotion, love, and self-denial that make up the fervent Christian life. Then, as Saint Chrysostom says, God will accept the good will and grant also to such as actually do not become martyrs the reward of martyrs.

Whatever may be the state of our lives we can and must be confessors of the faith by its faithful practice. But our ambition should aim high; continuous progress in virtue and Christian perfection must be our goal, as it was the goal of the confessors.

Not all are called to a life of virginity, but the spirit of virginity can be ours, and that is the spirit of loving and undivided consecration to God and generosity in giving all that God expects of us. God is not satisfied with a divided heart.

If we feel that we are still far from the holiness of the saints this should not be reason for discouragement. The saints did not become saints overnight, but by dint of much prayer, work and self-denial, rising again and again from their falls through humble repentance. All this we also can do, no matter what may have been the sins of the past. The mercy of Jesus is infinite, and Mary is the refuge of sinners and our most merciful Queen.

So we look up to our Queen and resolve to listen to the daily message of the rosary. In the 'Epistle' for the feast of the Most Holy Rosary she pleads with motherly solicitude "Now, therefore, ye children, hear me; blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that hears me, and that watches daily at my gates; and waits at the posts of

my doors. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.” (Proverbs 8:32-35)

With filial, trustful love we dedicate ourselves to her in a final act of consecration, “O my Queen, O my Mother, I give myself entirely to you, keep me, guard me as your property and possession.”
