

Golden Rose Apostolate Marian Consecration Renewal 2022



Golden Rose Apostolate

Preparation Programme,
10th April - 13th Day

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Introduction

“My heart has dictated with special joy all that I have written to show that Mary has been unknown up till now, and that that is one of the reasons why Jesus Christ is not known as he should be. If then, as is certain, the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ must come into the world, it can only be as a necessary consequence of the knowledge and reign of Mary. She who first gave him to the world will establish his kingdom in the world.”

St Louis Marie de Montfort

The purpose of the Golden Rose Apostolate is to help Catholics to live in a more intentional, daily way, Marian Consecration. In living this, we desire to hasten the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart and play our part in establishing the Reign of Jesus Christ over all hearts. Our aspiration is to ensure that consecration be something that extends into every part of one's life, and doesn't end with completion of a 33 day (or however long) preparation programme. Rather that a life of consecration should begin as the preparation ends.

That said, to say that the act of consecration and its preparation are not the 'be and end all' is not to deny their importance, but to underline it. It's not that these things are lacking, but rather that fully respecting their importance means our lives *should* change with our consecration. In order to consolidate, build upon or simply 'begin again' with that change, very often the most helpful thing one can do is to engage periodically with a renewal of the consecration itself. The time of consecration preparation – whether for a first time or a renewal – is a particularly graced time to:

- Revisit the promises and hopes inherent in the ideal of being consecrated to Our Lady
- Take stock of where I'm at spiritually, where I feel called to go and what is the next step God is asking of me towards this end
- Seek and implore the graces I need to grow in holiness, to give myself more deeply to Jesus through Mary.

Bearing these things in mind, we invite you to join us in the Annual Golden Rose Marian consecration! Well when I say annual... 13th May 2021 was the date of the first Golden Rose consecration to Our Lady. We invite you to join for a Consecration – or Renewal of Consecration – on 13th May 2022. This booklet is intended to help prepare for the same. Last year the consecration focused mainly on the message of Fatima and the consecration focus of St. Maximilian Kolbe. This year we'll base the structure on the method of St. Louis Marie de Montfort.

St. Louis divides his consecration preparation into four distinct phases, from which we get the original 33 day model. They devotional intentions of each of these phases are as follows:

- 1 12 Days (1-12) – Emptying oneself of the spirit of the world
- 2 7 days (13-19)- Acquisition of self knowledge and sorrow for sins
- 3 7 days (20-26) – Acquisition of understanding of the Blessed Virgin
- 4 7 days (27-33)– Acquisition of a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ

We will work with this general model, providing relevant devotional materials. Each day, a Scripture passage is suggested and a passage from the writings of a Saint are given to help to enter more deeply into the theme of the day. Questions are provided to help participants to engage with the readings, especially if they choose to journal. Pointers are periodically given as to specific things that may be appropriate at a given point of the preparation. The time spent with these depends on the discernment of the individual. It may be spending 10-15 minutes a day simply reading and saying a decade of the Rosary. It may be spending an hour or more in meditation and prayer. God has given us all different callings and duties, so the practical commitment isn't one size fits all – though we give guidelines to keep all participants on roughly the same devotional page.

General Preparation

My Devotional Commitment and Preparation Tracker

This preparatory section is best worked through in the days preceding the consecration, so there isn't too much practical work on day one and you will be ready to enter straight into the spiritual exercises. Here are some things you need to think about:

What is a reasonable time commitment you can make on a daily basis? _____

Of this time, how much do you believe the Holy Spirit is leading you to commit to meditation and how much to vocal prayer? It is probably best to include some elements of both, but discern what balance is likely to most benefit your soul and devotion.

Meditation _____ Vocal Prayer _____

Concrete Resolutions

Next I suggest making 1-3 concrete resolutions about what you will undertake for each day of the consecration. Suggestions for vocal prayers you may want to choose are at the back of the booklet in Appendix 1. The daily pages give materials, ideas and Scripture references for meditation. You may desire to keep up the same balance throughout the 33 days, or to change what you do in the various phases. Space below is given to make resolutions for each phase:

Introductory 12 days

- _____
- _____
- _____

Week 1

- _____
- _____
- _____

Week 2

- _____
- _____
- _____

Week 3

- _____
- _____
- _____

My Tracker of Consecration Preparation:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	

The above table is intended for you to be able to keep easy track of whether or not you have held to your resolution on each day. This is to help you to be faithful, but when it comes to consecration day don't let a lack of perfect preparation hold you back from giving your all to Mary. Simply give Her what you have to offer and ask Her to help you to build upon it.

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

An introductory reading to consider the grace we seek for the next 12 days, from the writings of St. John of the Cross (Ascent of Mount Carmel):

To reach satisfaction in all, Desire its possession in nothing.
To possess all, Desire the possession of nothing.
To arrive at being all, Desire to be nothing.
To come to the knowledge of all, Desire the knowledge of nothing.

To come to the pleasure that you have not,
You must go by a way in which you enjoy not.
To come to the knowledge you have not,
You must go by a way in which you know not.
To come to the possession you have not,
You must go by a way in which you possess not.
To be what you are not,
You must go in a way in which you are not.

When you turn toward something,
You cease to cast yourself upon the All.
For to go from all to the All,
You must deny yourself of all in all.
When you come to the possession of the All,
You must possess it without wanting anything.
Because if you desire to have something in all,
Your treasure in God is not purely your all.

In this nakedness, the spirit finds its rest; for in coveting nothing, nothing raises it up, and nothing weighs it down because it is in the centre of its humility; when it covets something, it is, by its very desire, wearied.

On journalling with the days' materials:
You may find it useful to journal in pondering the day's theme and meditations. If you decide to do this, perhaps you could consider writing your consecration journal in the form of letters to Our Lady, in order to consciously invite Her more fully into every aspect of your spiritual life.

Note:

Each daily theme of this section will reference a 'beatitude' taken from Sacred Scripture – either from the Sermon on the Mount or another 'Blessed is...'. This is in order to remind us of the beautiful exchange involved in turning our backs on the things of the world for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Day 1
Palm Sunday
10th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World
Theme: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord

Scripture Passage: John 5:16-44 (shorter passage take 5:36-44)

Questions for Reflection:

- What do I do in order to pursue eternal life?
- How can I move towards, what graces should I ask for, in order to be more open to way in which the Word of God can be revealed to and in me?
- In my motivations to do things, what tends to be my first consideration, and what other factors play a role in determining my action?
- How do I desire through this consecration to deepen my acceptance of Jesus' Lordship over my life?

Notes on Questions for Reflection:

Your reflection doesn't need to be based on, or even reference these questions. You can pray into anything; the Scripture and spiritual reading raises for you – the questions are simply given to open up things that can be prayed into if it helps you.

Spiritual Reading

From the writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola - a) Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises
Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.
And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created.

From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it.

For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honour rather than dishonour, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

b) Degrees of Humility

First Humility. The first manner of Humility is necessary for eternal salvation; namely, that I so lower and so humble myself, as much as is possible to me, that in everything I obey the law of God, so that, even if they made me lord of all the created things in this world, nor for my own temporal life, I would not be in deliberation about breaking a Commandment, whether Divine or human, which binds me under mortal sin.

Second Humility. The second is more perfect Humility than the first; namely, if I find myself at such a stage that I do not want, and feel no inclination to have, riches rather than poverty, to want honour rather than dishonour, to desire a long rather than a short life -- the service of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul being equal; and so not for all creation, nor because they would take away my life, would I be in deliberation about committing a venial sin.

Third Humility. The third is most perfect Humility; namely, when - including the first and second, and the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty being equal - in order to imitate and be more actually like Christ our Lord, I want and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches, opprobrium with Christ replete with it rather than honours; and to desire to be rated as worthless and a fool for Christ, Who first was held as such, rather than wise or prudent in this world.

Day 2
Holy Monday
11th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture Passage: Mark 12:41-44 (optional extras: Luke 12:13-34, 18:16-30)

Questions for Reflection:

- Do I trust Jesus to keep me secure, fulfil my desires, or do I hold onto the things of the world for lack of this trust?
- What attachments can I identify that hinder my free response to God?
Consider my attitude towards material goods and comfort, relationships and other people, time and how I use it, control of various aspects of my life, etc.
- We know the disciples saw how moved Jesus was by the widow's offering, but Sacred Scripture does not tell her that she did. Do I demand that God make me sensibly aware of His response to my efforts or give freely for love of Him?
- In what practical ways can I deepen my surrender today and what graces do I need to ask in order to do this?

Spiritual Reading

“It will be a great help towards this if we keep constantly in our thoughts the vanity of all things and the rapidity with which they pass away, so that we may withdraw our affections from things which are so trivial and fix them upon what will never come to an end. This may seem a poor kind of help but it will have the effect of greatly fortifying the soul. With regard to small things, we must be very careful, as soon as we begin to grow fond of them, to withdraw our thoughts from them and turn them to God. His Majesty will help us to do this. He has granted us the great favour of providing that, in this house, most of it is done already; but it remains for us to become detached from our own selves and it is a hard thing to withdraw from ourselves and oppose ourselves, because we are very close to ourselves and love ourselves very dearly.

It is here that true humility can enter, for this virtue and that of detachment from self, I think, always go together. They are two sisters, who are inseparable. These are not the kinsfolk whom I counsel you to avoid: no, you must embrace them, and love them, and never be seen without them. Oh, how sovereign are these virtues, mistresses of all created things, empresses of the world, our deliverers from all the snares and entanglements laid by the devil so dearly loved by our Teacher, Christ, Who was never for a moment without them! He that possesses them can safely go out and fight all the united forces of hell and the whole world and its temptations. Let him fear none, for his is the kingdom of the Heavens. There is none whom he need fear, for he cares nothing if he loses everything, nor does he count this as loss: his sole fear is that he may displease his God and he begs Him to nourish these virtues within him lest he lose them through any fault of his own.”

(St. Teresa of Avila)

“Once you have renounced everything, really everything, then any bold enterprise becomes the simplest and most natural thing in all the world.” Pope St. John XXIII

Day 3
Holy Tuesday
12th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World
Theme: Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

Scripture Passage: John 18:1 – 19:16

Questions for Reflection:

- How does my ideal of strength and understanding of authority compare with the example of that modelled by Jesus? How is this manifested in my life?
- In what areas of my life can I ask for the grace to be more gentle?

Spiritual Reading

The holy Chrism, used by the Church according to apostolic tradition, is made of olive oil mingled with balm, which, among other things, are emblematic of two virtues very specially conspicuous in our Dear Lord Himself, and which He has specially commended to us, as though they, above all things, drew us to Him and taught us to imitate Him: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Humility makes our lives acceptable to God, meekness makes us acceptable to men. Balm, as I said before, sinking to the bottom of all liquids, is a figure of humility; and oil, floating as it does to the top, is a figure of gentleness and cheerfulness, rising above all things, and excelling all things, the very flower of Love, which, so says S. Bernard, comes to perfection when it is not merely patient, but gentle and cheerful. Give heed, then, daughter, that you keep this mystic chrism of gentleness and humility in your heart, for it is a favourite device of the Enemy to make people content with a fair outside semblance of these graces, not examining their inner hearts, and so fancying themselves to be gentle and humble while they are far otherwise. And this is easily perceived, because, in spite of their ostentatious gentleness and humility, they are stirred up with pride and anger by the smallest wrong or contradiction. If, when stung by slander or ill-nature, we wax proud and swell with anger, it is a proof that our gentleness and humility are unreal, and mere artificial show. When the Patriarch Joseph sent his brethren back from Egypt to his father's house, he only gave them one counsel, "See that ye fall not out by the way." And so, my child, say I to you. This miserable life is but the road to a blessed life; do not let us fall out by the way one with another; let us go on with the company of our brethren gently, peacefully, and kindly. Most emphatically I say it, If possible, fall out with no one, and on no pretext whatever suffer your heart to admit anger and passion. S. James says, plainly and unreservedly, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Of course it is a duty to resist evil and to repress the faults of those for whom we are responsible, steadily and firmly, but gently and quietly... Correction given in anger, however tempered by reason, never has so much effect as that which is given altogether without anger; for the reasonable soul being naturally subject to reason, it is a mere tyranny which subjects it to passion, and whereinsoever reason is led by passion it becomes odious, and its just rule obnoxious. When a monarch visits a country peaceably the people are gratified and flattered; but if the king has to take his armies through the land, even on behalf of the public welfare, his visit is sure to be unwelcome and harmful, because, however strictly military discipline may be enforced, there will always be some mischief done to the people. Just so when reason prevails, and administers reproof, correction, and punishment in a calm spirit, although it be strict, every one approves and is content; but if reason be hindered by anger and vexation (which Saint Augustine calls her soldiers) there will be more fear than love, and reason itself will be despised and resisted. (St. Francis de Sales)

Day 4
Spy Wednesday
13th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture Passage: Sirach 2

Questions for Reflection:

- What opportunities do I have to stand up in the face of evil for the cause of justice? Do I use them adequately?
- Do I consistently rejoice when I am persecuted in the cause of right?
- If not – what attachments are at the root of my grievance?
- What practical efforts can I make in day to day life in order to better train myself to be able to face trials and persecution with dispositions that befit a soldier of Christ?

Spiritual Reading

“Once I saw a big crowd of people in our chapel, in front of the chapel and in the street, because there was no room for them inside. The chapel was decorated for a feast. There were a lot of clergy near the altar, and then our sisters and those of many other congregations. They were all waiting for the person who was to take a place on the altar. Suddenly I heard a voice saying that I was to take the place on the altar. But as soon as I left the corridor to go across the yard and enter the chapel, following the voice that was calling me, all the people began to throw at me whatever they had to hand: mud, stones, brooms, to such an extent that I at first hesitated to go forward. But the voice kept on calling me even more earnestly, so I walked on bravely. When I entered the chapel, the superiors, the sisters, the students, and even my parents started to hit me with whatever they could, and so whether I wanted to or not, I quickly took my place on the altar. As soon as I was there, the very same people, the students, the sisters, the superiors and my parents all began to hold their arms out to me asking for graces; and as for me, I did not bear any grudge against them for having thrown all sorts of things at me, and I was surprised that I felt a very special love precisely for those persons who had forced me to go more quickly to my appointed place.”

(St. Faustina, diary #31)

Jesus Be in your soul.

Trouble not yourself, my daughter, about what concerns me, since it troubles me not. The only thing which grieves me much is to see the blame laid upon those to whom it does not belong for the Author of these things is not man, but God, Who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for our greater good. Think of this only, that all is ordained by God. And do you love where there is no love, and you shall have love. May His Majesty preserve you, and make you grow in His love.

Amen.

(a letter of St. John in the Cross,
to a nun who was concerned about his being persecuted in the Order)

Day 5
Holy Thursday
14th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

Scripture Passage: John 6: 22-71

Questions for Reflection:

- Does my perception of doing God’s work match that of John 6?
- How does my solicitude in preparing my heart for God compare with Mary’s?
- How much space (in terms of avoiding distractions, denying my will and appetites etc.) do I leave in my life that my desire for God may grow?

Spiritual Reading

No, my dear brethren, let us never forget that in order to receive Holy Communion it is necessary to be converted and strong in a true resolution to persevere. When Jesus Christ desired to give His Adorable Body and His Precious Blood to His Apostles, in order to teach them how pure one should be before receiving It, He even went so far as to wash their feet. By that He wishes to show us that we can never be purified enough of our sins, even our venial sins. It is true that the venial sin does not make our Communions unworthy, but it is a cause of our profiting hardly at all by such a great blessing and happiness. The proof of that is very clear when you consider how many times we have received Holy Communion during the course of our lives. And have we become any better? No, not at all, and the real cause of that is that practically all the time we are holding onto our bad habits; we do not break ourselves of any one of them more than another. We have a horror of the big sins that kill our souls, but all those little fits of impatience, those grumblings when some worries or troubles befall us, or some disappointments or setbacks — these mean nothing to us. You will admit that in spite of so many Confessions and Holy Communions, you are always the same, that your Confessions are nothing else, nor have they been for years, than a repetition of the same sins, which, although venial, are nonetheless damaging to the merit of your Holy Communions. You have been heard to say, with good reason, that you are no better one day than another, but who is stopping you from correcting your faults? If you are always the same, it is simply because you do not want to make even small efforts to improve yourself. You do not want to endure anything or to be opposed in anything. You would like everyone to be fond of you and to have a good opinion of you, which is a difficult enough thing.

Let us try hard, my dear brethren, to destroy all that could be in the smallest way displeasing to Jesus Christ, and we shall see how our Communions will help us to make great strides towards Heaven. And the more we do this, the more we shall feel ourselves becoming detached from sin and inclining towards God. This is what I desire for you.

(sermon of St John Vianney)

The priest spoke these profound words to me, “There are three degrees in the accomplishment of God’s will: in the first, the soul carries out all rules and statutes pertaining to external observance; in the second degree, the soul accepts interior inspiration and carries them out faithfully; in the third degree, the soul, abandoned to the will of God, allows Him to dispose of it freely, and God does with it as, He pleases, and it is a docile tool in His hands.”

(St. Faustina’s diary #444)

Note: Now is a good time to have a first look at Appendix 3!

Day 6
Good Friday
15th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.

Scripture Passage: Isaiah 53

Questions for Reflection:

- How do I bear suffering, and how deeply do I allow God to help me to perceive and respond to it in the light of Christ's Cross?
- Does being a Christian change my life to a degree that people notice and treat me differently on account of it? If not, are there areas where it should?

Spiritual Reading

Why did the Son of God have to suffer for us? There was a great need, and it can be considered in a twofold way: in the first place, as a remedy for sin, and secondly, as an example of how to act.

It is a remedy, for, in the face of all the evils which we incur on account of our sins, we have found relief through the passion of Christ. Yet, it is no less an example, for the passion of Christ completely suffices to fashion our lives. Whoever wishes to live perfectly should do nothing but disdain what Christ disdained on the cross and desire what he desired, for the cross exemplifies every virtue.

If you seek the example of love: Greater love than this no man has, than to lay down his life for his friends. Such a man was Christ on the cross. And if he gave his life for us, then it should not be difficult to bear whatever hardships arise for his sake.

If you seek patience, you will find no better example than the cross. Great patience occurs in two ways: either when one patiently suffers much, or when one suffers things which one is able to avoid and yet does not avoid. Christ endured much on the cross, and did so patiently, because when he suffered he did not threaten; he was led like a sheep to the slaughter and he did not open his mouth. Therefore Christ's patience on the cross was great. In patience let us run for the prize set before us, looking upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who, for the joy set before him, bore his cross and despised the shame.

If you seek an example of humility, look upon the crucified one, for God wished to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to die.

If you seek an example of obedience, follow him who became obedient to the Father even unto death. For just as by the disobedience of one man, namely, Adam, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man, many were made righteous.

If you seek an example of despising earthly things, follow him who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, in who are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Upon the cross he was stripped, mocked, spat upon, struck, crowned with thorns, and given only vinegar and gall to drink. Do not be attached, therefore, to clothing and riches, because they divided my garments among themselves. Nor to honours, for he experienced harsh words and scourgings. Nor to greatness of rank, for weaving a crown of thorns they placed it on my head. Nor to anything delightful, for in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

(St. Thomas Aquinas)

Day 7
Holy Saturday
16th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Scripture Passage: Lamentations 3:1-58 (shorter reading 3:1-23)

Questions for Reflection:

- Do I respond to trials and challenges which come my way in faith, seeing the goodness of God in all things?
- Do I understand the value of suffering and of waiting upon the Lord?
- Am I willing to embrace self denial interiorly and exteriorly, for Christ's sake?

Spiritual Reading

If thou wilt make any progress keep thyself in the fear of God, and long not to be too free, but restrain all thy senses under discipline and give not thyself up to senseless mirth. Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou shalt find devotion. Compunction openeth the way for many good things, which dissoluteness is wont quickly to lose. It is wonderful that any man can ever rejoice heartily in this life who considereth and weigheth his banishment, and the manifold dangers which beset his soul. Through lightness of heart and neglect of our shortcomings we feel not the sorrows of our soul, but often vainly laugh when we have good cause to weep. There is no true liberty nor real joy, save in the fear of God with a good conscience.

(Thomas à Kempis – The Imitation of Christ)

I expect that for a long time the reader has been wishing to ask whether it be necessary, in order to attain to this high estate of perfection, to undergo first of all total mortification in all the desires, great and small, or if it will suffice to mortify some of them and to leave others, those at least which seem of little moment. For it appears to be a severe and most difficult thing for the soul to be able to attain to such purity and detachment that it has no will and affection for anything.

To this I reply: first, that it is true that all the desires are not equally hurtful, nor do they all equally embarrass the soul. I am speaking of those that are voluntary, for the natural desires hinder the soul little, if at all, from attaining to union, when they are not consented to nor pass beyond the first movements (I mean, all those wherein the rational will has had no part, whether at first or afterward); and to take away these — that is, to mortify them wholly in this life — is impossible. And these hinder not the soul in such a way as to prevent its attainment to Divine union, even though they be not, as I say, wholly mortified; for the natural man may well have them, and yet the soul may be quite free from them according to the rational spirit. For it will sometimes come to pass that the soul will be in the full union of the prayer of quiet in the will at the very time when these desires are dwelling in the sensual part of the soul, and yet the higher part, which is in prayer, will have nothing to do with them. But all the other voluntary desires, whether they be of mortal sin, which are the gravest, or of venial sin, which are less grave, or whether they be only of imperfections, which are the least grave of all, must be driven away every one, and the soul must be free from them all, howsoever slight they be, if it is to come to this complete union; and the reason is that the state of this Divine union consists in the soul's total transformation, according to the will, in the will of God, so that, there may be naught in the soul that is contrary to the will of God, but that, in all and through all, its movement may be that of the will of God alone.

(St. John of the Cross)

Day 8
Easter Sunday
17th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord

Scripture Passage: Isaiah 62

Questions for Reflection:

- What are the bedrock promises that I can return to in terms of my understanding of the hope God's call holds for me?
- To what extent am I willing to walk in such a way as to rely totally on God and trust that He will be faithful to bring about that which I cannot?
- What concrete steps can I take towards placing my joy in the things of Heaven rather than of earth?

Spiritual Reading

But is this pure love really in my heart? Are not my boundless desires but dreams—but foolishness? If this be so, I beseech Thee to enlighten me; Thou knowest I seek but the truth. If my desires be rash, then deliver me from them, and from this most grievous of all martyrdoms. And yet I confess, if I reach not those heights to which my soul aspires, this very martyrdom, this foolishness, will have been sweeter to me than eternal bliss will be, unless by a miracle Thou shouldst take from me all memory of the hopes I entertained upon earth. Jesus, Jesus! If the mere desire of Thy Love awakens such delight, what will it be to possess it, to enjoy it for ever? How can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the plenitude of Love? What is the key of this mystery? O my only Friend, why dost Thou not reserve these infinite longings to lofty souls, to the eagles that soar in the heights? Alas! I am but a poor little unfledged bird. I am not an eagle, I have but the eagle's eyes and heart! Yet, notwithstanding my exceeding littleness, I dare to gaze upon the Divine Sun of Love, and I burn to dart upwards unto Him! I would fly, I would imitate the eagles; but all that I can do is to lift up my little wings—it is beyond my feeble power to soar. What is to become of me? Must I die of sorrow because of my helplessness? Oh, no! I will not even grieve. With daring self-abandonment there will I remain until death, my gaze fixed upon that Divine Sun. Nothing shall affright me, nor wind nor rain. And should impenetrable clouds conceal the Orb of Love, and should I seem to believe that beyond this life there is darkness only, that would be the hour of perfect joy, the hour in which to push my confidence to its uttermost bounds. I should not dare to detach my gaze, well knowing that beyond the dark clouds the sweet Sun still shines.

So far, O my God, I understand Thy Love for me. But Thou knowest how often I forget this, my only care. I stray from Thy side, and my scarcely fledged wings become draggled in the muddy pools of earth; then I lament "like a young swallow," and my lament tells Thee all, and I remember, O Infinite Mercy! that "Thou didst not come to call the just, but sinners." Yet shouldst Thou still be deaf to the plaintive cries of Thy feeble creature, shouldst Thou still be veiled, then I am content to remain benumbed with cold, my wings bedraggled, and once more I rejoice in this well-deserved suffering.

O Sun, my only Love, I am happy to feel myself so small, so frail in Thy sunshine, and I am in peace... I know that all the eagles of Thy Celestial Court have pity on me, they guard and defend me, they put to flight the vultures—the demons that fain would devour me. I fear them not, these demons, I am not destined to be their prey, but the prey of the Divine Eagle.

(St. Thérèse)

Day 9
Easter Monday
18th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World
Theme: Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and John 15:1-7

Questions for Reflection:

- How do I understand love?
- Do I weigh up others and my relationships by the degree to which they make me happy or see every soul as there for me to lay down my life in love for?
- How can I more effectively ask for the grace to see others with the purity of Jesus' vision and strive to live in this grace?
- How can I invite the Blessed Virgin help me with these things?

Spiritual Reading

You come to adoration to do the office of the Angels. Be pure like them. He offers an insult who comes to adoration with an impure conscience. Does not the Scripture say: *Peccatori autem dixit Deus: Quare tu enarras justitias meas, et assumis testamentum meum per os tuum.* 1 ---- "But to the sinner God hath said: Why dost thou declare My justices, and take My covenant in thy mouth?" Be pure, therefore, if you want to adore. Shall a soul that exhales an odour of death dare to appear before Jesus, Who is so pure? Ah, I pray you not to be so contemptuous of our Lord as to come to adore him when your conscience is laden with sin!

The state of grace! Oh, the devil is deceiving us! We are quick to do little acts of virtue, but we neglect the purity of our conscience! But what is an act of virtue but a fruit? And the tree that bears the fruit depends on its root. Watch, therefore, that the root be sound! The Lord loves the praise that comes out of the mouths of little children because it comes from hearts that are pure.

... How do the Saints appease the anger of God if it be not that they are victims in His sight, victims beautified with the purity of His Son, the innocent and spotless High Priest?

...THIS being so, what have we to do? We must love the state of grace above everything else and fear nothing so much as occasions of sin. We carry our treasure in such fragile vessels! We must unceasingly watch and be on our guard. Mary trembled before an Angel! We must exercise every possible means to preserve the purity of our soul. We must be ever-vigilant sentinels. Let us keep watch over our senses. In the midst of our cities, so full of evil today, we ought to cover our eyes with our two hands lest death enter by those windows of the soul. We ought to say continually: "My God, I place my soul in Thy keeping." The air of cities is tainted. Sin rules there, and people glory in their servitude to it. It is a stifling air that is breathed there; one is more tempted; there are mists of sin which one breathes in spite of oneself. Let us therefore be more watchful over ourselves.

...Then let us be pure; Jesus Christ wills it. Let us labour to make our heavenly garment ever whiter and whiter. Oh, let us have faith! Let us remember Whom we serve! It is an evidence of the weakness of our faith that we lack delicacy in the presence of our Lord. Let us reproach ourselves again and again on that account. Let us become pure, and let delicacy, that fair flower of faith and love, grow in our heart and rule all our intercourse with Jesus Christ. He loves pure hearts; His delight is to be among the lilies; and the secret of His royal favour is purity of heart guarded with fidelity. *Qui diligit cordis munditiam, ... habebit amicum regem.* 3 ---- "He that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the King for his Friend." *(St. Peter Julian Eymard)*

Day 10
Easter Tuesday
19th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World
Theme: Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Scripture Passage: Matthew 18

Questions for Reflection:

- In what ways am I tempted against having a merciful heart towards others?
- What can I do to unite my heart and will more perfectly with God's?

Spiritual Reading

I always say – and I don't get tired of repeating it – that love begins at home. I will never forget that I was in a country once where there were many co-workers, but two of the coordinators of the co-workers were very distant from each other. And they were husband and wife. They came to me and I told them "I can't understand how you can give Jesus to others if you can't give Him to each other. How can you find Jesus hidden under the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor if you cannot see him in each other?"

The husband and wife started up an endless argument. Both of them let out all their frustrations and hurts, saying everything they had to say. Then I interrupted: "Now that's enough. You have said everything that you needed to say. Now let's go to Jesus so that you can tell Him all these things." We went to the chapel and the two knelt before the altar. After a few minutes the husband turned to his wife and said "You are my only love in this world, the only one that I love and have." Other things of that sort followed. It was all very beautiful.

Now all the co-workers there have changed for the better. Why? Because those in charge of the group have come to understand that if we don't accept Jesus in one another, we won't be able to give Him to others. *(St. Teresa of Calcutta)*

But what does forgiveness actually mean? And why should we forgive? A reflection on forgiveness cannot avoid these questions... I would reaffirm that forgiveness inhabits people's hearts before it becomes a social reality ... Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil. The measure of such a decision is the love of God who draws us to himself in spite of our sin. It has its perfect exemplar in the forgiveness of Christ, who on the Cross prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Forgiveness therefore has a divine source and criterion. This does not mean that its significance cannot also be grasped in the light of human reasoning; and this, in the first place, on the basis of what people experience when they do wrong. They experience their human weakness, and they want others to deal leniently with them. Why not therefore do towards others what we want them to do towards us? All human beings cherish the hope of being able to start all over again, and not remain for ever shut up in their own mistakes and guilt. They all want to raise their eyes to the future and to discover new possibilities of trust and commitment.

Forgiveness therefore, as a fully human act, is above all a personal initiative. But individuals are essentially social beings, situated within a pattern of relationships through which they express themselves in ways both good and bad... The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity. By contrast, the failure to forgive ... is extremely costly in terms of human development. What sufferings are inflicted on humanity because of the failure to reconcile! What delays in progress because of the failure to forgive! Peace is essential for development, but true peace is made possible only through forgiveness. (Pope St. John Paul II)

Day 11
Easter Wednesday
20th April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World

Theme: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God.

Scripture Passage: Matthew 26:69-75 & John 21:2-22

Questions for Reflection:

- How do my ideas about peacemaking match up with the example of Jesus?
- Is there a difference between being true peacemaking and compromising?
- What can I do to deepen my capacity to communicate Christ's peace?

Spiritual Reading

One day Francis met an acquaintance of his who looked troubled, and he asked him: "Brother, how are things with you?" The man immediately began to rant against his master, saying, "Thanks to my master — May God curse him! — I have had nothing but misfortune. He has taken away all that I possess." Francis was filled with pity for the man, and said, "Brother, pardon your master for the love of God, and free your own soul; it's possible that he will restore to you whatever he has taken away. Otherwise, you have lost your goods and will lose your soul as well."

But the man said, "I can't fully forgive him unless he returns what he has taken from me." Francis answered, "Look, I will give you this cloak; I beg you to forgive your master for the love of the Lord God." The man's heart was melted by this kindness, and he forgave his master. Immediately, he was filled with joy. (Life of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano)

The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace. Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world.

Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at; do it for peace. Let us radiate the peace of God and so light His light and extinguish in the world and in the hearts of all men all hatred and love for power. Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other - that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbour, do you think we would still need tanks and generals? Peace and war begin at home. If we truly want peace in the world, let us begin by loving one another in our own families. If we want to spread joy, we need for every family to have joy. (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

Three Degrees of the Militia Immaculata (St. Maximilian Kolbe)

In the first degree of the M.I. each one consecrates himself to the Immaculata and endeavours to realize the purpose of the Militia individually, according to his own circumstances and the rules of prudence.

In the second degree of the M.I., the Knights bind themselves by special statutes and programs. They unite their forces, in order to reach their declared goal more quickly and effectively.

The third degree of the M.I. consists in an unlimited devotion to the Immaculata. Thus She can do with us what She wills and as She wills. We belong entirely to Her and She belongs entirely to us. We do everything with Her help, we live and work under Her protection.

Now is a good time to revisit appendix 3 and think a little bit more about how you might feel called to deepen your commitment to Mary's service in and through the upcoming consecration. More specific questions on this will follow at a later date, but for now it the idea is simply to be considering the idea.

"Be at peace with your own soul, then heaven and earth will be at peace with you."

(Saint Jerome)

Day 12
Easter Thursday
21st April 2022

Part 1: Emptying Oneself of the Spirit of the World
Theme: Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.

Scripture Passage: Habakkuk 3

Questions for Reflection:

- Where in my heart do I draw the line in terms of my trusting God without demanding signs, assurances and proofs of His Love and faithfulness?
- Am I prepared to allow Our Lady to move that line – or even *remove* it?

Spiritual Reading

Having now to endeavour to show how the three faculties of the soul — understanding, memory and will — are brought into this spiritual night, which is the means to Divine union, it is necessary first of all to explain in this chapter how the three theological virtues — faith, hope and charity — which have respect to the three faculties aforesaid as their proper supernatural objects, and by means whereof the soul is united with God according to its faculties, produce the same emptiness and darkness, each one in its own faculty. Faith, in the understanding; hope, in the memory; and charity, in the will. And afterwards we shall go on to describe how the understanding is perfected in the darkness of faith; and the memory in the emptiness of hope; and likewise how the will must be buried by withdrawing and detaching every affection so that the soul may journey to God. This done, it will be clearly seen how necessary it is for the soul, if it is to walk securely on this spiritual road, to travel through this dark night, leaning upon these three virtues, which empty it of all things and make it dark with respect to them. For, as we have said, the soul is not united with God in this life through understanding, nor through enjoyment, nor through the imagination, nor through any sense whatsoever; but only through faith, according to the understanding; and through hope, according to the memory; and through love, according to the will.

These three virtues, as we have said, all cause emptiness in the faculties: faith, in the understanding, causes an emptiness and darkness with respect to understanding; hope, in the memory, causes emptiness of all possessions; and charity causes emptiness in the will and detachment from all affection and from rejoicing in all that is not God. For, as we see, faith tells us what cannot be understood with the understanding. Wherefore Saint Paul spoke of it ad Hebraeos after this manner: ...'faith is the substance of things hoped for'; and, although the understanding may be firmly and certainly consenting to them, they are not things that are revealed to the understanding, since, if they were revealed to it, there would be no faith. So faith, although it brings certainty to the understanding, brings it not clearness, but obscurity. Then, as to hope, there is no doubt but that it renders the memory empty and dark with respect both to things below and to things above. For hope always relates to that which is not possessed; for, if it were possessed, there would be no more hope. Wherefore Saint Paul says ad Romanos: 'Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth — that is, what a man possesseth — how doth he hope for it?' This virtue, then, also produces emptiness, for it has to do with that which is not possessed and not with that which is possessed. Similarly, charity causes emptiness in the will with respect to all things, since it obliges us to love God above them all; which cannot be unless we withdraw our affection from them in order to set it wholly upon God. Wherefore Christ says, through Saint Luke: ...'He that renounces not all that he possesses with the will cannot be My disciple'. And thus all these three virtues set the soul in obscurity and emptiness with respect to all things. (St. John of the Cross)

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow For Sins

An introductory reading to consider the grace we seek this week,
from the life of St. Catherine of Siena, by Raymond of Capua (her confessor):

In the beginning of my acquaintance with her, I had heard so many marvellous things concerning her, that I hesitated in believing them; God permitted it for greater good. I sought in all possible ways to discover some means of assuring myself, whether these phenomena came from God or from some other source—whether they were true or false. I have found many deluded souls, especially among females, whose heads are easily turned, and who are more exposed to the seductions of Satan. Certain remarks troubled me, and I desired to be satisfied by him, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, when suddenly the thought came to my mind, that if I were to obtain from God by Catharine's prayers, a contrition for my Sins superior to that which I felt habitually, it would be an evident sign, that all that occurred came from the Holy Spirit, for no one can have a true contrition except by the Holy Spirit, and although we are ignorant, whether we are worthy of love or of hatred, contrition of heart is a proof that we are in the grace of God.

I did not say a word of these thoughts which occupied me; but went to Catharine, and earnestly asked of her to please to obtain from God the remission of my sins. She answered me with a joy replete with charity, that she would most willingly comply, and I then added, that to satisfy my desire I must have a satisfactory evidence, namely, an extraordinary contrition for my sins. She assured me that she would obtain it, and on the morrow she was conversing with me, when her discourse insensibly turned on God and on the ingratitude with which we offend his goodness. Whilst she spoke, I had a sudden vision of my sins, of surprising accuracy and distinctness: I saw myself, divested of all things, in the presence of my Judge, and I felt that I merited death, as do malefactors when stricken by the justice of men; I saw also the bounty of my Judge, who by his grace took me into his service and replaced death by life, fear by hope, sorrow by joy, and shame by glory. These mental visions triumphed over my hardness and obduracy of heart, that I began to shed torrents of tears over my sins: and my grief became so profound that I thought I should die of it.

Catherine, whose end was accomplished, kept silence, and left me to my tears and sobs. Some moments after in the midst of my surprise at these interior dispositions, I remembered my request and the promise she had made me on the eve: I turned towards her, and said,

"Is not this the gift I asked for yesterday?"

"The same,"

answered she, and added "Remember the graces of God."

Note:

Each daily theme of this section will each seek to unveil and vanquish a particular deadly sin, as well as tending generally towards self knowledge and contrition.

Day 13
Easter Friday
22nd April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins
Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Sloth / The Necessity of Self Knowledge

Scripture Passage: Luke 18:1-17

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I really willing to engage my effort in interior, hidden and persistent prayer to attain to a clearer knowledge of what I am before God?
- Is my heart open to receive the ways in which the Lord Jesus desires to humble me and lead me to deeper contrition?
- How can I deliberately set about refusing to fall back into my comfort zones in terms of the way in which I view myself, in order to open my will to the Holy Spirit's revelation?

Spiritual Reading:

“In truth, there are few monasteries which do not possess some one who gives a great example of virtue, but the majority are weak and neither great nor elevated in character. This evil is brought about by persons becoming religious who are not yet really good Christians. Such know indeed their Founder and their constitutions, but they have little knowledge of Jesus Christ and His gospels. They aspire to become perfect in a day, while yet they are unaware of their own miseries and need of justification. They expect to be cured without thoroughly knowing their disease or the physician. They begin with the roof instead of with the foundations, and are eager to offer to the divine Master what He has only recommended as a counsel, without taking the trouble to give Him what He exacts as a debt.

From hence come so many dissensions, murmurings, and complaints about trivial things, so much imprudence, so many indiscretions, suspicions, rash judgements, attachments to one's own inclinations and way of thinking, and to trifles; such impatience of contempt, so little fervour in prayer, so little reverence for the holy mysteries, so little fruit from confession and frequent communion, such a poor conception and idea of the life to come, so little gratitude to Jesus Christ, so little solidity and dignity in the practices of devotion.

The remedy for all these evils is to employ the time of noviceship in learning truly to know the adorable Master; His precepts, maxims and counsels, by a thorough explanation of His gospel; truly to understand the nobility of man, whom God only can render happy; his fall and his misery, which the Incarnation and the death of a God could alone remedy: the corruption of his heart, of which self-love is master; the inability in himself to do any good without the grace of Jesus Christ: the never-ending danger from that concupiscence which, though conquered, is always within him; the necessity of continual prayer, of solitude, of penance, in order to keep the senses subject to the spirit; truly to understand how terrible God is in His judgements, how heinous are the sins committed after baptism, how differently we shall look upon things after death, and what a heavy responsibility for us will be the life and death of the Redeemer: truly to learn the folly of despising these truths and the sanctity which the grace of the law of this Jesus exacts from us, He who is our Saviour and our Model.”

(St. Jane Frances de Chantal, referencing the views of St. Francis de Sales)

Day 14
Easter Saturday
23rd April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins
Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Pride / The Nature of Discretion

Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 4:1-7 & Luke 17:7-10

Questions for Reflection:

- Do I hold in my heart any sense of entitlement with regard to God?
- Do I live primarily to please God, other creatures or myself?
- What can I do, and what graces do I need to ask for, in order to open my soul to be more grounded in the truth of Who God Is and who I am not?

Spiritual Reading:

“This virtue of discretion is no other than a true knowledge which the soul should have of herself and of Me, and in this knowledge is virtue rooted. Discretion is the only child of self-knowledge, and, wedding with charity, has indeed many other descendants, as a tree which has many branches; but that which gives life to the tree, to its branches, and its root, is the ground of humility, in which it is planted, which humility is the foster-mother and nurse of charity, by whose means this tree remains in the perpetual calm of discretion. Because otherwise the tree would not produce the virtue of discretion, or any fruit of life, if it were not planted in the virtue of humility, because humility proceeds from self-knowledge. And I have already said to you, that the root of discretion is a real knowledge of self and of My goodness, by which the soul immediately, and discreetly, renders to each one his due. Chiefly to Me in rendering praise and glory to My Name, and in referring to Me the graces and the gifts which she sees and knows she has received from Me; and rendering to herself that which she sees herself to have merited, knowing that she does not even exist of herself, and attributing to Me, and not to herself, her being, which she knows she has received by grace from Me, and every other grace which she has received besides.

And she seems to herself to be ungrateful for so many benefits, and negligent, in that she has not made the most of her time, and the graces she has received, and so seems to herself worthy of suffering; wherefore she becomes odious and displeasing to herself through her guilt. And this founds the virtue of discretion on knowledge of self, that is, on true humility, for, were this humility not in the soul, the soul would be indiscreet, indiscretion being founded on pride, as discretion is on humility.

An indiscreet soul robs Me of the honour due to Me, and attributes it to herself, through vainglory, and that which is really her own she imputes to Me, grieving and murmuring concerning My mysteries, with which I work in her soul and in those of My other creatures; wherefore everything in Me and in her neighbour is cause of scandal to her. Contrariwise those who possess the virtue of discretion. For, when they have rendered what is due to Me and to themselves, they proceed to render to their neighbour their principal debt of love, and of humble and continuous prayer, which all should pay to each other, and further, the debt of doctrine, and example of a holy and honourable life, counselling and helping others according to their needs for salvation, as I said to you above. Whatever rank a man be in, whether that of a noble, a prelate, or a servant, if he have this virtue, everything that he does to his neighbour is done discreetly and lovingly, because these virtues are bound and mingled together, and both planted in the ground of humility which proceeds from self-knowledge.” (from the Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena)

Day 15
Divine Mercy/ Low Sunday
24th April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins
Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Wrath / Cultivating Mercy

Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 13

Questions for Reflection:

- Do I know and understand in the depths of my heart that the love described by St. Paul is the disposition of God's Heart towards me?
- How does this (the awareness or lack thereof) affect how I live?
- Can I replace the word love (or charity) in St. Paul's description of its nature with my name - and recite it without having any pangs of conscience?
- If not, where am I falling short and how?

Spiritual Reading:

JMJ

The Year 1937

+ O Most Holy Trinity! As many times as I breathe, as many times as my heart beats, as many times as my blood pulsates through my body, so many thousand times do I want to glorify Your mercy.

+ I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbour.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbour's souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbours' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbour, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbours and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbour overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbour.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbour. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

+ You Yourself command me to exercise the three degrees of mercy. The first: the act of mercy, of whatever kind. The second: the word of mercy – if I cannot carry out a work of mercy, I will assist by my words. The third: prayer – if I cannot show mercy by deeds or words, I can always do so by prayer. My prayer reaches out even there where I cannot reach out physically.

O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for You can do all things. Amen.

(St. Faustina, Diary #163)

Day 16
Monday 25th April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins
Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Greed / Deepening One's Trust in God

Scripture Passage: 1 Timothy 6

Questions for Reflection:

- If the love of money is the 'root of all evil', how does it connect with the other evils St. Paul lists (v.4-7 of above passage)?
- To what degree is my life built upon the things which endure unto eternal life?
- Where can I invite Mary to better order my relationship with material goods?

Spiritual Reading:

The religious and moral traditions of Ireland, the very soul of Ireland, will be challenged by the temptations that spare no society in our age. Like so many other young people in various parts of the world, you will be told that changes must be made, that you must have more freedom, that you should be different from your parents, and that the decisions about your lives depend on you, and you alone.

Note: If you haven't been to Confession for Divine Mercy Sunday you might like to do so in the next few days as it is fitting to this week's meditations. If so, you could start planning this now...

The prospect of growing economic progress, and the chance of obtaining a greater share of the goods that modern society has to offer, will appear to you as an opportunity to achieve greater freedom. The more you possess—you may be tempted to think—the more you will feel liberated from every type of confinement. In order to make more money and to possess more, in order to eliminate effort and worry, you may be tempted to take moral shortcuts where honesty, truth and work are concerned. The progress of science and technology seems inevitable and you may be enticed to look towards the technological society for the answers to all your problems.

The lure of pleasure, to be had whenever and wherever it can be found, will be strong and it may be presented to you as part of progress towards greater autonomy and freedom from rules. The desire to be free from external restraints may manifest itself very strongly in the sexual domain, since this is an area that is so closely tied to a human personality. The moral standards that the Church and society have held up to you for so long a time, will be presented as obsolete and a hindrance to the full development of your own personality. Mass media, entertainment, and literature will present a model for living where all too often it is every man for himself, and where the unrestrained affirmation of self leaves no room for concern for others.

You will hear people tell you that your religious practices are hopelessly out of date, that they hamper your style and your future, that with everything that social and scientific progress has to offer, you will be able to organize your own lives, and that God has played out his role. Even many religious persons will adopt such attitudes, breathing them in from the surrounding atmosphere, without attending to the practical atheism that is at their origin.

A society that, in this way, has lost its higher religious and moral principles will become an easy prey for manipulation and for domination by the forces which, under the pretext of greater freedom, will enslave it ever more.

Yes, dear young people, do not close your eyes to the moral sickness that stalks your society today, and from which your youth alone will not protect you. How many young people have already warped their consciences and have substituted the true joy of life with drugs, sex, alcohol, vandalism and the empty pursuit of mere material possessions.

Something else is needed: something that you will find only in Christ...

(Pope St. John Paul II, homily in Galway 1979- i.e. the 'Young people of Ireland, I love you!' one!)

Day 17
Tuesday 26th April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins
Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Gluttony / The Value of Self Denial

Scripture Passage: Philippians 3

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I content with taking what I need in terms of food and drink, and do I receive what God gives as He gives it with simplicity and thanksgiving?
- In what ways should I deny my physical appetites to let spiritual desires grow?

Spiritual Reading:

We are gluttonous, my children, when we take food in excess, more than is required for the support of our poor body; when we drink beyond what is necessary, so as even to lose our senses and our reason.... Oh, how shameful is this vice! How it degrades us! See, it puts us below the brutes: the animals never drink more than to satisfy their thirst: they content themselves with eating enough; and we, when we have satisfied our appetite, when our body can bear no more, we still have recourse to all sorts of little delicacies; we take wine and liquors to excess! Is it not pitiful? We can no longer keep upon our legs; we fall, we roll into the ditch and into the mud, we become the laughing stock of everyone, even the sport of little children....

If death were to surprise us in this state, my children, we should not have time to recollect ourselves; we should fall in that state into the hands of the good God. What a misfortune, my children! How would our soul be surprised! How would it be astonished! We would shudder with horror at seeing the lost who are in Hell.... Do not let us be led by our appetite; we shall ruin our health, we shall lose our soul... A moment of pleasure in this world will cost us very dear in the other. There they will be tormented by a raging hunger and a devouring thirst; they will not even have a drop of water to refresh themselves; their tongue and their body will be consumed by the flames for a whole eternity....

O my children! we do not think about it; and yet that will not fail to happen to some amongst us, perhaps even before the end of the year! St. Paul said that those who give themselves to excess in eating and drinking shall not possess the kingdom of God. Let us reflect on these words! Look at the saints: they pass their life in penance, and we would pass ours in the midst of enjoyments and pleasures. St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, fasted all Advent, and also from St. John Baptist's day to the Assumption. Soon after, she began another Lent, which lasted till the feast of St. Michael. She lived upon bread and water only on Fridays and Saturdays, and on the vigils of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin and of the Apostles. They say that St. Bernard drank oil for wine. St. Isidore never ate without shedding tears! If we were good Christians, we should do as the saints have done.

We should gain a great deal for Heaven at our meals; we should deprive ourselves of many little things which, without being hurtful to our body, would be very pleasing to the good God; but we choose rather to satisfy our taste than to please God; we drown, we stifle our soul in wine and food. My children, God will not say to us at the Day of Judgment, "Give Me an account of your body"; but, "Give Me an account of your soul; what have you done with it?"... What shall we answer Him? Do we take as much care of our soul as of our body? O my children! let us no longer live for the pleasure of eating; let us live as the saints have done; let us mortify ourselves as they were mortified. The saints never indulged themselves in the pleasures of banqueting. Their pleasure was to feed on Jesus Christ! Let us follow their footsteps on this earth, and we shall gain the crown which they have in Heaven. (*St. John Vianney*)

Day 18

Wednesday 27th April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins

Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Envy / Seeing as God Sees

Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 12 & Matthew 10:40-42

Questions for Reflection:

- Are there particular areas in my life in which I am tempted to envy others?
- We need to ‘eagerly desire the greater gifts’, with a purity of intention that seeks to build the kingdom and rejoices in the gifts of others. Are my aspirations and desires in accord with love of God and of neighbour?
- What can I learn about envy and glory from the example of Jesus and Mary?

Spiritual Reading:

I often asked myself why God had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal measure of grace. I was filled with wonder when I saw extraordinary favours showered on great sinners like St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Mary Magdalen, and many others, whom He forced, so to speak, to receive His grace. In reading the lives of the Saints I was surprised to see that there were certain privileged souls, whom Our Lord favoured from the cradle to the grave, allowing no obstacle in their path which might keep them from mounting towards Him, permitting no sin to soil the spotless brightness of their baptismal robe. And again it puzzled me why so many poor savages should die without having even heard the name of God. Our Lord has deigned to explain this mystery to me. He showed me the book of nature, and I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden. He has been pleased to create great Saints who may be compared to the lily and the rose, but He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His Feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His Divine Eyes when He deigns to look down on them. And the more gladly they do His Will the greater is their perfection. I understood this also, that God's Love is made manifest as well in a simple soul which does not resist His grace as in one more highly endowed. In fact, the characteristic of love being self-abasement, if all souls resembled the holy Doctors who have illuminated the Church, it seems that God in coming to them would not stoop low enough. But He has created the little child, who knows nothing and can but utter feeble cries, and the poor savage who has only the natural law to guide him, and it is to their hearts that He deigns to stoop. These are the field flowers whose simplicity charms Him; and by His condescension to them Our Saviour shows His infinite greatness. As the sun shines both on the cedar and on the floweret, so the Divine Sun illumines every soul, great and small, and all correspond to His care—just as in nature the seasons are so disposed that on the appointed day the humblest daisy shall unfold its petals.

(St. Therese of Lisieux)

“The apostle says, No one can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3); and, There is not one who does good, not even one (Rom 3:13).

Therefore, whoever envies his brother the good that the Lord says or does in him incurs a sin of blasphemy, because he envies the Most High Himself Who says and does every good thing.” (St. Francis of Assisi, Admonitions)

Day 19

Thursday 28th April 2022

Part 2: Acquisition of Self Knowledge and Sorrow for sins

Theme: Unveiling and Vanquishing Lust / Singularity of Purpose

Scripture Passage: 2 Samuel 11 & Matthew 5:27-30

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I aware of the gaze of Jesus on my soul and are all the movements of my heart ordered towards meeting that gaze with love and purity of intention?
- Are all my relationships ordered towards God's glory?
- As I reach the end of the week in which I am praying for contrition and self knowledge, am I any closer to attaining to these two things?

Spiritual Reading:

Thursday, Nocturnal Adoration

When I came for adoration, an inner recollection took hold of me immediately, and I saw the Lord Jesus tied to a pillar, stripped of His clothes, and the scourging began immediately. I saw four men who took turns at striking the Lord with scourges. My heart almost stopped at the sight of these tortures. The Lord said to me, "I suffer even greater pain than that which you see." And Jesus gave me to know for what sins He subjected Himself to the scourging: these are sins of impurity. Oh, how dreadful was Jesus' moral suffering during the scourging! Then Jesus said to me, Look and see the human race in its present condition. In an instant, I saw horrible things: the executioners left Jesus, and other people started scourging Him; they seized the scourges and struck the Lord Mercilessly. These were priests, religious men and women, and high dignitaries of the Church, which surprised me greatly. There were lay people of all ages and walks of life. All vented their malice on the innocent Jesus. Seeing this, my heart fell as if into a mortal agony. And while the executioners had been scourging Him, Jesus had been silent and looking into the distance; but when those other souls I mentioned scourged Him, Jesus closed His eyes, and a soft but most painful moan escaped from His Heart.

And Jesus gave me to know in detail the gravity of the malice of the ungrateful souls: You see, this is a torture greater than My death. Then my lips too fell silent, and I began to experience the agony of death, and I felt that no one would comfort me or snatch me from that state but the One who had put me into it. Then the Lord said to me, I see the sincere pain of your heart which brought great solace to My Heart. See and take comfort.

Then I saw the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. When He had hung on it for a while, I saw a multitude of souls crucified like Him. Then I saw a second multitude of souls, and a third. The second multitude was not nailed to [their] crosses, but were holding them firmly in their hands. The third were neither nailed to [their] crosses nor holding them firmly in their hands, but were dragging [their] crosses behind them and were discontent. Jesus then said to me. Do you see these souls? Those who are like Me in the pain and contempt they suffer will be like Me also in glory. And those

▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪ who resemble Me less in pain and contempt will also bear less resemblance
▪ Now is the time to to Me in glory.
▪ read Appendix 4 for
▪ the first time, and to
▪ start considering the clergy. I also saw some crucified souls whom I knew, and this gave me great
▪ joy. Then Jesus said to me, In your meditation tomorrow, you shall think
▪ plan for your about what you have seen today. And immediately Jesus disappeared on me.
▪ consecration!
▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪

(St. Faustina, diary 445-446)

Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin

An introductory reading to consider the grace we seek this week

There is not and there will never be, either in God's creation or in his mind, a creature in whom he is so honoured as in the most Blessed Virgin Mary, not excepting even the saints, the cherubim or the highest seraphim in heaven.

Mary is God's garden of Paradise, his own unspeakable world, into which his Son entered to do wonderful things, to tend it and to take his delight in it. He created a world for the wayfarer, that is, the one we are living in. He created a second world - Paradise - for the Blessed. He created a third for himself, which he named Mary. She is a world unknown to most mortals here on earth. Even the angels and saints in heaven find her incomprehensible, and are lost in admiration of a God who is so exalted and so far above them, so distant from them, and so enclosed in Mary, his chosen world, that they exclaim: "Holy, holy, holy" unceasingly.

Happy, indeed sublimely happy, is the person to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the secret of Mary, thus imparting to him true knowledge of her... That person will find only grace and no creature in the most loveable Virgin Mary. But he will find that the infinitely holy and exalted God is at the same time infinitely solicitous for him and understands his weaknesses. Since God is everywhere, he can be found everywhere, even in hell. But there is no place where God can be more present to his creature and more sympathetic to human weakness than in Mary. It was indeed for this very purpose that he came down from heaven. Everywhere else he is the Bread of the strong and the Bread of angels, but living in Mary he is the Bread of children.

Let us not imagine, then, as some misguided teachers do, that Mary being simply a creature would be a hindrance to union with the Creator. Far from it, for it is no longer Mary who lives but Jesus Christ himself, God alone, who lives in her. Her transformation into God far surpasses that experienced by St Paul and other saints, more than heaven surpasses the earth. Mary was created only for God, and it is unthinkable that she should reserve even one soul for herself. On the contrary she leads every soul to God and to union with him. Mary is the wonderful echo of God. The more a person joins himself to her, the more effectively she unites him to God. When we say "Mary", she re-echoes "God"... The difficulty, then, is how to arrive at the true knowledge of the most holy Virgin and so find grace in abundance through her. God, as the absolute Master, can give directly what he ordinarily dispenses only through Mary, and it would be rash to deny that he sometimes does so. However, St Thomas assures us that, following the order established by his divine Wisdom, God ordinarily imparts his graces to men through Mary. Therefore, if we wish to go to him, seeking union with him, we must use the same means which he used in coming down from heaven to assume our human nature and to impart his graces to us. That means was a complete dependence on Mary his Mother, which is true devotion to her. (St. Louis Marie de Montfort)

Note:

Each daily theme of this section will consider Our Lady under a particular title from the Litany of Loreto.

Day 20

Friday 29th April 2022

Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin

Theme: Queen Conceived Without Original Sin

Scripture Passage: Sirach 14:20-15:20

Questions for Reflection:

- In the light of how our sins offend an infinitely holy God, and yet the lengths He is prepared to go to in order to purify us, what joy must Our Lady's spotless devotion give to Him?
- What does it mean for me to have a Heavenly Mother without spot or stain?
- Am I adequately fearless in entrusting myself to Our Lady's Maternal care and protection even in the depths of my soul, knowing she tends only to God?

Spiritual Reading:

As the architect has in his mind a plan of the house before the house is built, so God has in His Mind an archetypal idea of every flower, bird, tree, springtime, and melody. There never was a brush touched to canvas nor a chisel to marble without some great pre-existing idea. So, too, every atom and every rose is a realization and concretion of an idea existing in the Mind of God from all eternity. All creatures below man correspond to the pattern God has in His Mind. A tree is truly a tree because it corresponds to God's idea of a tree. A rose is a rose, because it is God's idea of a rose wrapped up in chemicals and tints and life. But it is not so with persons. God has to have two pictures of us: one is what we are, and the other is what we ought to be. He has the model, and He has the reality: the blueprint and the edifice, the score of the music and the way we play it. God has to have these two pictures because in each and every one of us there is some disproportion and want of conformity between the original plan and the way we have worked it out. The image is blurred; the print is faded. For one thing, our personality is not complete in time; we need a renewed body. Then, too, our sins diminish our personality; our evil acts daub the canvas the Master Hand designed. Like unhatched eggs, some of us refuse to be warmed by the Divine Love which is so necessary for incubation to a higher level. We are in constant need of repairs; our free acts do not coincide with the law of our being; we fall short of all God wants us to be. St. Paul tells us that we were predestined, before the foundations of the world were laid, to become the sons of God. But some of us will not fulfill that hope.

There is, actually, only one person in all humanity of whom God has one picture, and in whom there is a perfect conformity between what He wanted her to be and what she is, and that is His Own Mother. Most of us are a minus sign, in the sense that we do not fulfill the high hopes the Heavenly Father has for us. But Mary is the equal sign. The Ideal that God had of her, that she is, and in the flesh. The model and the copy are perfect; she is all that was foreseen, planned, and dreamed. The melody of her life is played, just as it was written. Mary was thought, conceived, and planned as the equal sign between ideal and history, thought and reality, hope and realization.

That is why, through the centuries, Christian liturgy has applied to her the words of the Book of Proverbs. Because she is what God wanted us all to be, she speaks of herself as the Eternal blueprint in the Mind of God, the one whom God loved before she was a creature. She is even pictured as being with Him not only at creation, but before creation. She existed in the Divine Mind as an Eternal Thought before there were any mothers. She is the Mother of mothers She is the World's First Love.

(Ven. Fulton J. Sheen,)

Day 21
Saturday 30th April 2022
Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin
Theme: Virgin Most Powerful

Scripture Passage: Luke 1

Questions for Reflection:

- What difference does it make that Mary not only was created without original sin, like Eve, but battled through a fallen world and remained unsullied by pride and impurity?
- Do I adequately trust Mary's intercession, in terms of the power of her virtue and intercession before God and against the enemies of our souls?

Spiritual Reading:

Who is this Virgin so reverently saluted by the angel and so lowly as to be espoused to a carpenter Beautiful commingling of virginity with humility! That soul is in no small degree pleasing to God, in Whom humility commends virginity, and virginity adorns humility. But how much more worthy of veneration is she, in whom fecundity exalts humility, and child-bearing consecrates virginity. Virginity is a commendable virtue, but humility an indispensable one. The first is of counsel, the latter of precept. Of the one it is said, "He that can take, let him take it." Of the other, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." To the one reward is offered: the other is exacted under a threat. Again, we can be saved without virginity, not without humility. A soul that has to deplore the loss of virginity may still be acceptable to God by humility: without humility, I will venture to say that even the virginity of Mary would not have been pleasing to Him, the Divine Majesty.

Upon whom shall my spirit rest, if not on him that is humble and peaceable, He says not on the virgin, but on the humble. If, therefore, Mary had not been humble the Spirit would not have rested on her. If the Holy Spirit had not rested on her, she would never have become fruitful; for how without Him could she have conceived of Him? Therefore, as she herself testifies, in order that she might conceive of the Holy Ghost, God the Father "regarded the humility of his handmaid," rather than her virginity. And if by her virginity she was acceptable to Him, nevertheless, it was by her humility that she conceived Him. Hence it is evident that it was her humility that rendered even her virginity pleasing to God ... Happy was Mary in whom neither humility nor virginity was wanting. O glorious virginity! Which fecundity honoured, but did not contaminate. O singular humility! that a fruitful virginity elevated but did not destroy. O incomparable fecundity! in which virginity was associated with humility.

Which of them is not wonderful, incomparable, unique? In pondering them, we are at a loss to decide which is the more worthy of admiration: the Virgin's fecundity, the Mother's integrity, or the adorable dignity of her offspring; or, again, that in such sublime elevation she still preserves her humility. Can we be surprised that God, Who is wonderful in His saints, should also show Himself wonderful in His Mother? Admire, ye married, and reverence her integrity in corruptible flesh! Ye sacred virgins, behold with astonishment this fruitful virgin! Let all Christians imitate the humility of the Mother of God! O holy angels, honour the Mother of your King! He is at once our King and yours, the Redeemer of our race, the replenisher of your city. To Him Who with you is so glorious, with us so humble, be rendered for ages without end, both by us and by you, the reverence due to His dignity and the honour and glory worthy of His infinite condescension. Amen. Amen.

(St. Bernard)

Day 22

Sunday 1st May 2022

Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin

Theme: Mother of Christ

Scripture Passage: Luke 2

Questions for Reflection:

- If receiving the total entrustment and filial obedience of God Himself only served to deepen Mary's humility, with what trust can I give myself to Her?

Spiritual Reading:

Since the beginning of the world it had not been heard that a woman was at once a virgin and a mother. And if you consider of whom she is the mother, how great will be your admiration of her exalted dignity! Do you feel as if you can never sufficiently praise it? Do you not judge, and rightly, that she who has the God-man for her Son is exalted in greatness above all the choirs of angels? Did not Mary confidently call the God and Lord of Angels her Son, saying:

"Son, why hast thou done so to us" Which of the angels would have presumed thus to speak? It is sufficient for them and something great, that while by nature they are spirits, by grace they are made and called angels, as David says: "Who maketh his angels spirits." In confidently calling God her Son, Mary acknowledges herself mother of that Majesty Whom those angels serve with reverential awe. Neither does God disdain to be called what He vouchsafed to be. For the Evangelist adds shortly after, "And he was subject to them" Who was subject? God, to man. God to Whom the angels are subject. God, Whom the powers and principalities obey, was subject to Mary. And not only to Mary, but to Joseph also for Mary's sake. Consider, then, and choose which you will most admire, the gracious condescension of the Son, or the surpassing dignity of the mother. Both are amazing; both are miraculous. That a God should obey a woman is humility without example; that a woman should command the Son of God is a dignity without parallel. In the praise of virgins we hear that wonderful verse: "They shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." But what praise, think you, is worthy of her who leads the way before Him? Learn, O man, to obey; learn, O earth, to be subject; learn, O dust, to be submissive. The Evangelist, speaking of your Creator, says: "He was subject to them" that is, of course, to Mary and Joseph.

...Blessed, then, is the fruit of thy womb, whom God hath blest for ever, and by whom thou thyself, O Mary, art blessed amongst women, because an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Blessed art thou amongst women, who didst escape that universal curse, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children", and that other, "Cursed is the barren in Israel."

Thou hast obtained the singular blessing of neither remaining sterile, nor bringing forth in sorrow. But who has taught thee, prudent Virgin, devout Virgin, that virginity is pleasing to God? What page of the Old Testament exhorted thee, what ordinance counselled thee, what law commanded thee to live in the flesh, yet not according to the flesh, and lead on earth the life of the angels? ... The unction of the Holy Spirit, Virgin, has taught thee all these things.

Before becoming thy Son God has been thy Master. Thou dost vow thyself as a chaste virgin to Christ, and thou knowest not thou shalt be His Mother. Thou wilt conceive, but without sin; thou wilt bring forth, but without sorrow; thou knowest not man, but thou wilt bear a Son. What Son? Thou wilt be Mother of Him whose Father is God. The Son of the Father's love will be the crown of thy chastity; the wisdom of the Father's mind will be the fruit of thy virginal womb. Of God, therefore, thou wilt conceive, and thou wilt bring forth a God. Take courage, then, fruitful Virgin, chaste Mother, spotless Mother; thou wilt no longer be accursed in Israel, nor reckoned among the barren. Thou wilt be blessed on earth by the angel, and all generations of the earth shall call thee blessed. "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." (St. Bernard)

Day 23
Monday 2nd May 2022
Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin
Theme: Mystical Rose

Scripture Passage: Wisdom 7:7 – 8:8

Questions for Reflection:

- How can I entrust my soul and prayer life more fully to Our Lady?

Spiritual Reading:

The Father begets; the Son is begotten; the Spirit is the “conception” that springs from their love; there we have the intimate life of the three Persons by which they can be distinguished one from another. But they are united in the oneness of their Nature, of their divine existence.

The spirit is, then this thrice holy “conception,” this infinitely holy, Immaculate Conception. ...Union means love, creative love. Divine activity, outside the Trinity itself, follows the same pattern. First, God creates the universe; that is something like a separation. Creatures, by following the natural law implanted in them by God, reach their perfection, become like him, and go back to him. Intelligent creatures love him in the conscious manner; through this love they unite themselves more and more closely with him, and so find their way back to him. The creature most completely filled with this love, filled with God himself, was the Immaculata, who never contracted the slightest stain of sin, who never departed in the least from God’s will. United to the Holy Spirit as his spouse, she is one with God in an incomparably more perfect way than can be predicated of any other creature.

What sort of union is this? It is above all an interior union, a union of her essence with the “essence” of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in her, lives in her. This was true from the first instant of her existence. It was always true; it will always be true.

In what does this life of the Spirit in Mary consist? He himself is uncreated Love in her; the Love of the Father and of the Son, the Love by which God loves himself, the very love of the Most Holy Trinity. He is a fruitful Love, a “Conception.” Among creatures made in God’s image the union brought about by married love is the most intimate of all (cf. Mt. 19,6). In a much more precise, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of her very being. He makes her fruitful, from the very first instant of her existence, all during her life, and for all eternity.

This eternal “Immaculate Conception” (which is the Holy Spirit) produces in an immaculate manner divine life itself in the womb (or depths) of Mary’s soul, making her the Immaculate Conception, the human Immaculate Conception. And the virginal womb of Mary’s body is kept sacred for him; there he conceives in time- because everything that is material occurs in time- the human life of the man-God.

And so the return to God (which is love), that is to say the equal and contrary reaction, follows a different path from that found in creation. The path of creation goes from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit; this return trail goes from the Spirit through the Son back to the Father; in other words, by the Spirit the Son becomes incarnate in the Womb of the Immaculata; and through this Son love returns to the Father.

And she (the Immaculata), grafted into the Love of the Blessed Trinity, becomes from the first moment of her existence and forever thereafter the “complement of the Blessed Trinity”.

In the Holy Spirit’s union with Mary we observe more than the love of two beings; in one there is all the love of the Blessed Trinity; in the other, all of creation’s love. So it is that in this union heaven and earth are joined; all of heaven with all the earth, the totality of eternal love with the totality of created love. It is truly the summit of love. (St. Maximilian Kolbe)

Day 24
Tuesday 3rd May 2022
Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin
Theme: Seat of Wisdom

Scripture Passage: Wisdom 8:9 – 9:9:18

Questions for Reflection:

- How can I better invite Our Lady to help me to attain to true wisdom and to be open to responding to it fruitfully?

Spiritual Reading:

Mary has this title in her Litany, because the Son of God, who is also called in Scripture the Word and Wisdom of God, once dwelt in her, and then, after His birth of her, was carried in her arms and seated in her lap in His first years. Thus, being as it were, the human throne of Him who reigns in heaven, she is called the "Seat of Wisdom." In the poet's words:

His throne, thy bosom blest,
O Mother undefiled.
That Throne, if aught beneath the skies,
Beseems the sinless Child.

But the possession of her Son lasted beyond His infancy—He was under her rule, as St. Luke tells us, and lived with her in her house, till He went forth to preach—that is, for at least a whole thirty years. And this brings us to a reflection about her, cognate to that which was suggested to us yesterday by the title of "Mirror of Justice." For if such close and continued intimacy with her Son created in her a sanctity inconceivably great, must not also the knowledge which she gained during those many years from His conversation of present, past, and future, have been so large, and so profound, and so diversified, and so thorough, that, though she was a poor woman without human advantages, she must in her knowledge of creation, of the universe, and of history, have excelled the greatest of philosophers, and in her theological knowledge the greatest of theologians, and in her prophetic discernment the most favoured of prophets?

What was the grand theme of conversation between her and her Son but the nature, the attributes, the providence, and the works of Almighty God? Would not our Lord be ever glorifying the Father who sent Him? Would He not unfold to her the solemn eternal decrees, and the purposes and will of God? Would He not from time to time enlighten her in all those points of doctrine which have been first discussed and then settled in the Church from the time of the Apostles till now, and all that shall be till the end—nay, these, and far more than these? All that is obscure, all that is fragmentary in revelation, would, so far as the knowledge is possible to man, be brought out to her in clearness and simplicity by Him who is the Light of the World.

And so of the events which are to come. God spoke to the Prophets: we have His communications to them in Scripture. But He spoke to them in figure and parable. There was one, viz., Moses, to whom He vouchsafed to speak face to face. "If there be among you a prophet of the Lord," God says, "I will appear to him in a vision, and I will speak to him in a dream. But it is not so with my servant Moses... For I will speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord." This was the great privilege of the inspired Lawgiver of the Jews; but how much was it below that of Mary! Moses had the privilege only now and then, from time to time; but Mary for thirty continuous years saw and heard Him, being all through that time face to face with Him, and being able to ask Him any question which she wished explained, and knowing that the answers she received were from the Eternal God, who neither deceives nor can be deceived. (Bl. John Henry Newman)

Day 25
Wednesday 4th May 2022
Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin
Theme: Help of Christians

Scripture Passage: John 2

Questions for Reflection:

- What difference does it make to one's spiritual life to have Mary's assistance offered freely at all times – and how can I better avail of this?

“In the midst of this endless sea, two solid columns, a short distance apart, soar high into the sky. One is surmounted by a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, at whose feet a large inscription reads:” ‘Auxilium Christianorum’ (‘Help of Christians’). The other, far loftier and sturdier, supports a Host of proportionate size, and bears beneath it the inscription: ‘Salus credentium’ (‘Salvation of believers’).

The flagship commander – the Roman Pontiff- standing at the helm, strains every muscle to steer his ship between the two columns, from whose summits hang many anchors and strong hooks linked to chains. The entire enemy fleet closes in to intercept and sink the flagship at all costs. They bombard it with everything they have: books and pamphlets, incendiary bombs, firearms, cannons. The battle rages ever more furious. Beaked prows ram the flagship again and again, but to no avail, as, unscathed and undaunted, it keeps on its course. At times, a formidable ram splinters a gaping hole in its hull, but immediately, a breeze from the two columns instantly seals the gash.

Meanwhile, enemy cannons blow up; firearms and beaks fall to pieces; ships crack up and sink to the bottom. In blind fury, the enemy takes to hand-to-hand combat, cursing and blaspheming. Suddenly the Pope falls, seriously wounded. He is instantly helped up, but struck a second time, dies. A shout of victory rises from the enemy, and wild rejoicing seeps their ships. But no sooner is the Pope dead than another takes his place. The captains of the auxiliary ships elected him so quickly that the news of the Pope's death coincides with that of his successor's election. The enemy's self-assurance wanes.

Breaking through all resistance, the new Pope steers his ship safely between the two columns; first, to the one surmounted by the Host, and then the other, topped by the statue of the Virgin. At this point, something unexpected happens. The enemy ships panic and disperse, colliding with and scuttling each other. Some auxiliary ships, which had gallantly fought alongside their flagship, are the first to tie up at the two columns. Many others, which had fearfully kept far away from the fight, stand still, cautiously waiting until the wrecked enemy ships vanish under the waves. Then they too head for the two columns, tie up at the swinging hooks and ride safe and tranquil beside their flagship. A great calm now covers the sea. ”

(St. John Bosco)

From the story of Fatima:

“Yes. I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and those souls will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.”

Lucia felt sad when the Lady told her this. So she asked, “Am I to stay here alone?”

“No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.”

Day 26
Thursday 5th May 2022
Part 3: Acquisition of Understanding of the Blessed Virgin
Theme: Singular Vessel of Devotion

Scripture Passage: Revelation 12

Questions for Reflection:

- What is the significance of Mary's role in salvation history, and what are the implications of this for me in fighting spiritual battles and becoming a saint?

It is by Mary that the salvation of the world has begun, and it is by Mary that it must be consummated. Mary has hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him, in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her.... But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost, in order that by her Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His Spouse during her life, and to reveal her but a very little since the preaching of the Gospel, subsist no longer.

God, then, wishes to reveal and discover Mary, the masterpiece of His hands, in these latter times:

§ 1. Because she hid herself in this world, and put herself lower than the dust by her profound humility, having obtained of God and of His Apostles and Evangelists that she should not be made manifest.

§ 2. Because, being the masterpiece of the hands of God, as well here below by grace as in heaven by glory, He wishes to be glorified and praised in her by those who are living upon the earth.

§ 3. As she is the aurora which precedes and discovers the Sun of Justice, who is Jesus Christ, she ought to be recognised and perceived, in order that Jesus Christ may be so.

§ 4. Being the way by which Jesus Christ came to us the first time, she will also be the way by which He will come the second time, though not in the same manner.

§ 5. Being the sure means and the straight and immaculate way to go to Jesus Christ, and to find Him perfectly, it is by her that the holy souls, who are to shine forth especially in sanctity, have to find our Lord. He who shall find Mary shall find life; that is, Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But no one can find Mary who does not seek her; and no one can seek her, who does not know her: for we cannot seek or desire an unknown object. It is necessary, then, for the greater knowledge and glory of the Most Holy Trinity, that Mary should be more known than ever.

§ 6. Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, in might, and in grace, in these latter times: in mercy, to bring back and lovingly receive the poor strayed sinners who shall be converted and shall return to the Catholic Church; in might, against the enemies of God, idolaters, schismatics, Mahometans, Jews, and souls hardened in impiety, who shall rise in terrible revolt against God to seduce all those who shall be contrary to them, and to make them fall by promises and threats; and, finally, she must shine forth in grace, in order to animate and sustain the valiant soldiers and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, who shall do battle for His interests.

§ 7. And, lastly, Mary must be terrible to the devil and his crew, as an army ranged in battle, principally in these latter times, because the devil, knowing that he has but little time, and now less than ever, to destroy souls, will every day redouble his efforts and his combats. He will presently raise up new persecutions, and will put terrible snares before the faithful servants and true children of Mary, whom it gives him more trouble to surmount than it does to conquer others.

(St. Louis Marie de Montfort)

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

An introductory reading to consider the grace we seek this week
from The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis

He who follows Me, walks not in darkness," says the Lord. By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna. Now, there are many who hear the Gospel often but care little for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ.

What good does it do to speak learnedly about the Trinity if, lacking humility, you displease the Trinity? Indeed it is not learning that makes a man holy and just, but a virtuous life makes him pleasing to God. I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it. For what would it profit us to know the whole Bible by heart and the principles of all the philosophers if we live without grace and the love of God? Vanity of vanities and all is vanity, except to love God and serve Him alone.

...Happy is he to whom truth manifests itself, not in signs and words that fade, but as it actually is. Our opinions, our senses often deceive us and we discern very little. What good is much discussion of involved and obscure matters when our ignorance of them will not be held against us on Judgment Day? Neglect of things which are profitable and necessary and undue concern with those which are irrelevant and harmful, are great folly. We have eyes and do not see.

What, therefore, have we to do with questions of philosophy? He to whom the Eternal Word speaks is free from theorizing. For from this Word are all things and of Him all things speak -- the Beginning Who also speaks to us. Without this Word no man understands or judges aright. He to whom it becomes everything, who traces all things to it and who sees all things in it, may ease his heart and remain at peace with God.

O God, You Who are the truth, make me one with You in love everlasting. I am often wearied by the many things I hear and read, but in You is all that I long for. Let the learned be still, let all creatures be silent before You; You alone speak to me. The more recollected a man is, and the more simple of heart he becomes, the easier he understands sublime things, for he receives the light of knowledge from above. The pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by many labours, for he does them all for the honour of God.

Note: As this is the final week before consecration day, it may be worth taking a look over the preparatory checklist on p.42 in advance, in case any planning may take more than 24 hours!

Note:

Each daily theme of this section will consider Our Lord under a particular title from the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Day 27
Friday 6th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, Splendour of the Father

Scripture Passage: John 1:1-18

Questions for Reflection:

- The Incarnation is central to Christian belief – how central is it in my life?

Spiritual Reading

The Word was from the beginning, the Only-begotten Son of God. Before all worlds were created, while as yet time was not, He was in existence, in the bosom of the Eternal Father, God from God, and Light from Light, supremely blessed in knowing and being known of Him, and receiving all divine perfections from Him, yet ever One with Him who begat Him. As it is said in the opening of the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..."

He, indeed, when man fell, might have remained in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But that unsearchable Love, which showed itself in our original creation, rested not content with a frustrated work, but brought Him down again from His Father's bosom to do His will, and repair the evil which sin had caused. And with a wonderful condescension He came, not as before in power, but in weakness, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of that fallen creature whom He purposed to restore. So He humbled Himself; suffering all the infirmities of our nature in the likeness of sinful flesh, all but a sinner,—pure from all sin, yet subjected to all temptation,—and at length becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross...

Let us then, according to the light given us, praise and bless Him in the Church below, whom Angels in heaven see and adore. Let us bless Him for His surpassing loving-kindness in taking upon Him our infirmities to redeem us, when He dwelt in the inner-most love of the Everlasting Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was. He came in lowliness and want; born amid the tumults of a mixed and busy multitude, cast aside into the outhouse of a crowded inn, laid to His first rest among the brute cattle. He grew up, as if the native of a despised city, and was bred to a humble craft. He bore to live in a world that slighted Him, for He lived in it, in order in due time to die for it. He came as the appointed Priest, to offer sacrifice for those who took no part in the act of worship; He came to offer up for sinners that precious blood which was meritorious by virtue of His Divine Anointing. He died, to rise again the third day, the Sun of Righteousness, fully displaying that splendour which had hitherto been concealed by the morning clouds. He rose again, to ascend to the right hand of God, there to plead His sacred wounds in token of our forgiveness, to rule and guide His ransomed people, and from His pierced side to pour forth his choicest blessings upon them. He ascended, thence to descend again in due season to judge the world which He has redeemed.—Great is our Lord, and great is His power, Jesus the Son of God and Son of man. Ten thousand times more dazzling bright than the highest Archangel, is our Lord and Christ. By birth the Only-begotten and Express image of God; and in taking our flesh, not sullied thereby, but raising human nature with Him, as He rose from the lowly manger to the right hand of power,—raising human nature, for Man has redeemed us, Man is set above all creatures, as one with the Creator, Man shall judge man at the last day. So honoured is this earth, that no stranger shall judge us, but He who is our fellow, who will sustain our interests, and has full sympathy in all our imperfections... He who has given us to share His own spiritual nature, He from whom we have drawn the life's blood of our souls, He our brother will decide about His brethren. In that His second coming, may He in His grace and loving pity remember us, who is our only hope, our only salvation! (St. John Henry Cardinal Newman)

Day 28
Saturday 7th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary

Scripture Passage: John 19:16-30

Questions for Reflection:

- What does Jesus' Sonship of Mary and the way in which God willed to become Incarnate mean to me as I prepare for Marian consecration?

Spiritual Reading

The key to understanding Mary is this: We do not start with Mary. We start with Christ, the Son of the Living God! The less we think of Him, the less we think of her; the more we think of Him, the more we think of her; the more we adore His Divinity, the more we venerate her Motherhood; the less we adore His Divinity, the less reason we have for respecting her ... It is on account of Our Divine Lord that Mary receives special attention, and not on account of herself. Left to herself, her motherhood would dissolve into humanity. But when seen in the light of His Divinity, she becomes unique. Our Lord is God Who became Man. Never before or since did Eternity become time in a woman, nor did Omnipotence take on the bonds of flesh in a maid. It is her Son who makes her Motherhood different...

As we study His Divine Life ... we know that it all began when He took on our human nature and became man. If He had never taken on our human flesh, we would never have heard His Sermon on the Mount, nor have seen Him forgive those who dug His Hands and Feet with nails on the Cross. But the Woman gave our Lord His human nature. He asked her to give Him a human life to give Him hands with which to bless children, feet with which to go in search of stray sheep, eyes with which to weep over dead friends, and a body with which to suffer that He might give us a rebirth in freedom and love.

It was through her that He became the bridge between the Divine and the human. If we take her away, then either God does not become man, or He that is born of her is a man and not God. Without her we would no longer have Our Lord! If we have a box in which we keep our money, we know that one thing we must always give attention to is the key; we never think that the key is the money, but we know that without the key we cannot get our money. Our Blessed Mother is like the key. Without her we can never get to Our Lord, because He came through her. She is not to be compared to Our Lord, for she is a creature and He is a Creator. But if we lose her, we cannot get to Him. That is why we pay so much attention to her; without her we could never understand how that bridge was built between Heaven and earth.

It may be objected: "Our Lord is enough for me. I have no need of her." But He needed her, whether we do or not. And, what is more important, Our Blessed Lord gave us His Mother as our Mother. On that Friday men call Good, when He was unfurled upon the Cross as the banner of salvation, He looked down to the two most precious creatures He had on earth: His Mother and His beloved disciple, John. The night before, at the Last Supper, He had made His last Will and Testament giving us that which on dying no man was ever able to give, namely, Himself in the Holy Eucharist. Thus He would be with us, as He said: "All days unto the consummation of the world." Now in the darkening shadows of Calvary, He adds a codicil to His Will. There beneath the Cross, not prostrate as the Gospel notes, "stood" His Mother. As a Son, He thought of His Mother; as a Saviour, He thought of us. So He gave to us His Mother: "Behold thy mother."
(Ven. Fulton J. Sheen)

Day 29

Sunday 8th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, Teacher of Apostles

Scripture Passage: Matthew 5-7 (not all of the selected passage needs to be read, choose the parts that most help you to encounter and come to know Jesus)

Questions for Reflection:

- How can I learn to know and follow more faithfully the teaching of Christ?
- What is Jesus asking of me today in order to deepen my commitment to Him?

Spiritual Reading

The Lord Jesus, having called together His disciples, and drawn them apart from the crowd, went up with them into Mount Tabor, about two leagues from Nazareth, that He might impart to them His Doctrine for it was fitting that He should teach them first and before others, as He was about to make them the masters and guides over others. Then He instructed them in many things, in sermon full of beauty and richness and no marvel, for the mouth of the Lord delivered it. He taught them the Beatitudes, and about prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, and many other truths concerning virtues, which you can find in the Gospel itself. You should read it diligently and frequently, and commit to memory the record of it, for it is the essence of all that is spiritual...

Let it suffice here to remark, that the Lord at the very beginning of this Sermon speaks of poverty, giving us to understand thereby, that poverty is the primary foundation of all spiritual discipline. By no means, then, can any one truly follow Christ, the mirror of poverty, when he is loaded with earthly riches. He is not free, but slave, whose mind is under the dominion of temporal things. Therefore He says, Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc. For of the thing which affectionately love, make myself, of my own will, the slave. 'For love, as S. Augustine says, is weight of the soul, and bears it whither it is carried itself. And nothing should be loved except God or for God. Truly, therefore, it is said, Blessed are the poor," for they set no value on anything for God's sake, and thus their union with Him is very close. But of this poverty S. Bernard says thus: "Poverty is sort of powerful wing, with which we can swiftly fly to the kingdom of Heaven. For in the other virtues which follow, the promise points to some future time but with poverty it is not so much promise as gift, for it is said of the poor, theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

...But let us return to our meditation. Behold, then, and observe the Lord Jesus humbly sitting on the ground on the mountain, and His disciples round Him how He was among them, as if one of them and how affectionately, kindly, beautifully, and effectively He speaks to them, attracting them to the acts of the several virtues of which He speaks. And on every occasion, as have before advised, try to contemplate His Face. Regard, too, His disciples, how humbly, reverently, and with what fixedness of mind they behold Him, and hearken to His wondrous words, and commit them to memory, and see what delight they enjoy in His every utterance and glance. In this contemplation, you try to share that sweetness of communion with Him, as if you yourself saw Him speaking, and were ready, at His bidding, to draw closer to His side, and to stay as long as the Lord permits you.

At the end of the sermon, behold the Lord Jesus, together with His disciples, coming down from the mount and how, as He went on His way, the crowd of poor people in flocks follow Him, not in any formal procession, but as the hen is followed by her chickens, so that, whoever was able, might get near Him, and hear the better what He was saying. See also the crowds coming lovingly to meet Him, and bringing their sick to be restored. "And He healed them all."

(St. Bonaventure)

Day 30 Monday 9th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ
Theme: Jesus , Good Shepherd

Scripture Passage: John 10 (for shorter reading, take v.1-30)

Questions for Reflection:

- How can I more faithfully follow and rely upon Jesus as my Shepherd?
- How can I deepen my recognition of and responsivity to His Voice in my life?

Spiritual Reading

He proves He is a shepherd by the two signs of a shepherd already mentioned. The first of these is that He calls his own sheep by name. Concerning this He says, I know my own... I know, I say, not just with mere knowledge only, but with a knowledge joined with approval and love... The second sign is that the sheep hear his voice and know him. And concerning this He says, and my own know me. My own, I say, by predestination, by vocation and by grace. This is like saying: They love me and obey me. Thus, we must understand that they have a loving knowledge about which we read: "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer 31:34).

He shows that He is a good shepherd by mentioning that He has the office of a good shepherd, which is to lay down His life for His sheep. First, He shows the reason for this; secondly, He gives a sign of it; and thirdly, He shows the fruit of his sign.

The reason for this sign, that is, of his laying down his life for his sheep, is the knowledge He has of the Father. Concerning this He says, as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. This statement can be explained in two ways. In one way, so that "as" indicates just a similarity in knowledge; and taken this way, such knowledge can be given to a creature: "I shall know even as I am known" [1 Cor 13:12], i.e., as I am known without obscurity, so I will know without obscurity. In another way, the "as" implies an equality of knowledge. And then to know the Father as He is known by him is proper to the Son alone, because only the Son knows the Father comprehensively, just as the Father knows the Son comprehensively: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son" (Matt 11:27), ... Our Lord says this because in knowing the Father, He knows the will of the Father that the Son should die for the salvation of the human race. He is also saying here that He is the mediator between God and man. For as He is related to the sheep as known by them and as knowing them, so also He is related to the Father, because as the Father knows him, so He knows the Father.

Then when He says, and I lay down my life for the sheep, He gives the sign: "By this we know love, that He laid down his life for us" (1 Jn 3:16). But since there are three substances in Christ, namely the substance of the Word, of the soul, and of the body, one might ask who is speaking when He says, I lay down my life ["my life" can also be literally translated as "my soul"]. If you say that the Word is speaking here, it is not true, because the Word never laid down his soul, since He was never separated from his soul. If you say that the soul is speaking, this too seems impossible, because nothing is separated from itself. And if you say that Christ says this referring to his body, it does not seem to be so, because his body does not have the power to take up its soul. Therefore, one must say that when Christ died, his soul was separated from his flesh, otherwise Christ would not have been truly dead. But in Christ, his divinity was never separated from his soul or his flesh; but was united to his soul, as it descended to the lower world, and to his body, as it lay in the tomb. And therefore, his body, by the power of his divinity, laid down his soul [or life] by the power of his divinity, and took it up again.

Then when He says, and I have other sheep, He sets down the fruit of Christ's death, which is the salvation not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. (St. Thomas Aquinas)

Day 31

Tuesday 10th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, Most Obedient

Scripture Passage: Luke 22: 24-71

Questions for Reflection:

- How does the example of Jesus turn the idea that obedience is something weak or merely passive on its head?
- What are the implications of Jesus' obedience for me in following Him?

Spiritual Reading

Obedience does not mean the execution of orders that are given by a drill sergeant. It springs, rather, from the love of an order, and love of Him who gave it. The merit of obedience is less in the act than in the love; the submission, the devotion, and the service which obedience implies are not born of servitude, but are rather effects that spring from and are unified by love. Obedience is servility only to those who have not understood the spontaneity of love.

To comprehend obedience, one must study it between two great moments. The first moment was when a woman made an act of obedience to the Will of God: "Be it done unto me according to Thy Word." The other moment was when a woman asked man to be obedient to God: "Do whatever He tells you." Between these historical facts is the story told by Luke: "And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their city Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God was in Him... And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them, and His mother kept all these words in her heart. Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" (Luke 2:39, 40, 51, 52)

For the reparation of the pride of men, Our Blessed Lord humbled Himself in obedience to His parents: "And he was subject to them." It was God who was subject to man... He gave the supreme lesson of that virtue which is the foundation of all Christianity humility, submission, and a hidden life as a preparation for duty.

Our Lord spent three hours in redeeming, three years in teaching, and thirty years in obeying, in order that a rebellious, proud, and diabolically independent world might learn the value of obedience. Home life is the God-appointed training ground of human character, for from the home life of the child springs the maturity of manhood, either for good or for evil. The only recorded acts of Our Blessed Lord's childhood are acts of obedience to God, His Heavenly Father, and also to Mary and Joseph.

Returning again to the idea of His obedience: the Gospel indicates immediately three effects of Our Lord's submission and obedience, namely, growth in age and grace and wisdom... If thirty-three be taken as the age of full bodily growth and development, it would seem that Our Blessed Lord's ardent love for humanity waited until that age, when He had attained perfect growth and vigour, in order that He might offer His life in sacrifice at its very fullness. As the act of His Will was total and complete, so the human nature which He would sacrifice on the Cross would not be wanting in anything for its perfect oblation. Obedience to the law of nature produces physical maturity; obedience to the law of parents produces mental maturity; obedience to the Will of the Heavenly Father produces spiritual maturity. Our Blessed Lord, therefore, as the Lamb of God, submitted Himself to the shepherding of His Mother so that He might be physically perfect and without stain for the great day of His sacrifice on which He would be offered without opening His mouth. (Ven. Fulton J. Sheen)

Day 32

Wednesday 11th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, Crown of all Saints

Scripture Passage: Revelation 21-22

Questions for Reflection:

- How can the contemplation of what Jesus died to win for me change me?
- How can I allow Jesus to draw me into the life of Heaven even on earth?

Spiritual Reading

‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord’ When the soul enters the kingdom of the blessed, and the barrier which hinders its sight is taken away, it will see openly and without a veil the infinite beauty of God; and this will be the joy of the blessed.

Every object that the soul then will see in God himself will overwhelm it with delight; it will see the rectitude of his judgments, the harmony of his regulations for every soul, all ordained to his divine glory, and its own good. The soul will especially perceive, in respect to itself, the boundless love which God has entertained towards it in becoming man, and sacrificing his life upon the cross through love of it. Then will it know what an excess of goodness is comprehended in the mystery of the cross, in the sight of a God become a servant, and dying condemned upon an infamous tree; and in the mystery of the Eucharist, in the sight of a God beneath the species of bread, and made the food of his creatures. In particular the soul will perceive all the graces and favours shown to it, which, until then, had been hidden. It will see all the mercies he has bestowed on it, in waiting for it, and pardoning its ingratitude.... It will see that these tribulations, these infirmities, these losses of property or of kindred, which it counted punishments, were not really punishments, but loving arrangements of God for drawing it to the perfect love for him. In a word, all these things will make the soul know the infinite goodness of its God, and the boundless love which he deserves; whence, so soon as it has reached heaven, it will have no other desire but to behold him in his blessedness and content; and, at the same time, comprehending that the happiness of God is supreme, infinite, and eternal, it will experience a joy that is only not infinite because a creature is not capable of anything that is infinite. It will enjoy, nevertheless, a pleasure that is extreme and full, which fills it with delight, and with that kind of delight that belongs to God himself...

The blessed are not so much blessed through the delight which they experience in themselves as in the joy with which God rejoices; for the blessed love God so infinitely more than themselves that the blessedness of God delights them infinitely more than their own blessedness, through the love which they bear to him; which love makes them forget themselves, and all their delight is to please their Beloved... Happy from their first entrance into heaven, they continue, as it were, lost, and, so to say, swallowed up in love, in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God. Wherefore every blessed soul will lose all its desires, and will have no other desire but to love God, and to be loved by him; and knowing that it is sure of ever loving him, and of being ever loved by him, this very thing will be its blessedness, which will fill it with joy, and will make it throughout eternity so satisfied with delight that it will desire nothing more. In a word, it will be the paradise of the blessed, to rejoice in the joy of God. And thus, he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy through eternity, can say that even in this life he enters into the joy of God, and begins to enjoy Paradise. Yet, O my sweet Saviour, and the love of my soul! In this vale of tears I still see myself surrounded by enemies, who would separate me from Thee. O my beloved Lord! suffer me not to perish; make me ever love Thee in this life and in the next life, and then do with me what Thou wilt. O Queen of Paradise! if thou prayest for me, assuredly I shall be with thee eternally, to be in thy company, and to praise thee in Paradise. (St. Alphonsus Liguori)

Day 33

Thursday 12th May 2022

Part 4: Acquisition of a Deeper Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Theme: Jesus, God of Peace

Scripture Passage: John 14

Questions for Reflection:

- What is the nature of Christ's Peace and how does it differ from that offered by the world?
- Are there ways in which I can allow myself to enter into and cleave to His peace more faithfully, so as to know and follow Him more faithfully?
- How can I, in and through my upcoming consecration, give myself to Jesus through Mary and help to establish Christ's peace in the world?

Spiritual Reading

"Were we to do a few things, we should find peace: let us have a pure intention to seek on all occasions the honour and glory of God; let us perform the little we can for this object, according to the advice of our spiritual father, and leave the rest to God. Why should he who has God for the object of his intentions, and who does what he can, torment himself? Why should he trouble himself? What has he to fear? No, no, God is not so terrible to those who love Him; He is content with a little, for He knows that we have not much.

And know that Our Lord is called in Scripture the Prince of Peace, and hence, wherever He is absolute Master, He preserves peace. It is nevertheless true, that, before establishing peace in any place, He first makes war there, separating the heart and soul from their dearest and most intimate affections, such as immoderate love of oneself, confidence and complacency in oneself, and other like evils. When Our Lord separates us from these cherished and favourite passions, it seems as if He excoriated our living heart, and we are filled with the most bitter sentiments; we can hardly prevent our whole soul from discussing its misfortune, so sensible is this separation.

But all this disputation of mind is not inconsistent with peace, when, though almost submerged by desolation, we still keep our will resigned to that of Our Lord, nailed to His divine good pleasure, and cease not from the performance of our duties, but fulfil them courageously. Of which Our Lord gives us an example in the Garden; for, overwhelmed with interior and exterior affliction, He resigned His heart sweetly into His Father's will, saying: "Not my will, but Thine be done," and ceased not, great as was His anguish, to visit and admonish His disciples. To preserve peace in the midst of war, and sweetness in the midst of bitterness, is indeed worthy of the Prince of Peace.

From what I have just said, I desire you to draw three conclusions: first, that we often imagine peace to be lost, because we are in pain, while it is not lost, as may easily be known by the fact that we still wish to renounce ourselves, to depend on the good pleasure of God, and to fulfil the duties of our state; second, that we must of necessity endure interior pain, while God tears away the last remnant of the old man, to renovate us in the new man who is created according to God, and therefore we should not be troubled, or suppose that we have fallen into disgrace with Our Lord; third, that all those thoughts which cause vexation and agitation of mind cannot proceed from God, who is the Prince of Peace, but are temptations of the enemy, and therefore to be rejected and disregarded."

(St. Francis de Sales)

Final Considerations before Consecration Day

By this stage the following should be in place:

- ✓ The prayer to be prayed in order to make the consecration
- ✓ Any concrete resolutions or changes one desires to make in order to live Marian consecration more fruitfully henceforth.
- ✓ My devotional plans for the day – do I intend to confess, go to Mass, pray the Rosary, sign a copy of the consecration... etc.
- ✓ Any practical arrangements I need to make for the above.

I have said that this devotion may most justly be called a perfect renewal of the vows or promises of holy Baptism. For every Christian, before his Baptism, was the slave of the devil, seeing that he belonged to him. He has in his Baptism, by his own mouth or by his sponsor's, solemnly renounced Satan, his pomps and his works; and he has taken Jesus Christ for his Master and Sovereign Lord, to depend upon Him in the quality of a slave of love. This is what we do by the present devotion. We renounce, as is expressed in the formula of consecration, the devil, the world, sin, and self; and we give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary. Nay, we even do something more; for, in Baptism, we ordinarily speak by the mouth of another, namely, by our godfather or godmother, and so we give ourselves to Jesus Christ not by ourselves but through another. But in this devotion we do it by ourselves, voluntarily, knowing what we are doing. Moreover, in holy Baptism, we do not give ourselves to Jesus by the hands of Mary, at least not in an expressed manner; and we do not give Him the value of our good actions. We remain entirely free after Baptism, either to apply them to whom we please or to keep them for ourselves. But, by this devotion, we give ourselves to our Lord expressly by the hands of Mary, and we consecrate to Him the value of all our actions.

Men, says St. Thomas, make a vow at their Baptism to renounce the devil and all his pomps... This vow, says St. Augustine, is the greatest and most indispensable of all vows... Yet who has kept this great vow? Who is it that faithfully performs the promises of holy Baptism? Have not almost all Christians swerved from the loyalty which they promised Jesus in their Baptism? Whence can come this universal disobedience, except from our oblivion of the promises and engagements of holy Baptism, and from the fact that hardly any one ratifies of himself the contract he made with God by those who stood sponsors for him?

...Now if the Councils, the Fathers, and experience even, show us that the best means of remedying the irregularities of Christians is by making them call to mind the obligations of their Baptism, and persuading them to renew now the vows they made then, does it not stand to reason that we shall do it in a perfect manner, by this devotion and consecration of ourselves to our Lord, through His holy Mother? I say in a perfect manner; because in thus consecrating ourselves to Him we make use of the most perfect of all means, namely, the Blessed Virgin.

Consecration Day!
Friday 13th May 2022

And the virgin's name was Mary...

Let us say a few words about this name which means 'star of the sea' and is so appropriate to the Virgin Mother... she it is whose brightness both twinkles in the highest heaven and pierces the pit of hell and is shed upon earth warming our hearts far more than our bodies, fostering virtue and cauterizing vice.... O you, whoever you are who feel that in the tidal wave of this world you are nearer to being tossed about among the squalls and gales than treading on dry land:

if you do not want to founder in the tempest
do not avert your eyes from the brightness of this star.
When the wind of temptation blows up within you
when you strike upon the rock of tribulation
gaze up at this star, call out to Mary
Whether you are being tossed about by the waves
of pride or ambition, or slander or jealousy
gaze up at this star, call out to Mary.
When rage or greed or fleshly desires are battering
the skiff of your soul, gaze up at Mary

When the immensity of your sins weighs you down and you are bewildered
by the loathsomeness of your conscience, when the terrifying thought
of judgment appalls you and you begin to founder
in the gulf of sadness and despair, think of Mary.

In dangers, in hardships, in every doubt
think of Mary, call out to Mary
Keep her in your mouth, keep her in your heart
Follow the example of her life
and you will obtain the favour of her prayer.

Following her, you will never go astray.
Asking her help, you will never despair.
Keeping her in your thoughts, you will never wander away.
With your hand in hers, you will never stumble.
With her protecting you, you will not be afraid.
With her leading you, you will never tire.
Her kindness will see you through to the end.

Then you will know by your experience
how true it is that the Virgin's name was Mary.
(St. Bernard)

Appendix 1

Some Suggested Prayers for the Consecration Period

The following prayers are taken from the instructions of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. As indicated in the opening pages of this consecration preparation, you are invited to discern your own specific preparation plan and this may include all or none of the above prayers, as well as anything else to which you feel called. However for reference what St. Louis puts forth is the following:

- Preparatory period (days 1-12): Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella, Magnificat, Glory be
- First week (days 13-19): Litany of the Holy Ghost, Litany of Loreto, Ave Maris Stella
- Second week (days 20-25): Litany of the Holy Ghost, Litany of Loreto, Ave Maris Stella, also St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary and the Rosary
- Third week (days 26-33): Litany of the Holy Ghost, Ave Maris Stella, Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, Montfort's prayer to Jesus, O Jesus Living in Mary

Veni Creator

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
and in our souls take up Thy rest;
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.
O comforter, to Thee we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
and sweet anointing from above.
Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;
Thou, finger of God's hand we own;
Thou, promise of the Father,
Thou Who dost the tongue with power imbue.
Kindle our sense from above,
and make our hearts o'erflow with love;
with patience firm and virtue high
the weakness of our flesh supply.
Far from us drive the foe we dread,
and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,
turn from the path of life aside.
Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow
the Father and the Son to know;
and Thee, through endless times confessed,
of both the eternal Spirit blest.
Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,
henceforth by all in earth and heaven. Amen.

Ave Maris Stella

Hail, O Star of the ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
ever sinless Virgin,
gate of heav'nly rest.
Taking that sweet Ave,
which from Gabriel came,
peace confirm within us,
changing Eve's name.
Break the sinners' fetters,
make our blindness day,
Chase all evils from us,
for all blessings pray.
Show thyself a Mother,
may the Word divine
born for us thine Infant
hear our prayers through thine.
Virgin all excelling,
mildest of the mild,
free from guilt preserve us
meek and undefiled.
Keep our life all spotless,
make our way secure
till we find in Jesus,
joy for evermore.
Praise to God the Father,
honour to the Son,
in the Holy Spirit,
be the glory one. Amen.

Litany of the Holy Ghost

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Father all powerful, have mercy on us
Jesus, Eternal Son of the Father, Redeemer of
the world, save us.
Spirit of the Father and the Son, boundless life
of both, sanctify us.
Holy Trinity, hear us

Holy Ghost, Who proceedest from the Father
and the Son, enter our hearts.
Holy Ghost, Who art equal to the Father and the
Son, enter our hearts.

R. Have Mercy on us
Promise of God the Father
Ray of heavenly light,
Author of all good,
Source of heavenly water,
Consuming fire,
Ardent charity,
Spiritual unction,
Spirit of love and truth,
Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
Spirit of counsel and fortitude,
Spirit of knowledge and piety,
Spirit of the fear of the Lord,
Spirit of grace and prayer,
Spirit of peace and meekness,
Spirit of modesty and innocence,
Holy Ghost, the Comforter,
Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier,
Holy Ghost, Who governest the Church,
Gift of God, the Most High,
Spirit Who fillest the universe,
Spirit of the adoption of the children of God,

Holy Ghost, inspire us with horror of sin.
Holy Ghost, come and renew the face of the
earth.
Holy Ghost, shed Thy light in our souls.
Holy Ghost, engrave Thy law in our hearts
Holy Ghost, inflame us with the flame of Thy
love.
Holy Ghost, open to us the treasures of Thy
graces
Holy Ghost, teach us to pray well.

Holy Ghost, enlighten us with Thy heavenly
inspirations.

Holy Ghost, lead us in the way of salvation

Holy Ghost, grant us the only necessary
knowledge.

Holy Ghost, inspire in us the practice of good.

Holy Ghost, grant us the merits of all virtues.

Holy Ghost, make us persevere in justice.

Holy Ghost, be Thou our everlasting reward.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the
world, Send us Thy Holy Ghost.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the
world, pour down into our souls the gifts of the
Holy Ghost.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the
world, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and piety.

V. Come, Holy Ghost! Fill the hearts of Thy
faithful,

R. And enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

Let Us Pray. Grant, O merciful Father, that Thy
Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify
us, that He may penetrate us with His heavenly
dew and make us fruitful in good works,
through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who
with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, liveth
and reigneth forever and ever. Amen.

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit
hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He
hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for
behold, from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed.

Because He that is mighty hath done great
things to me; and holy is His name. And His
mercy is from generation to generations, to
them that fear Him. He hath showed might in
His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the
conceit of their heart. He hath put down the
mighty from their seat; and hath exalted the
humble. He hath filled the hungry
with good things; and the rich he hath sent
empty away. He hath received Israel His
servant, being mindful of His mercy. As He
spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed
forever. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Litany of Loreto)

Lord, have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

R. Have Mercy on us
God the Father of Heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, One God,

R. Pray for us
Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother inviolate,
Mother undefiled,
Mother most amiable,
Mother most admirable,
Mother of good counsel,
Mother of our Creator,
Mother of our Saviour,
Mother of the Church,
Virgin most prudent,
Virgin most venerable,
Virgin most renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Vessel of honour,
Singular vessel of devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,

Gate of Heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of Apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Queen conceived without Original Sin,
Queen assumed into Heaven,
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of peace,

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray. Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, unto us Thy servants, that we may rejoice in continual health of mind and body, and by the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary, ever virgin, may be delivered from present sadness, and enter into the joy of Thine eternal gladness. Through Christ Our Lord.

R. Amen

O Jesus Living in Mary

O Jesus living in Mary,
Come and live in Thy servants,
In the spirit of Thy holiness,
In the fullness of Thy might,
In the truth of Thy virtues,
In the perfection of Thy ways,
In the communion of Thy mysteries;
Subdue every hostile power
In Thy spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen

Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Jesus, hear us. Jesus, graciously hear us.

R. Have Mercy on us
God the Father of Heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, One God,

R. Have Mercy on us
Jesus, Son of the living God,
Jesus, splendour of the Father,
Jesus, brightness of eternal light,
Jesus, King of glory,
Jesus, sun of justice, .
Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary,
Jesus, most amiable,.
Jesus, most admirable,
Jesus, mighty God,
Jesus, Father of the world to come,
Jesus, angel of great counsel,
Jesus, most powerful,
Jesus, most patient,
Jesus, most obedient,
Jesus, meek and humble,
Jesus, lover of chastity,
Jesus, lover of us,
Jesus, God of peace,
Jesus, author of life,
Jesus, model of virtues,
Jesus, lover of souls,
Jesus, our God,
Jesus, our refuge,
Jesus, Father of the poor,
Jesus, treasure of the faithful,
Jesus, Good Shepherd,
Jesus, true light,
Jesus, eternal wisdom,
Jesus, infinite goodness,
Jesus, our way and our life,
Jesus, joy of angels,
Jesus, King of patriarchs,
Jesus, master of Apostles,
Jesus, teacher of Evangelists,
Jesus, strength of martyrs,
Jesus, light of confessors,
Jesus, purity of virgins,

Jesus, crown of all saints,

Be merciful, spare us, O Jesus.
Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Jesus.

R. Jesus, deliver us
From all evil,
From all sin, .
From Thy wrath,
From the snares of the devil,
From the spirit of fornication,
From everlasting death,
From the neglect of Thine inspirations,
Through the mystery of Thy holy Incarnation,
Through Thy nativity,
Through Thine infancy,
Through Thy most divine life,
Through Thy labors,
Through Thine agony and Passion,
Through Thy cross and dereliction,
Through Thy sufferings,
Through Thy death and burial,
Through Thy Resurrection,
Through Thine Ascension,
Through Thine institution of the most Holy
Eucharist,
Through Thy joys, Jesus,
Through Thy glory, Jesus,

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Jesus, hear us, Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let Us Pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast said: Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; grant, we beseech Thee, to us who ask the gift of Thy divine love, that we may ever love Thee with all our hearts, and in all our words and actions, and never cease from praising Thee.

Give us, O Lord, a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy Name; for Thou never failest to govern those whom Thou dost solidly establish in Thy love, Who livest and reignest world without end. R. Amen.

St. Louis De Montfort's Prayer to Mary

Hail Mary,
beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father!
Hail Mary, admirable Mother of the Son!
Hail Mary, faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost!
Hail Mary, my dear Mother, my loving Mistress, my powerful sovereign!
Hail my joy, my glory, my heart and my soul! Thou art all mine by mercy, and I am all thine by justice. But I am not yet sufficiently thine. I now give myself wholly to thee without keeping anything back for myself or others. If thou still seest in me anything which does not belong to thee, I beseech thee to take it and to make thyself the absolute Mistress of all that is mine. Destroy in me all that may be displeasing to God, root it up and bring it to nought; place and cultivate in me everything that is pleasing to thee.
May the light of thy faith dispel the darkness of my mind; may thy profound humility take the place of my pride; may thy sublime contemplation check the distractions of my wandering imagination; may thy continuous sight of God fill my memory with His presence; may the burning love of thy heart inflame the lukewarmness of mine; may thy virtues take the place of my sins; may thy merits be my only adornment in the sight of God and make up for all that is wanting in me. Finally, dearly beloved Mother, grant, if it be possible, that I may have no other spirit but thine to know Jesus and His divine will; that I may have no other soul but thine to praise and glorify the Lord; that I may have no other heart but thine to love God with a love as pure and ardent as thine I do not ask thee for visions, revelations, sensible devotion or spiritual pleasures. It is thy privilege to see God clearly; it is thy privilege to enjoy heavenly bliss; it is thy privilege to triumph gloriously in Heaven at the right hand of thy Son and to hold absolute sway over angels, men and demons; it is thy privilege to dispose of all the gifts of God, just as thou wilt.
Such is, O heavenly Mary, the "best part," which the Lord has given thee and which shall never be taken away from thee-and this thought fills my heart with joy. As for my part here below, I wish for no other than that which was thine: to believe sincerely without spiritual pleasures; to suffer joyfully without human consolation; to die continually to myself without respite; and to work zealously and unselfishly for thee until death as the humblest of thy servants. The only grace I beg thee to obtain for me is that every day and every moment of my life I may say: Amen, so be it's all that thou didst do while

on earth; Amen, so be it's all that thou art now doing in Heaven; Amen, so be it-to all that thou art doing in my soul, so that thou alone mayest fully glorify Jesus in me for time and eternity. Amen.

St. Louis de Montfort's Prayer to Jesus

O most loving Jesus, deign to let me pour forth my gratitude before Thee, for the grace Thou hast bestowed upon me in giving me to Thy holy Mother through the devotion of Holy Bondage, that she may be my advocate in the presence of Thy majesty and my support in my extreme misery. Alas, O Lord! I am so wretched that without this dear Mother I should be certainly lost. Yes, Mary is necessary for me at Thy side and everywhere that she may appease Thy just wrath, because I have so often offended Thee; that she may save me from the eternal punishment of Thy justice, which I deserve; that she may contemplate Thee, speak to Thee, pray to Thee, approach Thee and please Thee; that she may help me to save my soul and the souls of others; in short, Mary is necessary for me that I may always do Thy holy will and seek Thy greater glory in all things. Ah, would that I could proclaim throughout the whole world the mercy that Thou hast shown to me ! Would that everyone might know I should be already damned, were it not for Mary! Would that I might offer worthy thanksgiving for so great a blessing! Mary is in me. Oh, what a treasure! Oh, what a consolation! And shall I not be entirely hers? Oh, what ingratitude! My dear Saviour, send me death rather than such a calamity, for I would rather die than live without belonging entirely to Mary. With St. John the Evangelist at the foot of the Cross, I have taken her a thousand times for my own and as many times have given myself to her; but if I have not yet done it as Thou, dear Jesus, dost wish, I now renew this offering as Thou dost desire me to renew it. And if Thou seest in my soul or my body anything that does not belong to this august princess, I pray Thee to take it and cast it far from me, for whatever in me does not belong to Mary is unworthy of Thee.

O Holy Spirit, grant me all these graces. Plant in my soul the Tree of true Life, which is Mary; cultivate it and tend it so that it may grow and blossom and bring forth the fruit of life in abundance. O Holy Spirit, give me great devotion to Mary, Thy faithful spouse; give me great confidence in her maternal heart and an abiding refuge in her mercy, so that by her Thou mayest truly form in me Jesus Christ, great and mighty, unto the fullness of His perfect age. Amen.

Appendix 2

Examples of Consecration Prayers

These pages give some examples of Marian consecration prayers, or prayers of a similar nature. If you would like to choose them, there several amongst the selection of them could be used as they are for your consecration. However the variety is also provided with a view to giving you an idea or some reference points if you desire to compose your own consecration prayer for the big day.

Prayer of St Maximilian Kolbe

O Immaculata, Queen of Heaven and earth, refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to you. I, (name), a repentant sinner, cast myself at your feet, humbly imploring you to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to yourself as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases you. If it pleases you, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what was said of you: “She will crush your head,” and “You alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world.”

Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for introducing and increasing your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls, and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For wherever you enter you obtain the grace of conversion and growth in holiness, since it is through your hands that all graces come to us from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

V. Allow me to praise you, O Sacred Virgin
R. Give me strength against your enemies

Consecration Prayer

O Mary, Virgin most powerful and Mother of mercy, Queen of Heaven and Refuge of sinners, we consecrate ourselves to thine Immaculate Heart.

We consecrate to thee our very being and our whole life; all that we have, all that we love, all that we are. To thee we give our bodies, our hearts and our souls; to thee we give our homes, our families, our country. We desire that all that is in us and around us may belong to thee, and may share in the benefits of thy motherly benediction. And that this act of consecration may be truly efficacious and lasting, we renew this day at thy feet the promises of our Baptism and our first Holy Communion.

We pledge ourselves to profess courageously and at all times the truths of our holy Faith, and to live as befits Catholics who are duly

submissive to all the directions of the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him.

We pledge ourselves to keep the commandments of God and His Church, in particular to keep holy the Lord's Day. We likewise pledge ourselves to make the consoling practices of the Christian religion, and above all, Holy Communion, an integral part of our lives, in so far as we shall be able so to do.

Finally, we promise thee, O glorious Mother of God and loving Mother of men, to devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the service of thy blessed cult, in order to hasten and assure, through the sovereignty of thine Immaculate Heart, the coming of the kingdom of the Sacred Heart of thine adorable Son, in our own hearts and in those of all men, in our country and in all the world, as in heaven. so on earth. Amen.

Prayer of St. Louis Marie de Montfort

O Eternal and incarnate Wisdom! O sweetest and most adorable Jesus! True God and true man, only Son of the Eternal Father, and of Mary, always virgin! I adore Thee profoundly in the bosom and splendours of Thy Father during eternity; and I adore Thee also in the virginal bosom of Mary, Thy most worthy Mother, in the time of Thine incarnation. I give Thee thanks for that Thou hast annihilated Thyself, taking the form of a slave in order to rescue me from the cruel slavery of the devil. I praise and glorify Thee for that Thou hast been pleased to submit Thyself to Mary, Thy holy Mother, in all things, in order to make me Thy faithful slave through her.

But, alas! Ungrateful and faithless as I have been, I have not kept the promises which I made so solemnly to Thee in my Baptism; I have not fulfilled my obligations; I do not deserve to be called Thy child, nor yet Thy slave; and as there is nothing in me which does not merit Thine anger and Thy repulse, I dare not come by myself before Thy most holy and august Majesty. It is on this account that I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me for a mediatrix with Thee. It is through her that I hope to obtain of Thee contrition, the pardon of my sins, and the acquisition and preservation of wisdom.

Hail, then, O immaculate Mary, living tabernacle of the Divinity, where the Eternal Wisdom willed to be hidden and to be adored by angels and by men! Hail, O Queen of Heaven and earth, to whose empire everything is subject which is under God. Hail, O sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails no one. Hear the desires which I have of the Divine Wisdom; and for that end receive the vows and offerings which in my lowliness I present to thee.

Marian Movement of Priests - Consecration Prayer

Virgin of Fatima, Mother of Mercy, Queen of Heaven and Earth, Refuge of Sinners, we who belong to the Marian Movement of Priests consecrate ourselves in a very special way to your Immaculate Heart.

I, N_____, a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before. In the presence of all the heavenly court I choose thee this day for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God in time and in eternity.

Receive, O benignant Virgin, this little offering of my slavery, in honour of, and in union with, that subjection which the Eternal Wisdom deigned to have to thy maternity; in homage to the power which both of you have over this poor sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity has favoured thee. I declare that I wish henceforth, as thy true slave, to seek thy honour and to obey thee in all things.

O admirable Mother, present me to thy dear Son as His eternal slave, so that as He has redeemed me by thee, by thee He may receive me! O Mother of mercy, grant me the grace to obtain the true Wisdom of God; and for that end receive me among those whom thou lovest and teachest, whom thou ledest, nourishest and protectest as thy children and thy slaves.

O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator and slave of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain, by thine intercession and by thine example, to the fullness of His age on earth and of His glory in Heaven. Amen.

By this act of consecration we intend to live, with you and through you, all the obligations assumed by our baptismal consecration. We further pledge to bring about in ourselves that interior conversion so urgently demanded by the Gospel, a conversion that will free us of every attachment to ourselves and to easy

compromises with the world so that, like you, we may be available only to do always the Will of the Father.

And as we resolve to entrust to you, O Mother most sweet and merciful, our life and vocation as Christians, that you may dispose of it according to your designs of salvation in this hour of decision that weighs upon the world, we pledge to live it according to your desires, especially as it pertains to a renewed spirit of prayer and penance, the fervent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the works of the apostolate, the daily recitation of the holy rosary, and an austere manner of life in keeping with the Gospel, that shall be to all a good example of the observance of the Law of God and the practice of the Christian virtues, especially that of purity.

We further promise you to be united with the Holy Father, with the hierarchy and with our

priests, in order thus to set up a barrier to the growing confrontation directed against the Magisterium, that threatens the very foundation of the Church. Under your protection, we want moreover to be apostles of this sorely needed unity of prayer and love for the Pope, on whom we invoke your special protection. And lastly, insofar as is possible, we promise to lead those souls with whom we come in contact to a renewed devotion to you.

Mindful that atheism has caused shipwreck in the faith to a great number of the faithful, that desecration has entered into the holy temple of God, and that evil and sin are spreading more and more throughout the world, we make so bold as to lift our eyes trustingly to you, O Mother of Jesus and our merciful and powerful Mother, and we invoke again today and await from you the salvation of all your children, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Legion of Mary Promise

Most Holy Spirit, I, (name of candidate),
Desiring to be enrolled this day as a legionary of
Mary, Yet knowing that of myself I cannot
render worthy service, Do ask of you to come
upon me and fill me with yourself, So that my
poor acts may be sustained by your power, and
become an instrument of your mighty purposes.

But I know that you, who has come to
regenerate the world in Jesus Christ,
Has not willed to do so except through Mary;
That without her we cannot know or love you;
That it is by her, and to whom she pleases, when
she pleases, and in the quantity and manner she
pleases, That all your gifts and virtues and
graces are administered;

And I realise that the secret of a perfect
legionary service Consists in a complete union
with her who is so completely united to you.

So, taking in my hand the legionary Standard
which seeks to set before our eyes these things,
I stand before you as her soldier and her child,
And I so declare my entire dependence on her.
She is the mother of my soul.

Her heart and mine are one,
And from that single heart she speaks again
those words of old:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord";

And once again you come by her to do great
things.

Let your power overshadow me, and come into
my soul with fire and love,
And make it one with Mary's love and Mary's
will to save the world; so that I may be pure in
her who was made Immaculate by you;
So that Christ my Lord may likewise grow in
me through you; So that I with her, his Mother,
may bring him to the world and to the souls who
need him; So that they and I, the battle won,
may reign with her for ever in the glory of the
Blessed Trinity.

Confident that you will so receive me - and use
me - and turn my weakness into strength this
day, I take my place in the ranks of the Legion,
and I venture to promise a faithful service.
I will submit fully to its discipline,
Which binds me to my comrades,
And shapes us to an army,
And keeps our line as on we march with Mary,
To work your will, to operate your miracles of
grace, Which will renew the face of the earth,
And establish your reign, Most Holy Spirit, over
all.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Appendix 4

Determining the Nature of My Consecration - Spiritual Preparation and Writing or Choosing a Prayer

This appendix is intended to be first read through after the week of meditation on contrition and self knowledge. Thereafter, it will be up to the individual to revisit at periodically as and when thought appropriate in order to better plan his or her personal consecration.

In order to perform a consecration to Our Lady, there will need to be a consecration prayer on the day. You may want to use an existing one for this, or you may desire to compose your own. Either way, a good starting point may be to read through the consecration prayers in Appendix 2 in order to familiarise yourself with the kind of ideas that can be brought into a Marian consecration.

If one of these (or any other that you have encountered) appeals to you and fits your needs, it would be good at this point to keep a copy of it to hand, to study and contemplate alongside the other materials as you prepare for consecration. This kind of preparation should help you to be able to pray it more wholeheartedly and fruitfully on consecration day. If you prefer to compose your own prayer, we will give a few notes on this at the end of this appendix. First we will take a look at some principles that apply whether you are writing your own prayer or using an existing one:

At this point, we have already reviewed Appendix 3 on Degrees of Consecration. Now that the time assigned in a particular way to shedding the spirit of the world and advancing in self knowledge and repentance has been completed, it should be possible:

- a) to bring a more realistic idea of where one is in at in terms of present disposition and
- b) to pray realistically and generously into what concrete advances might be made in terms of self gift through this consecration.

Together with preparing the consecration prayer, it may be helpful to make some concrete resolutions at this point as to how you desire to live Marian consecration more deeply henceforth. It is advisable to find a trusted director or confessor to review and approve or amend these same resolutions. If this is impossible, be very careful about undertaking anything that imposes obligations upon your soul, as you may be assured that God takes your prayers and promises more seriously than you do (c.f. Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, 2 Cor 10:6).

The other thing that you may want to consider is if there are particular areas of your life, mission or situation that you would like to entrust to Our Lady in a particular way at this time. This may be especially pertinent if your consecration is a renewal and you have already consecrated yourself in in general. Perhaps in the preparatory weeks God has highlighted particular areas in which perhaps you recognise a need for growth in virtue, or where you recognise a particular call or grace to go deeper or to serve. If this is the case, you may desire to invite Our Lady to take possession of these areas in a particular way, as well as (re)consecrating yourself to Her in a general way.

Finally, then, some notes regarding the composition of a prayer:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you! ‘Come Holy Spirit, come by the means of the most powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Your Well Beloved Spouse.’
- Above we mentioned being careful if operating without a director. If you are in this position, it may well be better to use something that is written by a Saint and already approved. If you have someone to ask, you can get them to check your prayer in advance.
- Having familiarised yourself with the consecration prayers of Appendix 2, it may help you to make notes of different parts the various prayers appeal to you. You can use these as they are or weave the ideas into your own words, as best fits your spiritual approach.
- Write from the heart and allow your words to reflect as many of the ideas that have come up in the considerations above as seems appropriate.