

## MYSTERY OF THE IMMACULATE



**“My Immaculate Heart will triumph...”**  
**By Robert F. Bergin**

# **MYSTERY OF THE IMMACULATE**

## **DEDICATED . . .**

**to the hallowed memory of all those great Marian writers and saints from whose teachings the thoughts that make up this monograph are drawn. May they intercede in Heaven for us now, in this hour of dire peril for the Church they loved and served so well.**

**Robert Bergin**

In anticipation of certain inquiries it should be mentioned that the imprimatur is no longer required by Church law for general writings on matters of faith and morals.

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# FORWARD

The understanding and acceptance of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary gives us an exceptional strength and spiritual power. It gives us an ability to see more clearly by the light of faith, to choose more wisely in the treacherous paths that beset us upon this earth as we move towards our momentous encounter with eternity. And it gives us the equipment to strike at the power of the enemy, to assist the Immaculate Virgin to crush his head, to come to the aid of our lost brothers and sisters, and to institute the reign of peace and love throughout the world.

As St. Louis de Montfort and St. Alphonsus Liguori illustrate in their writings, to understand the Immaculate Conception is to move into the highest realms of mystical theology, to soar into a new doctrinal wonderland especially reserved for this age, where miracles are commonplace and the soul experiences a relationship with the Eternal Father reminiscent of the state of innocence in the ancient Paradise.

*"O, what riches!" writes St. Louis, "what glory! what pleasure! what happiness! to be able to enter in and dwell in Mary where the most High has set up the throne of His glory! But how difficult it is for sinners like ourselves to have the permission, the capacity, and the light to enter into a place so high and so holy, which is guarded, not only by one of the Cherubim, like the old earthly Paradise, but by the Holy Spirit Himself who is its absolute Master! . . . the miserable children of Adam and Eve, driven from the earthly Paradise, cannot enter into this one, except by a particular grace of the Holy Spirit which they ought to merit."*

The unhappy world of today can be saved only by sound theology and the perfect practice of that sound theology by a holy life. No Christian can say he loves his fellowmen if he is not faithful to his religious duties, to his prayers, to his self-sacrifice. It is in self-denial that love is proved, but the self-sacrifice must be united to that of Christ on the cross. And this is done by ardent prayer, by the sighs and tears of those who sorrow for the anguish of humanity and who long with Christ to relieve it.

And the basis of it all is sound Christian doctrine, the truth of Christ, which makes men free.

The flow of sanctifying grace into the soul is governed by the soundness of doctrine, according to the saints. For example, a soul which follows the teaching of St. Louis de Montfort and St. Alphonsus Liguori in regard to the role of the Immaculate Mother is more easily and promptly united to Christ than the soul which, rejecting this sound doctrine, relies on its own dispositions in its approach to the Redeemer. Obedience to the magisterium, carrying with it the humility that goes with obedience and the grace that goes with humility, unites the soul strongly and unshakeably to Christ. Unquestionably, orthodox doctrine is important. It is the guarantee of a true union in charity.

**So important is sound doctrine that the Saviour bound Himself to guarantee its presence in every age through His infallible Vicars.**

## THE CALAMITOUS FALL

### MAN'S INITIAL LOSS OF GRACE

**In order to understand the full effects of the catastrophic fall from grace which man has suffered, it is necessary to return to that awesome scene in the ancient Paradise when the Most High pronounced His curse upon all humanity.**

The Catholic Church teaches that three people have been created immaculate. The word means *without stain, spotless*.

Adam and Eve were created in grace, in a state of original justice, without stain of sin, and in the friendship of God. Adam was created first, and Eve was created from Adam's rib. This was done in order to preserve the biological unity of the human race. From this flows the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man. We are all sons of Adam, all sons of God - as Adam was. Thus, we are all princes, aristocrats in the truest sense of the word. That was God's plan in placing Adam and his posterity in the Garden of Eden. They were to work out a divine destiny, to inherit thrones of glory in Heaven for all eternity.

Adam and Eve were given by God all that was necessary to make them idyllically happy. Dr. Edward Leen, C.S.S.P., comments: *"God's action in creating man was an action of divine disinterestedness . . . it was an action of infinite generosity, because what was bestowed on man was nothing less than divinity itself."* (Why the Cross? p. 122) Adam and Eve were divinely beautiful, with brilliant intellects which comprehended with ease all that they needed to know.

In the state of original innocence our First Parents enjoyed many privileges and pleasures denied to fallen man. Clearly, they were immortal, for death was the special penalty of their disobedience. They had been commanded not to eat of the fruit of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *"For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death. . . (Gen. 2. 17)*

### THE DEATH SENTENCE

St. Thomas comments: *'Although our First Parents lived many years after their Fall, they began to die the day the sentence of death was passed on them; on that day, too, they began to show signs of age . . .'* (11.11.164.1)

After the Fall, the trees of Paradise, which had given such delicious food to Adam and his wife, would no longer sustain them. Henceforth, Adam would earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Eve would bring forth her children in pain, and would be under her husband's dominion as punishment for leading him into sin.

The human body was to feel greatly the effects of the soul's loss of moral integrity. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve walked naked and were not ashamed. (Gen.2.25) This was because the senses were completely regulated by reason, and, in any case, the sensual pleasure of coition would have paled into insignificance compared to the stream of delights which, in the state of innocence flowed from the higher faculties to the lower. This *'stream of delights'* ended abruptly with sin. After the sin, Adam and his wife were ashamed of their nakedness. They made aprons of fig-leaves to cover the genitalia. And to this day, people of all nations do not appear in public with their genital organs uncovered.

In the state of innocence, there had been complete harmony between all the faculties. Now the senses were in a state of revolt, clamouring for satisfaction at the expense of reason. Dark clouds of ignorance began to gather in the hitherto serene and luminous heaven of man's mind. He began to find difficulty in contemplating truths which conflicted with his perverse inclinations. He developed an affinity for error.

The stage was set for all the wars and bloodshed, the brutality, violence and injustice which would disgrace the history of fallen man.

*"In this state,"* comments St. Louis de Montfort, *"Adam is, as it were, without hope. Neither the angels nor any other creature can save him. Nothing can restore him."* His offence is of infinite gravity inasmuch as it was a rebellion against the infinite dignity and majesty of an all-loving God. Only the merits of a Divine Redeemer can make restitution and bring peace between God and man.

### AN IMMACULATE VIRGIN

The souls of Adam and Eve were now disgraced and defiled, enslaved to Satan. Their bodies which, in the state of innocence, had exhaled an exquisite perfume, now emit the stench of incipient corruption. And the curse passes on to all the descendants of Adam - *except one*. The Immaculate Virgin, chosen from all eternity to give birth to the Divine Redeemer, is exempted by a singular privilege from this otherwise universal calamity.

"I shall put enmities between thee and the Woman..." (Gen.3.15) Satan, gloating over his tremendous victory, is told, right there in the ancient Paradise, that one human being, the Woman of Prophecy, would never be under his cruel dominion. "She shall crush thy head..." (Gen.3.15) He is told that, one day, his head would be crushed and his power would be broken by this Woman and her seed.

The curse would now swiftly manifest itself. Eve would suffer from the menstrual flow, the morning sickness and all the pains of childbirth. Adam would labour for the sustenance of his family in harsh and arid land. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... in the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread..." (Gen.3.18-19)

The human body is stricken and afflicted with pain and wearinesses, with fatigue and illnesses of all kinds, with old age and the decrepitude that comes with old age. And finally, the grave. The stench of the decaying bodies of his neighbours, the odours which come from unwashed bodies and the elimination of faecal matter\*, all these things will haunt and humiliate fallen man, and remind him of his catastrophic fall from grace.

### THE FOMES PECCATI

But far worse than these will be the hatred, the violence, the injustice, the lust which will now be innate in fallen man, giving rise to endless wars, tyrannies and bloodshed, and making peace on earth virtually impossible in the wake of the awesome cataclysm of the Fall.

But Adam and Eve are not left without hope. God has already announced a Redeemer, the seed of the Woman of Prophecy who is destined to crush the serpent's head and return mankind to God. And for a full four thousand years, the ancient patriarchs and prophets sighed for the appearance on earth of the Messiah, the Anointed One, Who would restore all things and save Israel. Every Jewish maiden hoped and prayed that she might be chosen to be the Mother of the Saviour of her people.

We know that the Redeemer has come. We know the name of the privileged maiden who was chosen to bear Him. But some ask, "If Jesus, the Son of God, has come, nearly two thousand years ago, why does Satan have such great power in the world? Why has his head not been crushed? Why do the powers of darkness tyrannise and destroy us in the way they do today?"

The New Testament Scriptures themselves tell us of a great age of Satanic power that was to come. This is clearly set out in the Apocalypse, and refers to a global triumph of Hell coming after a complete collapse of moral and spiritual standards throughout the world. In second Thessalonians, St. Paul calls this a revolt (against the authority of God), a revolt so widespread, so pervasive, that it will constitute a formal surrender of the nations to Satan.

**\*Some scholars have held that the trees of Paradise would have sustained man without the necessity of eliminating surplus matter. Others, including Aquinas, held that there would have been surplus matter, but that it would have been voided but in a decorous manner fitting to man's divine nature.**

This necessarily triggers the appearance on earth of Satan's personal representative, *the man of sin, the son of perdition* (2Thess.2.3). He comes to claim the nations which have surrendered to him by their blasphemies, their contempt for God and His commandments, their pride, their lusts and all their other sins. All of this was prophesied with crystal clarity by St. Louis de Montfort in the early 18th century. This great saint and prophet told us that, at the height of the power of Satan, the Immaculate Virgin will make a dramatic intervention in human affairs, that she will crush the head of the serpent, and bring a golden age of peace to all the world. Our Lady, at Fatima in 1917, confirmed these prophecies of St. Louis, telling us first of a second World War that was to come, then a Third World War, and then the complete destruction of the enemy and the Reign of Jesus Christ throughout the world. This magnificent victory is to be a joint victory of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary; Jesus wishes this in gratitude for her glorious *fiat* to the Archangel which launched the whole plan of Redemption and the move to bring countless millions of souls to the happiness of Heaven.

### A RETURN TO PARADISE?

*Will this golden age, accompanied as it is by a total absence of the diabolic power on earth, constitute a return to paradise?*

There are reputable scholars who believe that it will constitute *something* of a return to Paradise.

There are prophecies in the Scriptures which tell us of a great age to come, when men will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into sickles. (Isa.2.4) when the wolf shall lie down with the lamb and the leopard with the kid. (Isa.11.6) when the lion and the ox shall both eat straw (65.25). The prophet Ezechiel, referring to what is clearly the 'golden age' says:

**"And I will make you abound with men and beasts... and I will settle you as from the beginning, and I will give you greater gifts than you had from the beginning..."** (Ezech.36.11)

*Greater gifts than we had from the beginning?*

What then hinders the approach of the Golden Age? if we are to believe the revelations of the saints and prophets, it is the absence, among the people, of a tender, holy, interior, constant and disinterested devotion to Mary. And that is surely the tenor of the revelations of Fatima.

To save souls from Hell, Mary said at Fatima, *"the Lord wishes to establish in the world, the devotion to my Immaculate Heart."*

This then, is the first step in man's return to Paradise, after thousands of years of suffering and exile. It is in a world-wide cry of filial love and tender devotion to our Blessed Mother that the crushing of the serpent's head will be accomplished. *It is in the general acceptance of Mary Immaculate as the universal mediatrix with her Divine Son that the world will have peace.*

# THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

## A Divine Mystery

It is not possible for the human intellect to comprehend the beauty and mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Church teaches, as St. Alphonsus points out in his *Glories of Mary*, that, because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary had the use of reason from the first instant of her existence in the womb of her mother St. Anne. Just as Adam and Eve had the immediate use of reason – they also were created immaculate – so it was with Mary, the peerless Mother of God. She was destined, unlike Adam and Eve, to retain all the Divine gifts bestowed upon her at her conception, to augment them, to crown them with the many jewels of her glorious virtues, to bring, as a necessary consequence, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity into the world.

Mary was to be the instrument which Jesus Christ would use to accomplish the salvation of all men. Mary was the New Eve, immaculate, as Eve had been, but obedient and faithful to God, as Eve had been disobedient and faithless.

Eve was the instrument of the devil in the destruction of the human race. Mary was the instrument of God in its salvation.

It is a rule in the development of the spiritual life that holiness increases in the soul according to the measure of the purity of one's motives in serving God. Jesus alluded to this when He stressed that the first and greatest commandment was to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, with all our strength. (Mk.12.20) (Lk.10.27)

This implies the utmost purity of motive, the casting aside of all earthly considerations in the service of God.

Because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary's motives were so pure that she gave more glory to God by the least of her actions than all the saints have given Him by all their heroic actions put together. So St. Louis de Montfort assures us.

St. Bernard tells us that Mary loved God with such ardour that it required a continual miracle to preserve her life because of the vivacity of this love. And it is the common opinion of the saints and doctors that Mary died of love. For she was not, like others, under the death sentence. Therefore she did not age, and could only die of love.

The essence of the 'true devotion' taught by St. Louis de Montfort in his famous Treatise is his secret for entering into the sublimity of Mary's intentions in serving God. By participating in her unique purity of intention, as we may do, we give more glory to God in a month than by any other religious practice in many years. This is the dynamic spiritual power that will be given to the world, St. Louis tells us, in an Age of the Antichrist, which the saint saw, even in his own day, looming ahead on the horizons. This devotion is to be Heaven's specific answer to the challenge of hell in those terrible times. How remarkably was this prophecy of the saint vindicated at Fatima in 1917!

## THE HEAVENLY AURORA

Mary's Immaculate Conception has been regarded by the saints and doctors as the beginning of redemption history. They have called this glorious and singular event the heavenly aurora or dawn which broke the long night of darkness and signalled the rising of the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, upon the world.

Mary's Immaculate Conception was a world-shaking event which startled the very angels. Observing the creation of this soul of dazzling magnificence, the angels cried out – according to St. Louis de Montfort – *quae est ista?* Who is that? It was the Queen of all the Angels who was announcing by her presence on earth that the liberation of all the world was at hand.

Unique and extraordinary is the holiness that is Mary's because of her Immaculate Conception. And St. Louis and other saints tell us that she is able to pass something of that great and special holiness on to her servants and clients in this world. St. Louis tells us that she is the great and exclusive mould of God, able to make living images of her Divine Son at small cost and in a short time for souls who enter completely into her spirit. It was St. Augustine who first called her **forma Dei**, the mould of God.

Thus Mary said to the three children at Fatima on June 13th, 1917, "**Jesus wishes to use you to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart.**"

Later, on July 13th, Our Lady was to show a terrible vision of hell to the three children, a frightening abyss of fire containing the demons and the damned, which corresponded exactly with the descriptions of hell given by Our Lord Himself in the Gospels. And then Our Lady said: "**You have seen hell, where the souls of sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.**"



And she went on to state that, through this devotion, the head of the devil would be crushed, and the golden age of peace, justice and love would be given to all the world.

# THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

## ITS EARLY HISTORY

The question of Mary's Immaculate Conception was to prove of crucial importance to the theologians.

The early Christians had gathered in great numbers at the feet of Mary in the twenty years or so that she is said to have lived after her Son's Resurrection. For no Christian pilgrim worth his salt would have visited Jerusalem in those days without paying a reverent courtesy call on the Mother of the Redeemer, perhaps to catch from her lips some small detail of some incident in the early life of the Son of God.

Unfortunately, we do not have written records of the impressions of the visitors, other than the comments of St. Denys the Areopagite who is quoted - by Orsini and others - as saying that he was so overwhelmed by the beauty and grace of her person that he would have considered her a Divinity had he not been well instructed in the faith.

This is a profoundly interesting comment, for a person conceived without Original Sin, being also without actual sin as Mary was, would indeed give the impression of Divinity to others who are under the curse of Adam.

Mary must have made a powerful impression on many thousands of people, for devotion to her was immensely strong in the Christian Church of the first century. This is shown by the lavish praises of her in both the Eastern and Western liturgies of those times. The liturgy is the public prayer of the Church, and it is clear that the People of God, in those days, demanded that Mary be publicly praised and honoured for giving to her Divine Son the Body with which He suffered for us and saved us from eternal damnation. The early Christians would have been profoundly aware of her great suffering in this Olympian drama of Redemption, of the sword that surely pierced her soul as she watched her only Son bleed and die on Calvary. (Luke. 2.35)

## THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS

Three centuries later, when the persecutions had ceased, we find the congregation crying out and leaving the Cathedral in protest when the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, preached in a homily that Mary could not be given the title *Mother of God*. Nestorius held that Mary should only be considered Mother of Christ as Man.

This incident led to the convening of the Council of Ephesus in 431 at which Mary was given officially by the whole Church the title *Mother of God*, and Nestorius was condemned and exiled.

*But was Mary conceived without sin?* Or was she just another very holy woman, selected by Divine Providence to give birth to the Son of God?

In regard to this question, the theologians had not failed to notice a major problem in the Scriptures.

*"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin, death, so death passed upon all men . . ."* (Rom.5.12)

And St. Paul goes on: *" . . . therefore, as by the offence of one unto all men condemnation, so, by the justice of one unto all men justification . . ."* (Rom.5.18)

But, if death and condemnation passed on all men through Adam's sin, how could we say that Mary was immaculately conceived, and free from all stain of sin?

The energetic debate about this amongst the theologians of the Middle Ages showed how many brilliant and saintly men were unable to solve this problem. A powerful instinct amongst the Christians of the early ages had led them to believe that Mary must have been conceived without sin.

## THE EARLY PILGRIMS

The early Christians, visiting Mary in Jerusalem, would have noticed that she never aged, that the grace and beauty of her person never faded, that she received her visitors with a truly sublime love and compassion. Some of the saints have been surrounded by a marvellous fragrance, as was reported of Padre Pio of our times. How much more so the very Mother of God who is called, in Christian literature, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of Israel!

There was another Scripture of great interest to the theologians. In the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome, still the official version of the Catholic Bible, we read as follows:

*"I will put enmities between thee and the Woman, between thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel . . ."* (Gen.3.15)

Significantly, these words were spoken by the Most High in the ancient Paradise, to the serpent gloating over the downfall of the *entire human race*. Adam, in committing the Original Sin, had destroyed, not only himself, but *all his posterity* with him. For all men are conceived enslaved to Satan, and only the purifying waters of baptism can free them from the chains of slavery and eternal death.

But wait! There is a brilliant exception to the universal death sentence. *"I will put enmities between thee and the Woman . . ."* Who is this Woman? Somebody, surely, who will never be under the cruel yoke of Satan. That is clear from the prophesy. As we know there is now a universal consensus that the Woman is Mary Immaculate whose 'seed' Jesus Christ, crushed the serpent's head on the hill of Calvary two thousand years ago.

*"It was with one heart that We redeemed the world . . ."* Jesus spoke these words to St. Bridget of Sweden in the 14th century. The heart is the symbol of love. The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary were joined in unspeakable love for mankind in the great operation of the salvation of the whole world. For, without Mary, there could have been no divine Babe in that crib at Bethlehem.

### **MARY LITTLE KNOWN**

The saints tell us that it was necessary for devotion to Mary to be played down – so to speak – in the early Christian centuries, lest devotion to her should detract from the very necessary focus on the Person of the Redeemer.

But that necessity subsists no longer.

Mary must be made known today so that she may emerge in the role that God has designed for her, powerful protector of the Universal Church, destroyer of its enemies.

God has willed, then, that at some future time in history, thousands of years after the death of Christ on Calvary, Mary, the Woman of Prophecy will come to the aid of the human race in some tremendous crisis. Through the merits of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary, she will confront the Red Dragon (Apoc.12.3) crush his head and banish his diabolical power from the face of the earth.

## **AN INTENSE DEBATE AND A RAY OF LIGHT**

No angel from Heaven had come to inform the Church that Mary had been conceived immaculate. This precious and luminous doctrine had to be reasoned out the hard way. Such was God's will. And the history of the development of that doctrine is a fascinating story.

Not only the honour of the peerless Virgin was at stake. St. Augustine (354-430) states: **"For the sake of the honour of Christ, in the treatment of sin, I do not wish to have question of the Blessed Virgin Mary."**

Augustine could not bear to believe that the Precious Blood which ransomed the world was drawn from a tainted source. The Catholic instinct then was not to impute sin to Mary for her own honour but, pre-eminently, for Christ's honour as well. And what son is not jealous of the honour and good name of his mother?

In the early Church we do not find any sustained, co-ordinated efforts to deal with the troublesome texts from St. Paul relating to the inexorable death sentence that passed on all men through Adam's sin. (Rom.5.12 & 5.18) and (1 Cor.15.22)

But the mediaeval Church awakened to the urgent necessity of solving the apparently insoluble problem.

### **AN OBSESSION**

From the 12th century onward it became something of a theological obsession. All the saints and doctors recognised that Mary was in need of redemption. But how could that be if she never sinned?

The more the saints praised the unique grace and sublime beauty of Mary, the more difficult it became to impute to her the corrupting effects of Original Sin.

St. Anselm (11th century) writing on the sanctity of the Mother of God says: *"It was fitting that that Virgin should be resplendent with such a purity that, under God, a greater could not be imagined."* A strong hint of the Immaculate Conception, surely.

All devout Christians wanted to believe that Mary was conceived immaculate. They sensed that it would exalt us all if one of our sinful race were to be so pure and so Divinely beautiful.

But then there was the principle of universal death, stressed by St. Paul. Great saints like St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas wrestled in vain with the problem.

So did this debate rage for centuries whilst the Popes, the Vicars of Jesus Christ, refused to rule on the matter, leaving to the great geniuses of the mediaeval universities the work of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable. The Cathedral Chapter of Lyons had instituted a Feast in honour of the Immaculate Conception in 1140. To their dismay, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who was then enlightening all Europe with his learning and his eloquence, wrote then a letter disapproving of their new feast. And yet St. Bernard was renowned for his ardent love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin.

### **DEBATE AT THE SORBONNE**

Then, in 1307, a young theologian came to Paris from the University of Oxford in England. His name was Duns Scotus and he came to offer a solution to the problem that had eluded the greatest intellects of the preceding centuries. Duns Scotus, an Irish Franciscan, had devised a new category in the work of redemption, *redemption by preservation*.

Addressing, at the Sorbonne in Paris, the greatest theological minds in Europe, he passionately recited the glories of Mary, how intimately she was associated with the Blessed Trinity in the whole plan of Redemption, how Heaven itself had to wait for her consent until the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity could become man in her womb. How impossible then that such a unique and noble person could ever have been a slave to Satan by the Original Sin.

But what about the principle of universal condemnation so clearly enunciated in the Scriptures? Scotus has an answer for this. Mary was indeed under the law of death like everybody else, he says. But unlike us she was redeemed in a new and unique way, befitting her exalted status as Mother of God. *She was redeemed by preservation from Original Sin*, so that Satan could never arrogantly boast to the Redeemer that his own mother was once a slave to him.

Scotus finished his magnificent oration with the inspired cry:

**"DEUS POTUIT; DEO DECUIT; ERGO FECIT."**

God had the power to do this; it was fitting that He should do it; therefore He did it.

We know that John Duns Scotus convinced his distinguished audience with his inspired reasoning, and we can imagine the standing ovation which he received for throwing so brilliant a ray of light upon a problem that had troubled the Church for centuries.

So successful was Scotus that the observance of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception soon spread rapidly throughout France. It became the official teaching of the Sorbonne.

The Franciscan Order, influenced, no doubt, by the example of Duns Scotus, had it embodied in their Constitutions that every Novice should get a special grounding in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

At a Provincial Synod held in Dublin in 1351, it was decreed that the "*Conception of the glorious Virgin should be celebrated as a double of the first class forever in that Province.*"

In 1394, Don John I. of Aragon instituted the feast by his royal authority in all the provinces of Spain which had shaken off the yoke of Islam.

The Council of Basle, on Sept. 27th 1429, defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception "*as a pious doctrine, conformable to the worship of the Church, to Catholic Faith, to right reason, and to Sacred Scripture.*"

The Church at Rome up to the present had made no move. At length, in 1483, disputations in the pulpit, and in theological schools on the Conception of Mary were *forbidden*.

Differences of opinion, mainly between Franciscans and Dominicans on the subject, had become so '*strenuous*' that charity itself was threatened.

In 1511, an order of pious ladies, founded in honour of the Immaculate Conception, was approved of.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Spaniards of Mexico, in 1525, had dedicated the Cathedral of *Puebla de los Angeles* to the Immaculate Conception; and a little later the Mexican Cathedrals of *Merida*, *Maracaibo*, and *Nabana* were erected under the same title of the Immaculate Conception.

And then came the really big breakthrough. On June 17th, 1546, the Council of Trent, an authoritative Oecumenical Council, in its discussions on Original Sin made the following reservation: "*Nevertheless, this holy Synod declares that it is not its intention to include in this decree on Original Sin, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God.*"

**It remained now for Heaven itself to confirm and ratify the powerful moves which the Church on earth was making towards paying this greatest of tributes and honours to the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

## **INTERVENTION FROM HEAVEN**

### **SUPPORTED WITH MIRACLES**

God had willed that men should explore and analyse the mystery of the Immaculate Conception throughout the centuries. And a tentative conclusion had been reached.

Now it was time for Heaven itself to intervene to ratify and confirm the consensus that had been reached by the Church.

On the afternoon of November 27th. 1830, Sister Catherine Labouré of the Sisters of Charity in France was kneeling in prayer at the Convent of the Rue du Bac in Paris. Suddenly she saw a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mother of Christ was standing near a picture of St. Joseph in the chapel, clothed all in white. Her face was inexpressibly beautiful, as always in these apparitions. Her feet rested on a white globe on which was a serpent. Her hands held a golden ball which represented the world. It was surmounted by a gold cross. An oval frame formed around the Blessed Virgin, and on the rim of this frame, golden letters formed themselves: **"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."**

Then a voice said: **"Have a medal struck after this model. All who wear it will receive great graces; it should be worn around the neck."**

Then the tableau reversed itself, and, on the other side was a large M surmounted with a Cross. Below this were represented the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the one crowned with thorns, the other pierced with a sword.

It was God's will that this medal, known then as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, should quickly receive the approval of the Archbishop of Paris. So many miracles were attributed to it that it soon became known as the Miraculous Medal.

### **A DIVINE CONFIRMATION**

Heaven had thus strikingly confirmed that Mary was indeed conceived without Original Sin. And Heaven reaffirmed this doctrine by the many miracles worked in favour of those who wore this medal, and said the prayer on it.

The Miraculous Medal taught us another powerful lesson. Mary was now clearly seen to be the Woman of Prophecy in Genesis 3.15, the Woman who was to crush the serpent's head. For under her feet lay a green serpent with yellow spots. This also indicated that the ancient Vulgate translation of that passage by St. Jerome is the correct one, that the modernist Biblical scholars are wrong: "Ipsa conteret caput tuum . . ." **She shall crush thy head . . .**

Great rejoicing by the Faithful followed this marvellous intervention from Heaven. And, just twenty-four years later, on December 8th, 1854, Pope Pius IX, at St. Peter's in Rome, solemnly defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception: **"The doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her Conception, by a singular privilege from God, was preserved free from all stain of Original Sin, is a truth revealed by God, and is therefore to be firmly and constantly believed by all the Faithful."** (Acts of Pius IX)

Another truly amazing intervention from Heaven came just three years and three months after this solemn definition.

In the early months of 1858, at Lourdes, also in France, the Blessed Virgin was appearing to Bernadette Soubirous in that series of apparitions which is now world famous.

### **THE LADY'S IDENTITY**

The parish priest of Lourdes had demanded to know the identity of this mysterious Lady. Bernadette had a rendezvous with the Lady for the 25th of March, Feast of the Annunciation. The historian of Lourdes, J.B. Estrade, who took these notes personally from Bernadette, tells what happened:

"As soon as the earliest light of day appeared (Bernadette) left her bed, dressed quickly, and without troubling about the asthma from which she was then suffering, hastened along the road to Massabielle, and covered indeed she was with shame and confusion at finding the recess already aglow with glory and the Lady waiting.

'She was there,' said Bernadette, 'peaceful, smiling and looking down upon the crowd like a loving mother looking at her children.'

'When I was on my knees before the Lady,' she continued, 'I asked her pardon for arriving late. Always good and gracious, she made a sign to me with her head to tell me that I need not excuse myself. Then I spoke to her of all my affection, all my respect and the happiness I had in seeing her again. After having poured out my heart to her I took up my rosary. Whilst I was praying, the thought of asking her name came before my mind with such persistence that I could think of nothing else. I feared to be presumptuous in repeating a question she had always refused to answer and yet something compelled me to speak. At last, under an irresistible impulse, the words fell from my mouth, and I begged the Lady to tell me who she was. The Lady did as she had always done before; she bowed her head and smiled, but she did not reply. I cannot say why, but I felt myself bolder and asked her again to graciously tell me her name; however she only bowed and smiled as before, still remaining silent. Then once more, for the third time, clasping my hands and confessing myself unworthy of the favour I was asking of her, I again made my request.'

When the child reached this point in her story she was overcome by emotion. She continued as follows:

'The Lady was standing above the rose-tree, in a position very similar to that shown in the miraculous medal. At my third request her face became very serious and she seemed to bow down in an attitude of humility. Then she joined her hands and raised them to her breast . . . she looked up to heaven . . . then slowly opening her hands and leaning forward towards me, she said to me in a voice vibrating with emotion:

### **'I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.'**

In pronouncing these last words, Bernadette lowered her head and reproduced the Lady's gesture.

The great mystery of the grotto was at length revealed! And on that day – on the anniversary of that thrice blessed day when the archangel Gabriel came from the Most High to announce the impending advent of the Redeemer so long expected, and to salute as "full of grace," *i.e. Immaculate*, the predestined woman who was to crush the head of the accursed serpent. What a ground of hope for us, this coincidence! Angels who surrounded the Virgin in her rustic shrine, what must have been your joy on hearing your august Sovereign describe herself by one of the most glorious of her glorious titles. The vaults of Massabielle must have resounded with your hymns of praise."

## THE SINGULAR BEAUTY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Without question, our Immaculate Mother is the masterpiece of beauty in all of God's creation.

Adam and Eve had, in the state of innocence, many gifts denied now to Fallen Man. Amongst these were immortality, impassibility (freedom from suffering) and infused science.

In losing grace, they lost all these gifts, losing also the divine beauty which invested their persons. But Mary retained this heavenly beauty, and increased it daily by the practice of the most sublime virtues.

St John the Evangelist, in teaching of the incarnate Son of God, wrote: ". . . **and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**" (Jn.1.14)

But the great beauty of Mary and her Divine Son had, of necessity, to be concealed on this earth. It could not be such as would attract the coarse and sensual attention of men. It was revealed only to chosen souls such as Simeon the prophet, and to the apostles and disciples and other privileged souls.

Because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary's privileges and virtues were so unique, so outside the comprehension of ordinary mortals that she felt impelled to live a retired, cloistered life in the humble cottage at Nazareth which had been owned, according to tradition, by her parents Joachim and Anne.

"Her humility was so profound," St. Louis de Montfort tells us, "that she had no propensity on earth more powerful or more unintermitting than that of hiding herself, even from herself, as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God alone."

"It is certain," comments St. Alphonsus Liguori in the *Glories of Mary*, "that Mary's soul was the most beautiful that God had ever created."

**"My abode is in the full assembly of saints . . ."** (Eccu.24.16)

This text, applied in the liturgy of the Church of Mary, is explained by St. Bonaventure as **"I hold in plenitude all that other saints have held in part."**

St. Alphonsus Liguori goes on to quote a number of illustrious exegetes who taught that the immense ocean of grace which Mary received in the womb of St. Anne exceeded that of all the angels and saints put together. And St. Alphonsus, a Doctor of the Church, and official patron of moralists and confessors, supports this opinion himself. He asserts that it is believed by many to be most probable that Mary received this great grace in the first instant of her Immaculate Conception.

## THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

It has been noted that Mary's great privileges and prerogatives are incomprehensible to ordinary mortals.

St. Alphonsus comments that Mary's dignity as Mother of God places her in an order superior to all other creatures. He quotes with approval the well-known Jesuit theologian Francisco Suarez who asserted that Mary's dignity as Mother of God belonged to the order of the hypostatic union. This is the union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of Jesus.

And St. Alphonsus goes on: ". . . **as Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, it was quite becoming that God should adorn her, in the first moment of her existence, with an immense grace, and one of a superior order to that of all other men and angels, since it had to correspond to the immense and most high dignity to which God had exalted her.**"

Mary is the living image and mirror of her Divine Son. When the angel saluted her with that unique compliment '**full of grace**' he was saying, in effect, that she was **full of the Divine nature**. No room, in that beautiful compliment, for the corrupt human nature of fallen man.

We, when we are in the state of grace, are said to be participants in the Divine nature. And, for this reason, Christians in the state of grace are said to be '**other Christs.**'

But alas! how faint and flickering is the light of grace in the souls of ordinary Christians. St. Louis de Montfort tells us that the devils, who are skillful thieves, have little trouble in robbing the ordinary Christian of this treasure of treasures.

St. Louis urges us to confide this treasure of sanctifying grace to the most pure and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Then, if we are faithful in this consecration to Mary, the devils will never be able to surprise us, to strip us of our heavenly treasures, to lead us to hell.



## PROTESTANTS . . . AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Cardinal Newman, who was converted to Catholicism from Anglicanism, noted in one of his memoranda, that Protestants believe readily enough that Eve was created in grace, that is, immaculate.

Immediately after Adam and Eve fell from grace, we find God addressing the serpent, in their presence, and saying: "I shall put enmities between thee and the woman . . ." (Gen.3.15)

Satan had just acquired, through Adam's sin, a certain dominance or hegemony over the entire human race.

But surely the Most High is now speaking of an exception to this, "*I shall put enmities between thee and the woman . . .*"

Who is the woman?

If this woman is never to be other than an enemy to Satan, then she must be conceived in grace, i.e. *immaculate*, a new Eve who is to bring forth the new Adam from her most chaste womb, the Redeemer of the human race, Jesus Christ.

Protestants, travelling abroad in this age of swift communications, cannot fail to notice, in the soaring cathedrals, in the museums and art galleries of Europe, the truth of Belloc's comment, "*The history of Europe is the history of the Catholic Church.*"

One of these 19th century Protestants was captivated by the magnificence of the art and architecture of mediaeval Europe, in which the portrayals of the Madonna and Child take pride of place. He came back to his native land, the United States of America, deeply moved.

He was later to become Professor of English Literature at Harvard University, and a distinguished poet in his own right. His name was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and he penned the following tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

**"This is indeed the Blessed Mary's land,  
Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer!  
All hearts are touched and softened at her name:  
The priest, the prince, the scholar, and the peasant.  
Alike the bandit with the bloody hand,  
The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer,  
Pay homage to her as one ever present!  
And even as children who have much offended  
A too-indulgent father, in great shame,  
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended  
to go into his presence, at the gate  
Speak to their sister, and confiding wait  
Till she goes in before and intercedes:  
So men, repenting of their evil deeds  
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near,  
With their requests, an angry Father's ear,  
Offer to her prayers and their confession  
And she in heaven for them makes intercession.  
And if our faith had given us nothing more  
Than this example of all womanhood,  
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,  
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,  
This were enough to prove it higher and truer  
Than all the creeds the world has known before."**

Another remarkable tribute to Our Lady was paid by the British scholar and historian, William Lecky, also a Protestant. In chapter 3 of his *History of Rationalism*, he wrote of the magnificent ideal that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave to European civilisation. He wrote as follows:

**"The world is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and on the whole a more salutary influence than the mediaeval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognised as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or the toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and sensuality, woman rose in the person of the Virgin Mother into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had no conception.**

"The moral charm and beauty of female excellence was, for the first time, felt. A new type of character was called into being, a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and of purity, unknown to the proudest generations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patroness; in the millions who, in many lands, and in many ages, have sought, with no barren desire, to mould their characters into her image; in those holy maidens, who for the love of Mary have separated themselves from all the glories and pleasures of the world, to seek, in fastings and vigils and humble charity, to render themselves worthy of her benediction; in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes displayed in all the walks of society - in these, and in many other ways, we detect its influence. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilisation."

Another eminent Protestant poet, William Wordsworth paid this beautiful tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary, combining the images of the dawn and the moon, to which ancient writers were wont to liken Mary:

**"Brighter than eastern skies at daylight strewn  
With fancied roses – or the unblemished moon  
before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast...  
purer than foam on central ocean tost  
our tainted nature's solitary boast."**

*"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed . . ."* (Luke 2:35)

Is there no sympathy in Protestant hearts for the cruel suffering that Mary willingly accepted at the foot of the Cross, in order to assist the Redeemer in the mighty work of bringing salvation to all the world?

That we could never believe. Satan has managed to confuse and deceive millions of good Christians in regard to the role of Mary in the great drama of Redemption. Just as the misconceptions of the Jews concerning Jesus are about to be dissipated, so also, in this Apocalyptic age, are the misconceptions of millions of Protestants concerning Mary about to be dissolved.

There is a marvellous union of Jews and Christians in a common love and faith just over the horizons of this troubled age.

It was foreshadowed seventy years ago and confirmed by a great public miracle. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the instrument of God, said it at Fatima in 1917: *"In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. Russia will be converted and an era of peace will be conceded to humanity."*

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION... AND THE MASS

The Mass has been described as the translation of that never-to-be-forgotten scene on Calvary into the twentieth century, into our own time.

St. John Bosco used to tell his boys that, when they left their homes to go to Mass, they were, in effect, walking to Mt. Calvary to be present at the death of the Lamb of God who offered His life in sacrifice for the sins of the world.

St. Leonard of Port Maurice, in his treatise on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, asserts: **"The principle excellence of the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass consists in being essentially, and in the very highest degree, identical with that which was offered on the Cross of Calvary . . ."**

It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that, at the words of the priest at the Consecration of the bread and wine, we are immediately, powerfully and actually made present at the dramatic scene on Golgotha, when Jesus Christ offered His life for the redemption of the world. Time and space, the saints tell us, are swept away by the hand of Omnipotence. And this dramatic scene, beheld with the eyes of faith, lasts until the *Agnus Dei*, which is followed by the Communion of the priest and the Faithful.

Sinful man cannot approach to the throne of the Eternal Father unless he is clothed with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, who, by His sacrificial death, made infinite reparation for the sins of all the world.

We must refer here to that teaching of St. Louis de Montfort which bears on the necessity of offering the Holy Sacrifice in spiritual union with Mary Immaculate.

The Mother of Jesus conceived Him at the word of the Archangel; she nourished Him in her womb for nine months; she nursed Him at her breasts as an infant, and kept house for Him for thirty years. Finally, she stood at the foot of the Cross and offered her dying Son to the Eternal Father for the sins of the world.

The heart pierced with a lance and the Immaculate Heart transfixed with a sword of sorrow were made one in offering that sacrifice for our salvation.

### CO-REDEMPTRIX

Because of this, the Church has honoured Mary with the title of Co-Redemptrix and lavished praises and eulogies upon her in her liturgies from the very first century of Christianity.

St. Louis, with certain other saints, teaches that, if we stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary when we go to Mass, and offer the Holy Sacrifice in union with her, we give vastly more glory to God, and ensure the salvation of many more souls, than if we depended on our own merits and virtues in our approach to this Divine mystery.

Mary's holiness belongs - according to some of the saints - to the order of the hypostatic union. The holiness, even of the greatest saints, is far, far away from that exalted status.

St. Louis gives us the marvellous news, in his **Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary**, that if we give ourselves ardently and completely to Jesus through Mary, she is able to communicate to us something of her sublime virtues, to act in us and for us, to take possession of our souls in a remarkable and unique way.

### THE MERITS OF JESUS AND MARY

In this way, the saint tells us, we approach Mass and Holy Communion clothed with the merits of Jesus AND Mary. This precious devotion, i.e. doing all our actions in union with Mary, adds a new and powerful dimension to the process of achieving the highest degree of holiness. Those who use it, the saint proclaims, even though young, soon becomes elders in light, in wisdom, in holiness and in experience.

St. Louis teaches us to do all our actions **by Mary, with Mary, in Mary, and for Mary**; so that we may do them all the more perfectly **by Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus**.

But the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the pre-eminent offering of the Christian to God, and the sure foundation of any holiness he might achieve.

How necessary then to place our hand in the hand of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, as she stands at the foot of the Cross and offer that infinite Sacrifice in union with her! She is the Mother of all humanity, and she thinks constantly with great anguish of her children. She agonises that there are yet many millions who know not Christ, who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

**Is there any greater vocation than to stand with Mary at the foot of the Cross, to plead to the Eternal Father through this Infinite Sacrifice for the salvation of the world?**

## THE MEANING OF CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

The expression 'to consecrate' means to set aside something wholly and completely to the service of God. We were all 'set aside' for the service of God at baptism actually. But most people have forgotten the baptismal vows made long ago.

The consecrated vessels, the chalices, the ciboria, the monstrance's etc. are all made of precious metals, out of respect for the purposes for which they are used. The use of these sacred vessels for common or profane purposes is a sacrilege.

In the Old Testament, God ordered the use of gold and silver, the finest woven materials and the most beautiful vestments for use in the sanctuary. (Ex.ch.28) In Biblical terms there is a sharp distinction between the sacred and profane. We should be conscious of this distinction when we make the solemn consecration of ourselves to Jesus through Mary. We have now forsworn the world, the flesh and the devil forever. We belong only to Jesus. For the act of consecration is not just a passing prayer. It is a most sacred and inviolable commitment.

We can be certain, first of all, that the act of consecration, faithfully observed, will make us happier than we have ever been before. The greatest happiness, here and hereafter, lies in union with Jesus Christ and we unite ourselves with the Saviour to the extent that we move towards Christian perfection.

Paradoxically however, the consecration requires penance or self-discipline. **It is the yoke that is sweet that we are asked to accept, the burden that is light.** (Mt.11.30) We cannot say that happiness can be ours in an absolute sense in this vale of tears. What we can say, however, is that the following of Christ gives us *the maximum happiness possible here on earth* and paradise forever in eternity.

In our weakness and blindness we find it difficult to reconcile penance and self-discipline with the notion of being happy. Yet when we read the newspapers we find that the suicides have generally led irreligious lives, lives of self-indulgence. And they found, not happiness but despair.

Our new consecrated state will give us our first lesson in true philosophy. We will find that happiness does not consist in pleasure, in good health, in any external good fortune. True happiness comes from living our lives in harmony with God who created the universe. Happiness can never come then from sensual pleasure, or wealth or power.

The ancient philosophers, the Greeks, the Romans, the Orientals were aware of this long before the Christian era. Wise men from all parts of the world seem to have taught that the *summum bonum* or highest happiness came from the free choice of good over evil, of virtue over vice, from a life of self-denial and self-discipline. For this reason you cannot really learn philosophy in the same way that you can learn an exact science. You cannot take out a degree in wisdom at a university. For wisdom, properly speaking, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. You can only become wise by leading a certain type of life, a life of self-discipline and prayer.

### A FRUITFUL VINE

When the soul consecrates itself to Jesus through Mary, it embraces a series of moral imperatives. A consecrated person's time is no longer his own. His talents and his money are no longer his own. He is now a fruitful vine in the vineyard of the Lord. His fruits are good works, charity, the love of neighbour. This involves some pain to our slothful, selfish human nature. But St. Louis assures us that the marvellous graces that we receive from Our Lady as a result of our consecration to her Immaculate Heart make these crosses far more meritorious and enable us to bear them with greater facility.

The consecrated person is still bound by the duties of his state in life - even more so. He must work well for his employer, he must conscientiously protect and sustain his wife and children, he must give good example as a law-abiding citizen. And he must accept any crosses and humiliations that come to him at his place of employment or at home with resignation. The saints accepted humiliations with gratitude, knowing well that they were far better for the development of the life of grace in the soul than compliments or praise. In regard to suffering, our supreme Exemplar Jesus Christ tells us by word and example that suffering meekly borne in this life for His sake merits rich rewards in glory in the next life. We must be steadfast in faith, we must believe that the trials and pain of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come. We, as slaves, are now Our Lady's property and possession. We are voluntary slaves. We must lovingly and loyally accept any crosses She sends, knowing that these crosses are necessary for the success of our glorious and inspiring crusade.

### SERIOUS PRAYER

When we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary, the very first thing we must do is to incorporate a serious prayer schedule into our daily lives lest we fail through lack of spiritual strength to carry out the terms

of our consecration. It is prayer which gives us the inspiration to persevere, to generously give our time, our talents, our resources to the crusade for Jesus that is to renew the face of the earth. We should recite at least five decades of the Rosary each day. If we have time it is good to recite the whole fifteen decades each day. Daily Mass, fifteen decades of the Rosary, and the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception form an excellent rule for anyone serious about developing his spiritual life.

The fact that we are approaching Jesus through Mary means that the quality of our prayers and sacrifices is greatly enhanced. St. Louis de Montfort tells us that it is humbler to consider ourselves unworthy to approach this King of kings direct, and this humility is immensely pleasing to God who loathes pride and loves the humble. (1P.5-5)

The Gospel of St. John indicates an intercessory role by Our Lady at the wedding feast of Cana. Here Our Lord anticipates the time of the beginning of His public life set by His Father simply to please His Mother.

There is no question of the theological soundness of this consecration of ourselves to Jesus through Mary. It is set out with great precision in the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary of St. Louis de Montfort. He cites many illustrious saints and doctors who practised and promoted it. From the earliest centuries there are traces of it in the Church.

### **A SHORT, EASY PATH**

Popes Pius IX, Leo XIII, St. Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII, all praised highly this inspired treatise of St. Louis de Montfort. This approach to Jesus through Mary is the short, easy, secure path to perfection for Christians. By it you will greatly enrich yourself in grace in this life, sanctifying grace, the treasure that lasts forever. For it is transmuted into glory at our deaths.

There is one more very important consideration. St. Louis tells us in the treatise that this devotion is a secret of grace reserved for the Church in a time of great peril, when She would be threatened by the powers of darkness in some extraordinary way. He was clearly writing for the present crisis which threatens the whole of Christian civilisation. He prophesied a great victory for the Church and for the Cross by means of this devotion. And he wrote that this victory would be the fulfilling of the ancient prophesy in Genesis: **'I shall put enmities between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.'** (Gen.3.15)

The consecration to Jesus through Mary is therefore not only the finest means of finding happiness, fulfilment and true riches in this life, it also is the finest form of patriotism. For this is dedication to the truth. And it is the truth that sets us free. (Jn.8.32) *And it is the truth that sets the nation free.*

An act of consecration is printed below. Remember, it is not just a passing prayer. It is a sacred commitment, a commitment to be embraced with the utmost resolution and determination. By it we pledge ourselves to accept and remain faithful to the highest ideals of love and loyalty, of honour and patriotism that ever stirred the human soul.

### **ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a wretched sinner, today renew and ratify in thy hands, my Immaculate Mother, the vows made for me at baptism by my sponsors.

I renounce forever Satan and all his pomp's and works. I give myself entirely to Jesus, to carry my cross after Him and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before. I contemplate Him in His agony, and realise that it was to save me from Hell, to deliver me from the cruel slavery of the devil, that He suffered this indescribable agony.

I offer myself to thy Immaculate Heart, which suffered so acutely for me at the foot of the Cross. I wish to honour that sorrowful Heart, which does so justly merit the love, the reverence, the gratitude of all mankind.

My dear Mother, my loving advocate with Jesus, I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, my talents, my time, and even the value of all my good actions. I leave 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. Amen.

**Heart transfixed with pain and woe!  
Set my heart with love aglow  
Of my Saviour Crucified**

# CONCLUSION

This little booklet covers, in some degree, the story of the Immaculate Conception: perhaps it could be conceded that the story reached a tremendous climax at Fatima in 1917.

At the Cova da Iria we learned that the whole world, all nations, with their sorrows, their wars, their chaos and disorders, their famines and all their miseries, had been placed under the maternal care of the Immaculate Heart of Mary by God Himself.

Mary's Divine Son permitted her to appear at Fatima to announce this to a blind, perverse and sceptical world. But the great public miracle, and the many lesser miracles that accompanied it, made little impression on the blindness and the scepticism.

The two youngest seers had died shortly after the visions, just as Our Lady said. The second world war occurred as predicted. Error spread from Russia causing wars and persecutions as predicted. There is a series of prophecies not yet fulfilled. They relate to a world chastisement, a **Judgement of the Nations** such as is predicted in the Scriptures.

The prophecy of a world war, a world famine, a world persecution seems certain to be fulfilled because of the widespread wickedness and moral enormities of our times. Catholics have almost totally ignored the only solution to this threat, the solution that was given to us with miracles by Our Lady at Fatima.

Of all the revelations from Heaven in recent times, those transmitted to the world at Fatima are by far the most important.

Our Lady's words to the three little shepherds were of major doctrinal importance. Not only was the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception taught at Fatima, but many other central doctrines of the Church were taught also. Our Lady spoke of the Mass, of Holy Communion, of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. **How trenchantly was Hell brought to the notice of the world at Fatima!** Not only was the vision of the fiery inferno given to the three children, but every Catholic in the world was bidden to remind himself of the existence of Hell five times in every Rosary, at the end of each decade. How far away from the will of God are our modernist clergy for they defiantly refuse to even mention Hell. Will this institutional Church withstand the Judgement of God which is coming and which was predicted at Fatima?

The urgent necessity of Prayer and penance was heavily emphasised at Fatima. The doctrine of Original Sin was clearly implied by the Immaculate Conception and, in fact, all the doctrines of the magisterium were clearly taught by implication and ratified by the great public miracle. But Fatima was not only a message to Catholics. It was a universal message, sent to all mankind, via the Catholic Church to which it was entrusted. It was a message of love to all mankind. For Our Lady is Mother of the whole human race, and she came to Fatima as a loving mother to bring all mankind to the peace and happiness of knowing and loving her Divine Son.

The Mother of Christ, at Fatima, set the world agenda for the 20th century. We were offered there a clear choice, an irrevocable choice. It was to return to a life of prayer and Godly living or suffer the most indescribable calamities. So far we have chosen the wars, the suffering, the chaos. All of this, Mary told us, would be precipitated by our sins and our disobedience.

The central message of Fatima is that Mary's Immaculate Heart is to be known and loved by all the world, so that the nations of the world might find peace. This little booklet has been published in the hope that it will promote that crucially important devotion.

It is well said that we don't go to Heaven alone. We take others with us through our prayers and good works. And we don't go to Hell alone. We take others with us through the scandal we give by our wicked lives.

We hope and pray that **Mystery of the Immaculate** will persuade its readers to take many others to Heaven with them. Introduce your friends and relatives to the motherly and Immaculate Heart of Mary through this booklet. We have Heaven's word for it that this is the way that leads to Jesus, to peace on earth, to eternal salvation.

## **THE MAGNIFICAT**

**My soul doth magnify the Lord  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.  
And His mercy is from generation to generation, 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. (Luke 1.46-55)**

## **ACT OF CONTRITION**

**O my God I am heartily sorry that I have offended Thee, and I detest my sins above every other evil, because they displease Thee, my God, who art infinitely worthy of all my love, and I firmly resolve by Thy holy grace never more to offend Thee and to amend my life. Amen.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. . .  
TO THE FOLLOWING AUTHORS**

St. Louis de Montfort: Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Love of Eternal Wisdom.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri: The Glories of Mary

Rev. Timothy Hurley, D.D.: The Lily of Israel

J.B. Estrade: The Blessed Virgin Mary at the Grotto of Lourdes

Rev. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., M.A., D.D.: Why the Cross?

St. Thomas Aquinas: The Summa Theologica

References were also made to books on the revelations of Our Lady to St. Catherine Labouré by Delaney, Englebert and Dervin.

**PRAYER OF FATHER OLIER**

O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in us in the spirit of Thy sanctity in the plenitude of Thy gifts, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the communication of Thy Divine mysteries. Overcome all the powers of the evil one in Thy spirit to the glory of the Father. Amen.



**IT IS CERTAIN**

*that*

*Fulfilment of the Fatima Requests*

*can*

**Destroy**

**Nazism Satanism & Marxism**

**Bring Liberty and Brotherly love**

**to the World**

**Build the new social order in**

**peace, Justice and Charity.**

**IT IS CERTAIN**

*that*

**NOTHING ELSE CAN**

## **THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

**"It is a truth that I was conceived without original sin and not in sin. A golden hour was my conception. My Son joined my Father and my mother in a marriage of such chastity that a purer union has never been seen. Sensuality was extinguished in them. Thus my flesh was formed through divine charity."**

**-REVELATION OF B.V.M. TO ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN**

## **A TRIBUTE**

St. Dionysius, one of the Wise Men of the Areopagus in Athens, was taken by the Apostle St. John to meet with the Blessed Virgin Mary. In a letter to St. Paul, he commented as follows:

**"When I was conducted to the Godlike presence of the Holy Virgin, so divine a splendour shone around without me, and more fully illuminated me within; such fragrance of all perfumes abounded, that neither my unhappy body, nor my spirit, could bear the weight of so great and entire happiness. My mind was lost; my spirit failed me, overcome by the glory of such majesty. I call to witness that God who was present in the Virgin, that had not what I had learnt from you taught me otherwise, I should have believed her to be the true God. For it would seem that the Blessed could possess no greater glory than that happiness which I, now unhappy, tasted."**

(From the writings of D. Roberto, Hermit of Monte Corona)

***“You will be hated for my names sake”***

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by ALL those who knew him.

- One of His favourite prayers -  
***“O Jesus, it is for the love of you,  
for the conversion of sinners  
and in reparation, for all the offences  
committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.  
I am all Thine, my Queen, my Mother,  
and all that I have is Thine!”***

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