

MARY OUR MOTHER

From THE GLORIES OF MARY

by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

How much greater our confidence in Mary should be because she is our mother

NOT BY CHANCE nor in vain do the servants of Mary call her mother. They cannot invoke her by any other name and are never weary of calling her mother: mother indeed, for she is truly our mother, not according to the flesh but the spiritual mother of our souls and our salvation.

Sin, when it deprived our souls of divine grace, also deprived them of life. Hence, when they were dead in misery and sin, Jesus our Redeemer came with an excess of mercy and love to restore to us by his death upon the cross that lost life, as he has himself declared: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). More abundantly because, as the theologians teach us, Jesus Christ by his redemption brought us blessings greater than the injury Adam inflicted upon us by his sin; he reconciled us to God and thus became the father of our souls, under the new law of grace, as the prophet Isaias predicted, "the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

But if Jesus is the father of our souls Mary is the mother, for in giving us Jesus she gave us true life, and offering upon Calvary the life of her Son for our salvation she then brought us forth to the life of divine grace.

At two different times, Mary became our spiritual mother. The first time was when she was found worthy of conceiving in her virginal womb the Son of God, as Albertus Magnus says. St. Bernardine of Siena teaches us that when the most holy Virgin, on the annunciation of the angel, gave her consent to become mother of the eternal Word, which consent he awaited before making himself her Son, she by this act demanded of God our salvation. She was so earnestly engaged in obtaining it that from that time she has borne us, as it were, in her womb, as a most loving mother.

St. Luke says, speaking of the birth of our Saviour, that Mary "brought forth her first-born son" (Luke 2:7). Therefore, says a certain writer, if the evangelist affirms that Mary brought forth her first-born, is it to be supposed that she afterward had other children? But the same author adds that if it is of faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh except Jesus, then she must have other spiritual children and these we are. And this explains what is said of Mary in the holy Canticles: "Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies" (7:2). St. Ambrose explains this: "Although in the pure womb of Mary there was only one grain of wheat, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of grain, because in that one grain were contained all the elect of whom Mary was to be the mother." Hence, wrote William the Abbot, Mary in bringing forth Jesus, who is our Saviour and our life, brought forth all of us to life and salvation.

The second time in which Mary brought us forth to grace was when on Calvary she offered to the eternal Father with so much sorrow of heart the life of her beloved Son for our salvation. Wherefore St. Augustine asserts, having then co-operated with Christ in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became also by this co-operation the spiritual mother of all who are members of our head, Jesus Christ. This is also the meaning of what is said of the blessed Virgin in the sacred Canticles: "They have made me the keeper in the vineyards: my vineyard I have not kept" (1: 5).

Mary, to save our souls, was willing to sacrifice the life of her Son, as William the Abbot remarks. And who was the true soul of Mary but her Jesus, who was her life and all her love? Wherefore St. Simeon announced to her that her soul would one day be pierced by a sword of sorrows; which was the very spear that pierced the side of Jesus, who was the soul of Mary. And then she in her sorrow brought us forth to eternal life, so that we may all call ourselves children of Mary's sorrows. She, our most loving mother, was always and wholly united to the divine will. That is why, St. Bonaventure remarks, when she saw the love of the eternal Father for men, who would have his Son die for our salvation, and the love of the Son in wishing to die for us, she too, with her whole will, offered her Son and consented that he should die so that we might be saved, in order to conform herself to that exceeding love of the Father and Son for the human race.

Be joyful, then, all you children of Mary. Remember that she adopts as her children all those who wish her for their mother. Joyful: for what fear have you of being lost when this mother defends and protects you? Thus, says St. Bonaventure, everyone who loves this good mother, should take courage and repeat: What do you fear, oh my soul? The cause of your eternal salvation will not be lost, as the final sentence depends upon Jesus who is your brother, and upon Mary who is your mother. And St. Anselm, full of joy at this thought, exclaims in order to encourage us: “Oh, blessed confidence! Oh, secure refuge! The mother of God is my mother too. With what certainty may we hope, since our salvation depends upon the sentence of a good brother and a kind mother!”

Hear, then, our mother who calls us and says to us: “Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me” (Prov. 9:4). Little children have always on their lips the word “mother,” and in all the dangers to which they are exposed and in all their fears they cry, “Mother! Mother!” Most sweet Mary, most loving mother, this is exactly what you desire, that we become little children and always call upon you in our dangers and always have recourse to you, for you wish to aid and save us, as you have saved all your children who have had recourse to you.

Mary, the Glory of the Church **Fr. Abram Ryan**

And in all these I sought rest and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.

—*Eccl. 24: 11*

THE Incarnation of Jesus Christ through Mary is the rehabilitation in grace of the human race.

The Church of Christ is the perpetuation of the Incarnation. By the first man Adam, at the word of the woman Eve, sin entered into the world. Sin’s reparation was to be made by the Man Christ, Who, at the word of Mary: “Be it done unto me according to thy word,” entered into this world. Man and woman,—Adam and Eve,—were the causes of our spiritual ruin. Man and woman—Christ and Mary—second Adam and second Eve—are the causes of our Redemption. Everywhere on earth, and until the end of time, the act of disobedience of our first parents reaches in its consequences of sin for souls and death for bodies. And so everywhere in the world and down to its last day reaches the act of Mary’s obedience to the Divine will in becoming the Mother of Christ, together with the obedience of Christ in doing His Father’s will, in the consequences of grace for the souls and immortality for the bodies of every child of the human race who accepts the Redeemer. The influences of Jesus and Mary move forever alongside the influences of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were two persons united in one act—it was our ruin. Jesus and Mary are two persons united in one act—it is our Redemption.

Every day of history will man’s heart ask: “Through whom have I lost all right to Heaven?” And every heart’s answer will be: “Through Adam and Eve.” And every day of time each heart will ask: “Through whom shall I recover the right to Heaven?” And every heart’s question shall have its answer: “Through Jesus and Mary.” It is the only true answer. It is the full and perfect answer. Truth gives it—Faith proclaims it; and the Church of Truth and Faith must realize and illustrate it. Else all is as dark to the questioning world as it was before the mystery of the Infant’s birth in Bethlehem. For the mystery of man’s regeneration in grace must solve the mystery of man’s generation in sin. In the light of the former mystery stand Jesus and Mary. In the darkness of the latter mystery stand Adam and Eve.

Our Holy Church is the mystical Eden in this world, with gates wide open, guarded by the Angel of Redemption. Who so wills to leave the beautiful spiritual garden, may do so. God forces none to stay. But who so desires to return and re-enter, cannot do so unless they come to the gates wearing the robes of grace. In the garden are the second Adam and the second Eve—Jesus and Mary,—for it is theirs to keep and cultivate;—and in our Holy Church we meet them there together.

With us of the true Faith the glory of Jesus is the royal mantle of Mary His Mother—and her glory is the brightest gem in the crown of Christ.

Saint Paul writing to the Ephesians proclaims that Christ would be a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing and that it would be holy and without any blemish.

What are the glories of the “glorious Church?”

Her Divine truths with their Heavenly light? Yes.

Her laws with their sanctifying influences? Yes.

Her Sacraments with their supernatural action? Yes.

Her teachings with their Divine power over the human mind—and infallible certainty? Yes.

Her messages of mercy, the legacies of His love, to every heart redeemed? Yes.

Sinners in their penances and pardons? Yes.

Saints in the splendors of their sanctities? Yes.

Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins with the supernatural braviaries, sufferings, austerities and purities of their lives and deaths? Yes.

For in their persons redeeming grace has conquered their minds with its light, their wills by its law, and their hearts with its love.

Ah! Yes, they are the living glories of the “glorious Church” whose life is divine. They visibly realize in their persons and reflect on the world, within as well as without, the kingdom of grace, the glories of dogmas, laws, and Sacraments—the light of the Christ Who lives over again in their lives.

The Church of Christ must have other Christs—human to prove to the world His Divine Christhood. All along the ages she will have her Calvaries to climb; but she must and will have a thousand Tabors up the slopes of which she will lead sinners from the valley of sin to transfigure them on the summit with the splendors of sanctity—so that the generations of men passing by will see the glory shining; and in the wonder of Faith and with the Faith of wonder, will cry aloud as Peter cried: “Oh Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

Churches calling yourselves Christian, listen! You must prove your title. How?

In your hand you bring us the Scriptures. Well and good. We also have them. In your other hand have you the lives of your Saints? Saints are living scriptures. Do you bring us only words even though they be the words of Christ? They are dead words unless you show us men who have lived them. Life is the logic that proves the power of Christ. He Himself is not in His words. Only His thoughts are there. He Himself in His Church by His grace lives in men, women, and children who participate in His sanctity. Show us such if you can.

Read for us the Litany of Saints! Have you none?

No Saints—no Christ. No canonizations—then no names crowned on earth with the halo of Christ’s holiness.

Churches! Do you lead your followers only through the valley of ordinary virtues and commonplace duty?

Lift up your eyes! Yonder on the mountains, rising towards the skies the splendors of the “Sun of Justice” are shining on the snow—white purities of the lofty Christ-like lives. Do those lives belong to you? Is the white snow up there too cold for the feet of your children? Are the mountains of sanctity too steep, too rugged for them to climb? Are the splendors on their summits too bright and dazzling to your eyes?

Then—move on down in the valley. You know not the mysteries and the meanings of the mountains climbed by Christ—Calvary, Tabor, Olivet. You are not His Church. You have no Saints. You have no hearts beating with the highest heroisms of Faith. Not so we of His Holy Church. True—the most of us walk in the lower valleys of ordinary virtue; but countless is the number of those who have scaled the steeps and reached the summits of holiness. And their glory shines down on our souls, making our way brighter and our hearts braver; and their glory is theirs and yet Christ’s, and what is theirs and His is ours. We salute them as we pass, for they are the heroes in the march—in the battles and in the victories of the soldiers of Christ. And they hail us as we pass them by with cheering words that give us comfort and courage and heavenly trust in our homeward way.

Human sanctity is the splendor of Divine grace. Where its light gleams there surely shines the moveless Son of changeless Faith. From the birthday of the Church, until this very evening all down the ages, there has been a line of saints. But above them all, with a brighter glory than they all together possess, and with a greater power, reigns Mary the Mother in the kingdom of Her Son. Mother of Christ—Mother of His Church—such is her place and power and glory.

Is it a wonder that the Church has glorified her in every age? Is it a marvel that blazoned on her banners of battle and sounding in her hymns of triumph, the name of Mary is forever united with the name of Jesus?

From the beginning she has held in her keeping the honor of the Mother of Christ. Who dared to lift a voice or

write a word against Mary, She at once anathematized. And her reason it was the simplest—only this: Whosoever attacks the Mother assaults the Son. Arius attacked the Divinity of Jesus Christ by denying His Divine and eternal Sonship—and therefore attacked the Fatherhood of God.

Arius was anathematized. Nestorius arose and denied the Divine maternity of Mary. The Church has never far-fetched or abstruse reasons for her action. Clear and simple was her reason when she condemned Nestorius. Only this: whoever attacks the Mother attacks the Son. Just as simple and clear as her reason against Arius—he who attacks the Son attacks the Father. Her enemies pass away leaving memories that shame the pages of history. The Church of her Divine Son moves on. All her generations, in the simplicity of their Faith call Mary blessed. It is her own prophecy becoming part of their religion. But in each generation of the children of Faith appear men full of wisdom and learning and full in grace who are the special guards of the rights and the honors of the Mother of Christ. Why read the roll of their names? Why quote the words of Jerome and Augustine and Ambrose down to the infallible utterances of Pius the Tenth of this century? The children of the Kingdom hear them from childhood to the grave. The wanderers outside the Kingdom hear them not—or when they do they will not understand. Look everywhere along the past: See you not the beautiful bannered procession—simply endless, for where one stops the other starts, going up to the temples of Jesus to keep the feasts of Mary!

Do you not behold the consecrated Virgin walking side by side with the Magdalen who has come back to the shrine of mercy, through the prayers of Mary? Do you not see ignorance in ungainly hurry jostling learning when she moves with a step that cannot help but be stately, though her face does wear the look of Faith's humbleness? And listen! Where they move with psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles singing the endless "Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!" to the Son, and re-echoing back to Mary His Mother, her own glorious Magnificat. From the hall and from the hovel come the singers singing. The robe of the king touches the rag of the beggar man and becomes more beautiful and more royal for the touch. The mantle of the princess floats beside the tatters of the peasant. The tiara-crowned head of the Pope bows where the little altar boy is kneeling. The Bishop's purple and the priest's black cassock meet before the altars to honor Mary. The Purple and the the Black meet there on perfect spiritual equality. Savagery and civilization repeat together the same Our Father and the same Hail Mary. The Indian strolling the forests tells the same beads as the sage in his study. It is all for Mary, because it is all for Jesus. Is she not then the Glory of the glories of our Holy Church: and is it not our glory, with our words and with our actions, with our whole hearts and with our whole souls and with all the strength of Faith the truest and of love the tenderest, to glorify the blessed name of Mary in life, in death and in eternity.
