

Mary Spouse of the Holy Ghost

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'You know well the intimate and wonderful relations existing between Mary and the Holy Spirit, so that she is justly called His Spouse.'—Pope Leo XIII.

"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord."

LET us never cease to thank the Holy Ghost for Mary. The expression of thanks that He will appreciate best is that we follow Mary's example, model ourselves upon her, and live our lives through her inspiration and intercession.

The Annunciation shows Mary's self-surrender, complete and absolute, with a plea that God may use her as He wishes, use her as His instrument, and thus she paid Him the highest act of worship.

Once Mary made sure of her duty as regards her vow of virginity she did not hesitate. St. Luke's description of the scene reads as if he had received it from Mary herself. "And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man

Mary wanted instruction on this point. She was always prepared to do the will of God. The Angel answered at once, saying: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Now Mary knows that there was to be no question of a man in the case. To avert the possibility of a doubt in Mary's mind, the Angel added: "And behold thy cousin, Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God." (St. Luke 1. 36-37).

Mary had then to decide, to accept or refuse. She was perfectly free. God, of course, knew that she would not refuse. It was certainly a dramatic moment not only in the life of Mary, but in the history of humanity.

Instruments of the Holy Ghost.

Through Mary's help let us offer ourselves, our life's work whatever it may be, to the Holy Ghost that He might make us better instruments and use us. We all need to open our eyes more widely to His light, to open our ears more wistfully to His inspirations, and to put forth our hands more eagerly to do the will of God. Let us resolve to offer every day of our lives an act of adoration and reparation to the Holy Ghost. We do this by saying the Angelus, the Glory be to the Father, the official prayer to the Holy Ghost, the hymn or the sequence, or out of the love of our hearts let us speak to Him in our own words:

"O God the Holy Ghost, Whom we have slighted, grieved, resisted from childhood unto this day, reveal us Thy Personality, Thy Presence, Thy Power. Increase Your Seven Gifts within us. Let the fire of Thy Love burn up and consume in us every sin and stain of the Flesh and of the spirit. Cleanse us and purify us so that You can use us as Your instrument.

"Help us to hunt down and slay our little faults. He that is faithful in that which is the least is faithful also in that which is greater. They who strive to get rid of little faults will never willingly commit greater sins?"

During the thirty years at Nazareth Mary was the instrument of the Holy Ghost in being a Mother to the Holy Family. Her daily tasks of housekeeping, washing and mending clothes, and caring for her Divine Son from babyhood to manhood were done with great exactness because done for God. If we follow Mary's example and do well the little duties of each day, not waiting for something big to happen, the thought that we are instruments of the Holy Ghost will light up every household task, and gilt every daily duty, no matter how trivial.

Mary Leads Us to the Holy Ghost.

Devotion to Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, means putting ourselves without reserve in her hands. She will lead us to Him, the Spirit of Truth, abiding within us. Devotion is a noble word, a rich word which calls for a giving up of our own opinion. It is a challenge to our constancy and perseverance. It asks us to pause and think before we give in to our own way and inclination.

Mary, who kept His secrets in her heart, will lead us to the Holy Ghost if we ask her each morning to open our eyes to see the path that lies before us, to open our ears to hear His invitations, and to warm our hearts to follow where He leads and to do what He asks of us this very day. We may be in awe of God the Holy Ghost, but surely we can approach Mary, His Spouse, and through her we can seek and find His Divine Counsels.

When day is done let us kneel by our bedside and ask Mary to play the searchlight of His Wisdom on the doings of this day, its thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, and so let us see how we stand in the sight of God. Such a glance will make us humble, and in that humility lies our hope of sharing Mary's faith in the Holy Ghost abiding within us.

She, the great Mother of men, is filled with love for us by the Holy Ghost. Through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost She became the Mother of Christ, and remains "our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

Thinking in the Heart.

"The Kingdom of God is within you," Our Blessed Lord assures us. The Holy Ghost is the inner Power, the hidden, silent, secret Source of holiness, as opposed to the modern platform of pomp and flash and noise and show. The Holy Ghost is the direct opposite to the idolatry of the flesh, to the Hollywood way of life, and to worldly ambition.

What is within quickens. The Holy Ghost is a spiritual Dynamo. He is the Current which carries us to that sea of peace which is holiness of life. To become holy we must become interior souls. Without the interior spirit we cannot pray and everything we do goes haltingly. No mere organization, no matter how humanly perfect it may be, can touch our hearts or the hearts of others. The interior working of the Spirit alone can alter us or reform others. The more interior life is the more perfect it is.

The mighty tree grows because it digs deep into the earth and sends its roots down so that its trunk and branches can withstand the storms that blow and the drought that withers. We also grow from within. Our moral strength is within us. And if we would build ourselves into better and holier persons we must plan a few minutes each day to think in the heart. Our lives will bear fruit in proportion as we meditate. Without meditation the breath of self-love will arrest, and, perhaps, destroy our spiritual growth. We cannot Unmask the subtle forms self-seeking assumes unless we think in the heart.

Mary's Interior Life.

At the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple the Gospel narrates: "And His Mother kept all these words in her heart." (St. Luke 2. 51). That single sentence could be looked upon as the life story of Our Blessed Lady on this earth. She stored all that she heard from Her Divine Son in her heart. Hers was a silent, hidden, interior, meditative life.

We shall thank the Holy Ghost for Mary, His Spouse, by devoting a few minutes each day in silence and solitude to thinking things over. We are frightened by the word "meditation," thinking that it is only for priests, religious, and chosen souls. Mary at Fatima did not use the word "meditation" but asked us "to keep her company," that is, to chat with her, to share her thoughts, and to apply the lessons of the Rosary to our own lives as we re-live in imagination the scenes of the fifteen Mysteries of her Rosary.

The Gift of Pentecost.

In making a novena to the Holy Ghost, especially during the one in preparation for Pentecost, let us turn our eyes more often to Mary as she led the Apostles in the Supper chamber with prayer, instruction, and penance while they waited for the coming of the Holy Ghost. No one prepared more carefully for His coming than she did. As before, by her prayers, virtues, and ardent desire, she drew the Son of God to her womb, so now at Pentecost the Holy Ghost was drawn down on

the Church by the prayers and sighs of the Mother of God. How ceaseless were her prayers and penances! She knew the importance of the Mystery which was at hand, by which the work of her beloved Son was to be completed and crowned by the Holy Ghost. Thus in a spiritual sense Mary filled the office of Mother at the birth of the Church. For that we should thank her sincerely and ask her to take us by the hand and lead us to the Holy Ghost

No one ever received the Holy Ghost in such fullness as she did. It is true that His gifts of grace did not appear on her in such an outward manner as they did on the Apostles, but grace was stored up in her as spiritual capital from which the early Church drew, and the Church today continues to draw.

The Pentecostal gifts to Mary had an extraordinary effect on the infant Church, and continue to have on the interior life of the Church of today, which belongs to her as the Mother of God. In Apostolic days she encouraged, comforted and instructed the Apostles. They consulted her on their missions and brought home to her all their problems. It may have been on her advice that St. Peter went to Rome to establish the headquarters of the Church at the centre of the world.

It was she who instructed the Apostles and enlightened the four Evangelists on the Mysteries of the Redeemer's earlier life of which she was the sole witness. Her presence on earth blessed every undertaking of the Apostles. The infant Church harvested a rich crop of souls because Mary was there to petition the Lord of the harvest to grant fruit to the seed sown by His Apostles and disciples.

The Feast of Generosity.

Pentecost is the feast of generosity for the Holy Ghost; it is the great Gift of God to us. How the Lord loves the generous giver! And who was more generous in her offering than Mary! "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word," is the golden thread with which Mary weaved every day of her life a glorious tapestry of generosity for God alone.

We shall thank the Holy Ghost for His gift of Mary to us by striving to be generous to Him. He never asks us to attempt anything beyond our limited powers but only to be ungrudging within limits, to give to God the little more that means so much. It is the little extra, the bit over and above that spells generosity, which captivates the heart of God.

O Holy Ghost, the Gift of Pentecost, make us more generous towards You.

O Spouse of the Holy Ghost, His Gift to us, inspire us and strengthen us to answer "Yes" to the whispered invitations of the Holy Ghost.

Thank the Holy Ghost for Mary....

The Angelus is a prayer of thanksgiving to the Holy Ghost for the Mystery of the Incarnation. While saying it let us thank the Holy Ghost for selecting Mary as His instrument, for having her in mind since the Garden of Eden, for the careful choice of her parents, for so richly endowing her, and for making her His Bride.

The ejaculation: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy divine love" should be offered through Mary as an act of gratitude. When we say: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost" let us form the letter M with a finger on the page, on the kneeler, or in the air, anywhere so long as it is inconspicuously done. This little act acknowledges the threefold relationship of Mary to the Divine Persons, daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Ghost. This small, unnoticed gesture acknowledges that as we receive every grace and blessing from the Blessed Trinity through Mary, so through Mary we render thanks to the Three Divine Persons and give Them glory always.

A frequent turning of the heart to Mary will create a spirit of devotion to the Holy Ghost and that develops into a habitual act of thanksgiving. Let us keep a favourite picture of Our Lady in our Missals and books of devotion. Let it be a bookmark, projecting above the pages to catch the eye and remind us that all prayer gains in its passing through her hands, and that Mary does add something to every prayer to God. Even if the prayer or exercise is not directed to Mary, let us conclude it with an Ave or a Marian ejaculation, that she may endorse this devotion. Whenever God grants us a grace He expects us to accept that favour through Mary and to acknowledge her in doing so.

A Spirit of Consecration.

We thank the Holy Ghost for Mary by cultivating a spirit of consecration to her, an utter dependence upon her. Each morning let us consecrate ourselves to God through her and frequently let us think of that consecration during the day. We have no standing before God except that we are her children.

From the moment of the Annunciation when she said: "Be it done unto me according to thy word" we belong to her and God only deals with us as united to Mary. St. Louis Marie de Montfort assures us that the image of the unborn babe in its mother's womb is the true image of our dependence upon Mary. A babe in arms is not a true picture because such a babe has a little life of its own apart from its mother. A mother may desert such a babe and the babe's life goes on. The unborn babe is absolutely dependent on the mother who carries it.

Let us cultivate the spirit of consecration to Mary as a habitual thanksgiving to the Holy Ghost. Each day is Mary's day. But there must be order in our spiritual lives, regular hours for prayer, and a few minutes each day for thinking in the heart.

The Song of Mary.

Mary is a living lyre touched by the Holy Ghost.

The Song of Mary takes its title from the word with which it begins: "Magnificat." In earlier times it was known as "The Gospel of Mary," "The Virgin's Prophecy," and, perhaps, the most beautiful title of all, "The Virgin's Nuptial Song." It was the custom at weddings in Palestine to express appropriate sentiments in *extempore* song. But Mary sang her own bridal song, the song of her espousal with the Holy Ghost, the song of the Bride of the Holy Ghost, of the union of God with mankind, of the marriage of heaven and earth, the hymn of the Incarnation. The Magnificat is steeped in the hymns and prophecies of the Old Testament with which Mary, like every pious Israelite, was familiar. In her song Mary proclaims the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and makes a new prophecy for a new era. The Magnificat is the crown of Scriptural song, for it surpasses all the canticles of the Old Testament and is itself the first canticle of the New.

In the first great happiness of her Divine Motherhood, Mary, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, pours from her soul her exultant, wondrous song, simple in expression but of *mysterious* depth. The song may be divided into three parts. First, Mary thanks God on her own behalf, then on behalf of the world redeemed, and finally on behalf of Israel, God's chosen people.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord;

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God My Saviour.

For He hath regarded the humility of His hand-maiden;

For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed;

For He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His Name."

A literal translation from the Greek text would be:

"My soul extols the Lord, And my spirit leaps for joy in God My Saviour."

The word "magnify" does not mean to make great, for no one can increase the infinite greatness of God; rather is it used in a sense of declaring great. St. Elizabeth had declared that Mary was great: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Our Lady is quick to refer her greatness to its true source, God.

"Exult" is a better word than "rejoice." Mary sings her soaring song of joy that God has so honoured His obscure maid.

"The humility of his hand-maiden" means the lowliness of his slave.

"From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" are daring words for a young country girl to make in an unimportant village in Palestine. But the prophecy is all the greater if it is fulfilled. And how wonderfully it has been fulfilled in this our Marian age!

Mary of Nazareth makes the staggering statement that all future generations of mankind will honour her memory. The greatest masterpieces in the art galleries of Christendom are pictures of Mary of Nazareth. No woman has ever been eulogized by the poets as Mary. Mary's name and titles are written across the map of the world; cities and towns, hills and

mountains, capes and bays, rivers and provinces are named after Mary. The number of churches dedicated to her is past counting. Who can estimate the number of children with the name of Mary? Countless generations have prayed to her daily and died with her name on their lips, "O Mary, O Mary, how great is thy name!"

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me." The Mighty One, He Whose Name is Holy, has done this sublime thing to Mary, making her His Bride and Spouse. Mary's explanation is that the Mighty One was honouring the lowliness of His slave.

Through Mary the Seat of Wisdom, we hope to be wise. She will teach us that no man is wise unless he falls upon his knees in deep humility. How sorely the modern world needs Mary to bring it to its knees! The advance of science has sharpened the intellect, while the hearts of men remain dark and cold. Recourse to the Holy Ghost, and to Mary His Spouse, is the urgent need of this proud age.

"And His mercy is from generation unto generation,

To them that fear Him.

He hath shown might with 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 lowly.

He hath filled the hungry with good things;

And the rich He hath sent away empty."

Having glorified God for His favours to herself, Mary now glorifies and praises God for His mercies to men. She echoes here the sentiments of the psalmist, David, who had declared: "But the mercy of God *is* from eternity and unto eternity, upon them that fear Him." (Ps. 102. 17). The mercy promised by God to Abraham and to his seed forever is in her mind and heart as she sings her song.

She looks into the future and sees the Divine revolution in which the pride and arrogance of man are overthrown by the foolishness of the Gospel. God shows might in His arm; the proud are scattered; the mighty put down from their seat; the rich sent hungry away; while the humble are exalted and the hungry filled with good things. So does Mary proclaim in advance the Beatitudes of the Gospel and anticipates St. Paul's preaching:

"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? And the base things of this world and the contemptible hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in His sight." (I Cor. 1. 20).

"He hath given help to His servant Israel.

Being mindful of His mercy;

As He spoke to our Fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." —(Luke I. 46-55).

Finally, Mary thanks God for His favours to Israel, His chosen people. The Messiah was to be born in Israel of the seed of Abraham. Despite the sins of the chosen people, Jehovah has mercifully remembered His promises to their fathers, the Patriarchs. Now He deigns to fulfill those promises. Mary, an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has become the Mother of the Messiah.

In the "Magnificat" Mary makes a solemn act of thanksgiving, the first to fall from Jewish lips for the Incarnation. She, a daughter of David, a child of Abraham, looks back along the course of the centuries to the promise given by God to Abraham and her joy and gratitude is in her song that the promise has been fulfilled in herself.

The Church takes up the song of Mary. She chants or recites it *daily in* her Office, reminding her children of God's mercy to us in the Incarnation, and of the greatness of her through whom this blessing has come. During the Office in choir all must rise and stand with uncovered heads for the *singing* of the "Magnificat." Another mark of respect is the incensing of the altar during the "Magnificat". The song of Mary is the only canticle or hymn that from remote antiquity has been prefaced by making the Sign of the Cross.

Although the "Magnificat" is primarily Mary's praise of God, yet, we see in it God's intention that men should praise

Mary. Mary praises God in herself and herself in God. She extols the power and wisdom and goodness of the Most High, for the reason that these attributes are so wondrously shown in her who is His Mother. Not to honour Mary is consequently not to honour God in the noblest work of His hands. The Holy Ghost moved St. Elizabeth to recognize and revere the Mother of God and to proclaim her “blessed among women. That is why the humble handmaid of the Lord does not chide St. Elizabeth for her praise. She teaches us that she is worthy of honour, worthy because God has so honoured her. The Holy Ghost speaks through the lips of Mary her right to our praise and veneration:

“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.”

Mary, His Inseparable Companion.

“When the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. She is the inseparable companion of the Holy Ghost in all His works of grace. Unless the Holy Ghost finds Mary in a soul, He works none of His marvels there. We cannot have a perfect fidelity to the Holy Ghost without union with Mary.”—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

The Legion of Mary is full of the Spirit of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. That spirit might be summarized in his own words that “Mary is the inseparable companion of the Holy Ghost.” Over the standard of the Legion is the Dove of the Holy Ghost. In the picture of the Legion the widespread wings of the Dove of the Holy Ghost surmount Mary and her apostolate for souls. The Legionary Promise is addressed to the Holy Ghost. Every meeting of the Legion opens with the invocation and prayer of the Holy Ghost. The Legionaries seek personal holiness through the union of the Holy Ghost and Mary. They appeal to the Holy Ghost to deepen their devotion to Mary, His Spouse, and they ask Mary to lead them and all they hope to do to the Holy Ghost. The Legion is convinced that the sanctification of themselves, and of the other members of the Mystical Body, is dependent on the power and operation of the Holy Ghost.

True Devotion is from the Holy Ghost.

True devotion to Mary means to link her always with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the Mighty One Who has done such great things to Mary. He will do great things for all who approach Him through Mary, His Spouse. The Legion of Mary has been guided by the Holy Ghost in prescribing for its members interior prayer and apostolic action. Prayer and action, interior and exterior formation, prayer before action and action to follow prayer, to pray to act and to act because of prayer—this is the explanation of the extraordinary fruits of the Legion.

The Legion has been led back to the spirit of apostolic times by Mary. We have many societies, confraternities, sodalities and pious unions but none of them have combined, as the Legion does, prayer and action. The Legion has the wisdom of the saints who prayed fervently because everything depended on the good God and then worked as if all depended on themselves. Inner holiness and apostolic work are the two wings on which the Legionary advances in grace and co-operates with Mary in the salvation of the world.

The Legionary Promise

Most Holy Ghost, 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 Thee to come upon me and fill me with Thyself,
So that my poor acts may be sustained by Thy power, and become an instrument of Thy mighty purposes.
But I know that Thou, Who hast come to regenerate the world in Jesus Christ,
Hast not willed to do so except through Mary,
That without her we cannot know or love Thee,
That it is by her, and to whom she pleases, when she pleases, and in the quantity and manner she pleases,

That all Thy gifts and virtues and graces are administered;
And I realize that the secret of a perfect Legionary service
Consists in a complete union with her who is so completely united to Thee.
So, taking in my hand the Legionary Standard, which seeks to set before our eyes these things,
I stand before Thee 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 Thou comest by her to do great things.
Let Thy 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 Thee;
So that Christ my Lord may likewise grow in me through Thee;
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 Thou wilt 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 Thy will, to operate Thy miracles of grace,
Which will renew the face of the earth,
And establish Thy reign, Most Holy Ghost, over all.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer to Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

O Mary, thou spotless Bride of the Holy Ghost! Thou art the glory of Jerusalem,, the joy of Israel, the honour of our nation. Thou art the valiant woman who didst crush the head of the serpent when thou didst offer thy Divine Son to the Heavenly Father in the love of the Holy Ghost, for the salvation of the world. Through the merits of this previous sacrifice and through the sufferings of Thy Son, obtain for us the gifts of the Holy Ghost I thank the Holy Ghost that He has chosen thee as His Bride and constituted thee the dispenser of His graces. Look upon me with thy compassionate eyes, upon my distress and needs. Help me that I may never lose the grace of God nor defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, but that my heart may ever remain His holy dwelling, and that I may with thee eternally praise and bless the Holy Ghost in heaven. Amen.

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray for us.

She is Our Lady of Light.

Mary is the Seat of Wisdom, the prudent Virgin, the Mother of Good Counsel, the confidant of God Himself, for she was that for three and thirty years on earth. She is Our Lady of Light, filled by the Holy Ghost not only at her Immaculate Conception, her beautiful Annunciation, but again at Pentecost She is given motherly queenship over all hearts, that she may love and understand and help all hearts. As Faber wrote, her heart was broken that it might wider be, "that in the vastness of its love there might be room for me." And she is Our Lady of Paradise—full of joys, of virtues, of smiles, of welcoming.

His Immaculate Spouse.

O Holy Ghost, give me a great devotion towards Mary, Thy Immaculate Spouse, so that in her and by her Thou mayest form in me Jesus Christ in a lifelike way, unto the fullness of His perfect age.

Mother of God, Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost, I give Thee my whole self, soul and body, all I have or may have, to keep for Jesus, that I may be His for ever more.

O Lady of Light, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray for me.

O Mother of God, sanctified by the Holy Ghost in Thy Immaculate Conception, pray for me.

“Kindle in Us the Fire of Thy Love.” The Life of the Holy Ghost is symbolized by fire. Fire makes action. Fire creates an appetite for more action. A thing of fire will spread. When we ask Him to kindle in our hearts the fire of His Divine Love, we really ask Him to propel us to action, action on ourselves first, and then because of our increase in holiness, action on and for others for the love of Him. This is the new commandment of the Holy Ghost—action this day on behalf of the spiritual growth of others because we love Him.

A Prayer for Australia.

Holy Ghost, we beseech Thee, descend upon our lovely morning land, dedicated to Thee. Change the hearts of the enemies of the Holy Church. Convert them to the true faith. Guide our leaders. Give us the spirit of justice and charity. Make us worthy of the name—”The Southern Land of the Holy Ghost.” Amen.
