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A LAYMAN

meets

Our Lady

by Bill Smith

*The
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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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A Layman Meets Our Lady

By

BILL SMITH

OUR LADY does so much for mankind that it is impossible to find in the Litany of Loretto or among the Blessed Mother's many other titles one single invocation that fully expresses her privileges and prerogatives. The Lady does so much for people like you and me. I might even go so far as to say that she does things *to* people like you and me. But we'll see more about that later.

I just said that it is her business to do things *for* people. That's a good sound piece of Catholic teaching. We know that she is called by the somewhat awesome and technical title of Mediatrix of All Graces. That simply means that every grace that was merited through her divine Son, and all the graces she merited, and all the graces the saints ever stored up — all of these merits are applied to us through her. In other words, every time her Son, Jesus Christ, wants to give anybody grace, he sends it through her hands.

I have talked to a lot of people about this power of the Blessed Mother, and some of them seem to feel that because she hands out the graces Christ wishes to bestow on us, she is in a position to circumvent him.

Or to put it another way, suppose she doesn't want Joe Doaks to have a certain grace that her Son wants Joe to have; then, these people feel, she could refuse to let Joe have the grace. Or suppose she wanted Jenny Doaks to have a certain grace that her Son didn't want Jenny to have. Then again, these people feel, she could hand that grace to Jenny and her Son wouldn't have anything to say about it.

Distribution of Graces

Needless to say, these ideas about the Lady are quite false. All that she is, is a sort of middleman (or perhaps we should call her the middle woman) in the distribution of graces. The main fact is that her will is so fully in accord with the will of her divine Son, that he and she work together like a team. Therefore, she never gives a grace to a person he doesn't want it given to, and she doesn't prevent somebody from getting a grace that her Son wants that person to have.

It is easy enough to understand the Lady as the Mediatrix of All Graces. The hard thing for us to understand is this unity of her will with the will of her Son, and yet it is the source of her power. She always and inevitably does what her Son wants. She always did. It is hard for us to understand a person like that because we so often do things her divine Son doesn't want. A less pleasant way of putting the matter is to say that we commit sins, for committing sin simply means following our own will instead of God's will.

Secret of Sanctity

The reason the Lady is so powerful is because she and her divine Son are always in accord on everything. He wants what she wants, and she wants what he wants. In that statement lies the secret of sanctity for us too. We must want what God wants and then have the courage to do it.

The person who can best help us to do this is, of course, God's own Mother, for all her power to help us, direct us, and guide us comes from her closeness to Christ and from the unity of her will with his.

We must get to know her, and then we must follow her way of life so that we may make our wills more and more like God's.

Hard to Know

Like most women, the Lady is somewhat of an enigma at first. Anybody who has ever met the girl of his dreams can tell you what a hard time he had in really getting to know her. The dream girl seems so aloof; she seems as if she isn't an ordinary mortal. She seems so superior to everybody else. The boy envisions his wondergirl as living in a serene never-never land where everybody from her grubby little brother to her rather harassed mother and father must feel that they are associating with a lovely angel much too beautiful and good for this world.

And very often the girl, who is perfectly normal and has her little spats with pop and mom and with little brother, and who is just like anybody else, can't disabuse her

worshiping boyfriend of these notions. I had almost called them "silly" notions, and so, in a sense, they are. But they aren't entirely silly, for the most wonderful part of love is to put the loved one on a pedestal—a pedestal so high that it seems as if it would be just enough for the lover to be able to touch the foot of his beloved, and then to dedicate himself to her service forever.

The Awakening

It is unfortunate, however, that in many cases boy not only meets girl, but boy gets to know girl. And the better he gets to know her, the more he finds out that she is quite terribly human. He finds out that she can get angry and that her serene brow can become wrinkled with frowns. He finds out that she eats and sleeps and lives just like ordinary people—not in any wonderful never-never land, but in the hard land of everyday reality. And then, too often, the boy is disillusioned, and if he doesn't really love the girl, he becomes cynical and says, "Aw, all women are alike—just snares and delusions. I'm through with them forever."

Of course, he may not keep this attitude very long, for perhaps some day he will really meet a girl who, with all her faults, is so wonderful and so mysterious to him that he will go through the rest of his life with that undying spark of love still burning in his heart for her.

Mothers!

No matter what we men may say about women, no matter how cynical we may

become about their very human weaknesses, we still realize that there is in them some wondrous spring of mystery, of strength, of goodness, of tenderness. For after all, nature made them to be the greatest thing on earth: mothers. And none of them ever really lose the urge toward that great career, no matter how they may obscure it, or hide it, or ruin it.

I suppose, then, that the mystery of women lies in that deep-rooted mother urge that they all have. I suppose that is what we men admire in them and I suppose that is why, somehow, we never feel quite worthy of them. They can be mothers; we can only be fathers.

The Lady has about her at first the same mystery, the same aloofness that all women have. She was not only designed by God to be a mother, the way all women are designed, but she was designed to be the Mother of Mothers—yes, and the Mother of fathers—because she was designed to be the Mother of God himself.

Introduction

The problem is to get to know her. The first introduction to her can come about in various ways, just as the introduction to any woman can come about in various ways.

In my own case, I met the girl who was to be my wife by the purest chance. In fact, it was on a blind date at a college prom.

Then I've known cases of boys and girls who were raised as nextdoor neighbors and

who never thought very much about each other until one day the great light suddenly dawned, and they were in love. The little kid with the pigtails and the dolls suddenly blossomed into a wonderful, mysterious, lovable creature for that other little kid who once carried dead rats in his pocket and thought of nothing better than climbing trees and avoiding taking a bath.

The whole world suddenly changed for them. She felt a new power to attract a man. He took to washing behind his ears and became very solicitous about pleasing her. They were in love, and the whole world sang, and the sun never set.

Similar Experience

I think each of us must undergo a similar experience in meeting the Lady. We must fall in love with her, not only the way a boy falls in love with a girl, but the way a child truly loves his mother.

In her mysterious womanly way she is at once the Lady who demands the love and the honor and the respect that medieval knights gave their ladies and the Mother who sees in each of us the image of her own Son. Maybe we have spoiled that image of his by our selfishness or our wickedness, but she is still Mother enough to see far into our souls and say, "That's my boy" or "That's my girl."

The Question

But the question still remains: How do we get to know her?

As far as Catholics are concerned, our knowing her is similar to the case of the boy and the girl next door. We have, so to say, been brought up with her. From the time we could talk we knew her name and called her Mother. As we grew older we heard more about her. We learned how she was the Mother of the baby Jesus who came down to earth and was born on Christmas morning. But when Christmas morning came, we were often too interested in our presents to think about the Present she gave us. Later on we were taught to pray to her and we said her rosary. But when we said it, we thought of it as a sort of never-ending treadmill of prayers that pop or mom made us say or as a task that had to be finished as soon as possible so we could go out to play.

Always Present

Somehow, though, she was always there in the background of our thoughts and prayers and hopes. And then maybe one day when we were in a jam—maybe we were worried about passing an examination we hadn't prepared for—we wore out the step in front of her altar, asking her to make us wise and learned when we hadn't done anything about it ourselves. Already, you see, we expected miracles from her. And more often than not her lazy little client did get a passing mark through very little effort of his own.

Then we forgot about her for a while. And maybe we have gone on forgetting about her, the most lovable of all women,

the most tender of all mothers. Perhaps we still look at her statue in church or we carry her picture in our prayer books or we still mumble the prayers of the rosary without really talking to her. But I promise you that one day she will burst upon your consciousness with a sudden ray of light, and you will find that you are in love—in love with the greatest woman and the dearest Mother in the world.

Then you will begin to understand the heretofore seeming doubletalk of the Litany. You will share the sentiments of millions of men and women of all times and all conditions who have sung of her the way a lover serenades his beloved. You will see why they can't get finished talking about her in the language of love. And you will see why I say there is no single title which expresses all she means to mankind.

Meeting the Lady

I have said that the Lady has stood behind all your prayers and mine from the time we first began to learn to pray. In the same way she has stood behind the hopes and prayers of men and women from the beginning of time. She is the one who was foretold by God's own words to Adam and Eve when he said that a woman would crush the head of the serpent.

The Jews waited almost as much for her to be manifested as they did for Christ himself. Jewish girls from the dawn of history hoped that they might be the chosen one to bear the little Messias. And yet, when he came to earth neither he nor his

Mother was recognized by the great majority of people. It has always been part of her fate to be in the background—not only of history, but of our own lives. But she is always there.

Then in the Middle Ages men began to build great cathedrals to honor her and her Son. They built Chartres on the site of a cave where the Druids worshipped a black madonna. They decorated the church as if it were for the residence of a Queen-Mother—and so it was. All the jewels and laces and trinkets that women love and that men love to give them are in Chartres—presents to the Lady. But these jewels are the flaming blues and greens and scarlets of the wondrous windows. Her laces are the delicate traceries of the carved stone. Her trinkets are the soaring columns and the teeming statues of the facade.

Never Satisfied

Yet, like a typical woman, she seems never to be satisfied. The great towers of Chartres have been repeatedly struck by lightning, and the church itself has been reduced to rubble by fire. It is almost as if she said, "I want something new now. Build me another cathedral. But whatever you build, I shall want another, better one."

Of course, she is right. She has that great sense of the fitness of things that most women have. By her very dissatisfaction with things as they are, she, like many women, inspires us to even greater deeds and even greater effort.

But unlike most women, she doesn't

demand these things in a moment of caprice or for her own selfish honor. She is eternally demanding that we rebuild our lives, just as she has so often demanded that her cathedral at Chartres be rebuilt. It isn't so much that she is dissatisfied, but she knows we can do better with God's help, and so she leads us on.

I think that here, then, is our first point of contact with her. She is, in a sense, dissatisfied with the careless way we handle our lives, and she knows that deep down inside ourselves we too are dissatisfied. Then, when we are most lonely and most down on our luck, she works on that sense of dissatisfaction. It is then that we are apt to find her standing at our side with that quaint, inscrutable smile that she must have had when the Evangelist wrote of her: "...his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart."

End of the Road

Very often you will find her at what looks like the end of the road for you. The reason for meeting her here is, I think, because it is about the only time she can really get a chance to talk to us alone. When everything is going along fine and we are contented and successful, we don't have time for her. We scarcely ever think of her. But when the going gets rough, when we come to what looks like a dead-end in our lives, when it seems our friends have deserted us—it is then that she comes into the picture. Then we are often only too ready to find a friend. And of course, there

she stands, as she has stood by us all along, only we didn't see her.

At those moments, then, when we are in really desperate straits, she offers us a chance to fall in love with her and to remake our lives. It doesn't matter what the trouble is—she is always there, waiting. Perhaps it is a broken romance and we feel life isn't worth living any longer. Perhaps it is the loss of a job and we wonder when and how we are going to eat again. Perhaps it is sickness or death in the family. When all seems most lost and we are most lonely, she is always there to turn to.

It is then that we realize why she is called Comforter of the Afflicted and Help of Christians. It is then that she starts doing things for us and to us.

What the Lady Does

Very often, on our first real meeting with the Lady, she does things *to* us before she starts doing things *for* us.

There is only one thing she demands before she starts going to work in our behalf, and that is that we offer ourselves to her. But beware how you offer yourself to her, for she takes you at your word.

Sometimes before we come quite to the point of offering ourselves to her, she has watched us trying to twist God's will our way through prayers and novenas and even self-sacrifice. I think she must smile at all these goings-on when they are done by somebody like us who has a very distorted notion of what prayer is.

Real Prayer

Many of us feel that by praying we can get God to change his divine will in our regard. We feel that somehow God hasn't quite made up his mind about us, and that by praying we can get him to do so. Rather, there is one fundamental thing about prayer which we must remember. Prayer will not change God's will, which has been made up from all eternity. Therefore, our prayer should be that God's will, whatever it is, will be accomplished and that we may have the strength and grace to do whatever is necessary to accomplish it. Prayer to various saints, pious exercises like novenas and holy hours, of course, are all to the good. They help us to pray ever so hard that God's will may be done. But they cannot change that will.

Now that in itself is often a hard thing to realize, and it is a harder thing to accept. If we don't get what we pray for right away, we often tend to be discouraged, and to say: "Oh, what's the use?"

The Lady Enters

It is here again that the Lady enters the picture. We said a little earlier that she is an expert in knowing the will of God, for her will and his have always been in absolute accord. Not even the greatest saints can say that. But she can say that. That is why she is an expert in helping us to bring our wills into line with God's will, if we only give her a chance.

It seems to me, therefore, that while prayers to the saints are valuable, they are

most valuable insofar as they lead us to meet the Lady. Remember, every saint had a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother of God and they recognize her as their Queen. What is more natural, then, than that they introduce us to her through prayer?

But to return to the matter of prayer and God's will, what happens to us when we have been praying for something and don't get it? We can do one of two things—you or I can say: "Religion is the bunk. Prayer is a waste of time. The Church is a fake. I'll forget the whole thing and go out and live whatever kind of life I choose." Or we can do something else—something you and I must do. You and I, when we find that God does not will something we want, can turn to the Lady for consolation.

Peace of Mind

There have been so many books written lately on peace of mind and how to relieve nervous tension that it would seem that everybody ought to be peaceful, happy, and quiet. But as we all know, people are not. Even you and I aren't at peace with ourselves and with others. All sorts of things worry us and bother us and upset us. Maybe they aren't big things. Maybe they are only stupid, small things, like the annoying habit somebody has of sucking an empty tooth when we're sitting quietly in a theater trying to concentrate on a movie. Or maybe it's a baby crying at two o'clock in the morning.

Maybe something else bothers us: love troubles, family troubles, lack of money to

do the things we'd like. Whatever it is, it can be a very troublesome trouble. Then our nerves get jangled and we fly off the handle at pop or mom or little brother, or if we're married, at our husband or wife.

And somehow all the books in the world don't seem to help us to get that peace of mind they're always talking about. So what shall we do? To whom shall we turn?

To the Lady

It is time, then, to turn to the Lady. Maybe this is just the moment she has been waiting for: when we are down on our luck and everything is going dead wrong.

Now I don't mean that she will instantly cure a broken leg, or heal a person suffering from cancer, or even hand us a million dollars, however badly we might want those things for ourselves or for somebody else. But one thing she will give us is peace of mind and the strength to do God's will in any given situation.

Consecration

But first of all, *we have to turn ourselves over to her*. And I mean turn ourselves over to her with no strings attached. We have to tell her that we belong to her totally and entirely, and that we want nothing other than what she wants, and we want it only in the way she wants it.

This is not easy to do, for at first we may say that we want what she wants, but not really mean it. We will still have hidden away in the back of our minds the things we want.

But never mind them for the moment. Let's just concentrate on her.

What to Do

The first way to concentrate on her, of course, is to get right with her Son. If we haven't been going to Holy Communion and confession very regularly, now is the time to start—even if we don't feel like it. But we have to make one effort, cost what it will, to go to confession and Holy Communion. And then we have to keep it up—not whenever we feel like it, but regularly: every week, and if possible, every day.

Along with all this, we must start doing exactly what she told the children of Fatima: *say the rosary every day.*

At first the rosary and Holy Communion are going to seem like colossal tasks. It is too hard to get up in the morning. It is too hard to take time out to say the rosary. But let me tell you, it is not so hard as having your heart torn and bleeding every hour of the day.

Voices

It is through the rosary and Holy Communion that we shall be able to talk to the Lady and that she will be able to talk to us and guide us. Very few of us, maybe none of us, will ever have direct inspiration from the Blessed Mother or the saints, the way Joan of Arc had her Voices. But each of us can have from the Lady some sort of guiding voices that are all our own. Let's see what these voices are.

First of all, there is that voice which

normally works within each one of us: the voice of conscience. We know right from wrong; and we know whether we are falling over the ragged edge of sin or whether what we are doing is right. If we are not sure about some things, that is where the sacrament of confession comes in. The confessor is there to set us right about the doubtful things. Once he has spoken, we must follow him. Sometimes his advice is going to hurt but we must follow it, for his is the second voice the Lady sends us.

The next voice is that of the people to whom we owe honor or respect or who are our superiors, put over us by God. For boys and girls, this means parents and teachers; for employees, that ogre, the boss; for married people, the legitimate wishes and desires of husband or wife. For example, if a husband is continually running counter to the legitimate wishes of his wife, he can be almost sure he is running counter to the wishes of God and the Blessed Mother.

Strident and Annoying

Then there are other voices the Lady lets us hear. Some of these are pretty strident at times — and pretty annoying. Older children certainly have some obligation to help their younger brothers and sisters, even when the youngsters get cross and crabby.

Finally, there is the obligation of charity toward those around us, be they friends or enemies. It is easy to help friends. The hard part comes when we have to help those

who dislike us or lie about us or make fun of us. And yet they too sometimes almost shout at us for help and understanding and love.

These, then, are voices which should be for us just as compelling as the Voices of Joan. Actually, they are the voices of God and his Blessed Mother who call to us through a whole variety of sometimes very unpleasant people. But the Lady is still there, waiting for us to hear her gentle call in the midst of these often strident and cross cacklings.

Typical Woman

I have told you that the Lady is a typical woman—she is never satisfied. She always expects more from those who love her and want to follow her.

After we have started listening to the voices I have told you about, she will speak to you with her own voice. She will demand more and more things from you. First, she will ask little extra sacrifices. Maybe one of them will be putting off eating a bit of candy after a meal. Maybe it will be an extra prayer or two. Maybe it will be doing without a cigarette when you want it very badly. Somehow, quite silently and deep in your own heart, she will tell you what she wants and when she wants it.

Then you will say to yourself, "Now at last she will give me what I want. She will give me the boy or the girl I want to marry. She will give me the raise I want or the automobile I have had my eye on for a

couple of years or whatever else I am praying for."

But I say to you that probably at that moment the Lady will say one great big "No." So what do you do then?

The Lady Says "No"

When the Lady says "No" to our prayers, then is really the time for us to trust her and to have even greater confidence in her. It is also high time for us to re-examine the motives we had in wanting the thing for which we are praying. God will always answer our prayers and he will give us what we ask, provided it is in accord with his will. The Blessed Mother cannot change that will, but she can assist us in accepting it.

If we ask the Lady for something, and we don't get it, perhaps it is an indication that the thing we want would not be good for us, or that God just doesn't want us to have it.

Next, we ought to try to find out if perhaps we didn't ask for the thing with a wrong motive. Perhaps we prayed so ardently for something only because of our own selfishness. Maybe we didn't want it because it would help us to come closer to God, but we only wanted it for our own selfish use—to make us look bigger in the eyes of our neighbors or to satisfy some selfish pleasure or vanity. In that case, it is probable that the Blessed Mother will turn a deaf ear to our prayers.

But there is still another consideration: the sense of timing that the Lady displays when she does answer our prayers.

Is It Good Now?

When we pray, we seldom think that what we want may not be good for us here and now. Maybe we are not ready for the favor yet. The Lady may know full well that if she gave us what we wanted at this particular time, we would be so cocksure of ourselves that we would not appreciate it, and we might stop praying and abuse it.

So, if the Lady says "No" to a certain prayer at a certain time, it does not mean that she has not heard the prayer or will never answer it. It could be that she is just waiting until the proper time—until we are able to accept the favor without its bowling us over.

That is why we ought to pray with confidence, try to purify our motives, and put our trust blindly in the Lady.

Most Important

This last requirement is one of the most important of all. It is certainly the hardest, for it requires us to accept the Lady's "No," and still go on trusting her. It is at this point that we must really put the whole of our request into her hands, for she has shown us that we are powerless.

I imagine that if we would closely examine the purpose of our requests to the Lady we would find that most of them involve some other person, and for the request to be granted, we are really asking that she change the heart or the mind or the will of somebody else.

The boy who wants to marry the girl is

really praying that somehow the Lady will make the girl receptive to the boy's proposal. The man who wants a raise is really praying that the Lady will soften the boss' heart and make him hand over the extra money on payday. The man who is praying desperately for a house for his family is really asking that some landlord will favor him or that somebody else will vacate a house.

You see, many of our prayers do not involve us alone, but they really involve other people and a change of heart that has to be wrought in these other people.

A Great Power

When the Lady says "No," then, she is really telling us that she can sway the hearts and minds of others where we can only argue or plead with them—and often to no purpose.

This great power of hers was implied, I think, when she talked to the children of Fatima. She said that people had to say her rosary every day or the world would be plunged into a blood-bath of war and persecution. She was really saying that if we prayed, she would soften hearts, change minds, and so arrange things that peace would come about in the world. As she knows and as we know, all the diplomatic maneuvering and conferences haven't brought peace; all the compromises and treaties haven't brought peace. That is because peace depends upon men's hearts' being changed. But she said that if people would say her rosary, she herself would so

touch men's hearts and she would so arrange things that peace would come.

Since she has this tremendous power over the hearts and minds of men, why should we not trust her blindly? Why should we not pray to her every day?

But We Don't

And yet we don't. We still try to run things ourselves. Very often when we do, we only mess things up worse than ever. By our anxiety we disturb other people. By our impatience we try to force others to do what we want. If we would only let the Lady alone to work in her own way, we could be absolutely certain that our prayers will be answered the way she and her divine Son want them to be answered. And we may be sure that she will give us the answer at the very time it is good for us to have it, and not before.

She tells us, in effect: "If you pray to me, if you trust me absolutely, and if you dedicate yourself to me, I will give you the means to do whatever my divine Son wants you to do. If you need a million dollars for some work he wants you to do, then you will get the million dollars. If you need an automobile to do my Son's work, then you will get the automobile. If you really need a raise in salary to do what my Son wants you to do with that extra money, then you will get it.

"But don't come to me and ask for a million dollars or an automobile or a raise or anything else if you just want it for

yourself and for your own vanity. Then I will probably say 'No'."

Four Essentials

To sum up, then, we must have a good motive, we must pray with confidence, we must continue to pray, and we must trust the Lady absolutely. Once we have done these things, most of our anxiety will disappear and we will start to achieve peace of soul. Most of our worry comes about because we want things we can't have. Then we start to figure out ways of getting these things, and if we don't get them through our own efforts, we fall into despair and say, "What's the use of praying and being good? I might as well be bad and do as I please."

In any event, we continue to be anxious and bothered, and we become unhappy at our lack of success because at last we have seen how powerless we really are.

Hands Outstretched

But all the time the Lady is standing there with her hands outstretched to us and telling us that if we would only trust her as a Mother, and do the will of her divine Son, we could be at peace with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with God. She tries so hard to show us that there is only one thing worthwhile in the world: saving our souls.

From what we have just said, it may seem as if the Blessed Mother of God doesn't do much for us, or that she won't do much for us. Perhaps we feel that way because we want too ardently some physical,

tangible favor—the automobile, the husband or wife, the extra money in the pay envelope. Now all these things are good in themselves and it is not wrong to want them. But the thing to think of is this: Are they good for us to have? Does God want us to have them? Would we use them for God if we got them? Should we have them right now?

Reorientation

Before the Lady does anything else for us, she sets our minds and wills in order, so that we may truly appreciate her favors. In other words, she turns us toward God. This reorienting of our minds and wills toward God is sometimes a very rough process. We want what we want when we want it. But the Lady often holds off giving us what we want until we make up our minds to turn to God. We can show her that we really mean to turn to him by doing what she demanded of the children of Fatima: saying the rosary every day. Also, we can go to Holy Communion more frequently.

And all the while we are doing these things, we can be praying for what we want or think we need. But we must pray with confidence, and we must be prepared to have the Lady sometimes say “No.”

Just when we think we have the favor in our hands, we will find that it escapes us. She permits this, not because she is capricious and wants to see us squirm, but to strengthen our wills and hearts and to encourage us in the practice of confidence.

When we get these setbacks in life, we often feel that the Lady has done something *to* us, instead of *for* us. And so, indeed, she has. She has permitted us to be disappointed so that we may be still stronger in our confidence in her power.

Not Spoiled

She knows, as does any mother, that if a child is handed everything on a silver platter, soon he will become ever more and more demanding. Soon he will want everything for himself and he will forget about his brothers and sisters and the others in the family. He will become a spoiled brat.

Believe me, the Lady takes good care that her children do not become spoiled. And yet, for this very reason, she often appears to us to have no heart.

Then again, like the good housewife that she is, she permits nothing to be wasted. She provides generously for her children, for is she not the Mediatrix of All Graces? But she does not want us to waste the graces she gives us. If she gave us right away whatever we wanted, we might be like a child with a shiny new knife. We might cut ourselves with it rather than use it to cut something else. Like children we may want the knife but we may still be too inept to use it properly.

Nothing Harmful

She refuses, too, to let us have a gift that she knows would only cause us harm. She knows all the trouble we can get into

and she knows exactly where our weaknesses lie. So, like a good mother again, she never gives us anything that she knows we can't handle properly. Theologians call these things which are dangerous to us, occasions of sin. So, rest assured, she will never give us anything that, in our weakness, will be an occasion of sin for us.

But for every disappointment, for every time she doesn't give us what we think we want, she gives us a greater consolation to make up for it. She shows us a little more of the smiling face of herself and of her divine Son. Little by little she lets us see how wonderful God is, and how worthwhile it is to love him and him alone. Little by little, she leads us from a desire for the things of this world, to a desire for the things of God and of heaven.

Slow Process

It's a slow process with most of us because we fight it so hard. But she is always ready to lead our halting steps forward. There are times when we are afraid and lonely, and then we want to be tied to her apron-strings. But after a while we get impatient and we try to run on ahead of her down the road of life. Then she has to take us by the hand and lead us back to the safety of her company.

So, here is one prayer I think we ought always to say: "Dear Lady, I am weak and stubborn. But I love you, even in the midst of my weakness. If the time ever comes when I shall try to escape from your guiding hand, please pull me back to

you, that I may always walk down the road of life and into eternity with my hand clasped trustingly in yours."

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