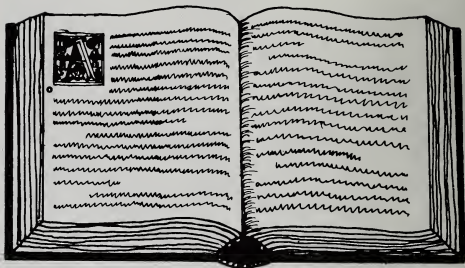


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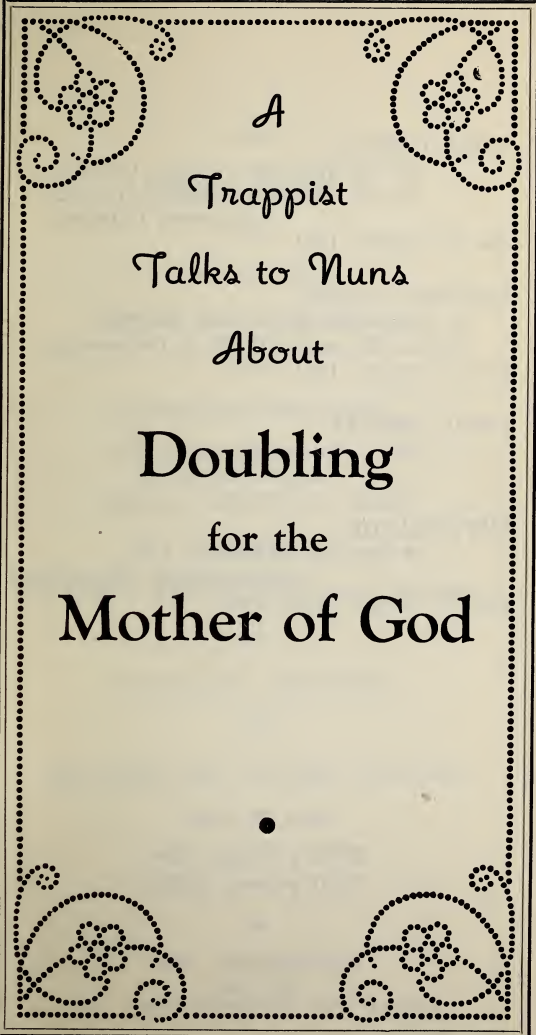
A
Trappist
Talks to Nuns
About
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for the
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IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
MY SISTER
SISTER LEO STANISLAUS
WHO
DOUBLED FOR MARY
THEN
LIKE A MYSTICAL ROSE
DIED
LETTING FALL PERFUMED PETALS
OF
FRAGRANT MEMORIES
AND
THE SEED FOR FUTURE FLOWERS
THIS IS ONE

FOREWORD

I know that the proper title differs for many of you, but I am going to rely on the kindness so characteristic of all of you and address "Mothers," "Madames," and "Sisters" under the one title of "Sister." I know you won't mind.

I am saying:

"Sister, you have only six lines to learn and six lines to live.

Learn them and live them and you have shown the world its Saviour.

You have doubled perfectly for the Mother of God!"

Now, let me explain. . . .

Feast of the Annunciation
March the Twenty-fifth
Nineteen Hundrel and Forty-one

•

**YOUR ROLE
IN
THE GREAT DRAMA
OF
THE REDEEMING**

•

WILL YOU THINK ALONG WITH ME?

In this our day and age, Sister, there has burst upon us, with all the force of a new revelation, the centuries-old doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. As always, God, in His goodness, gives us the grace, the particular grace, that is suited to the particular need of the hour.

We needed this almost new revelation! We needed to know that God is near and that we are of infinite worth. Why? — Because modern writers and thinkers had made us little more than animals whose destiny is the ever-nearing grave. Literature is nothing but a lamentation when not a howl of despair. From platform, the professor's chair and the ever reeling press we hear that life is hardly worth living. But then it comes! From out the past, from out the nineteen hundred years that have passed, comes the voice of Paul, the voice of John and the voice of Jesus Christ. And we learn to lift up our heads, to lift up our eyes and to lift up our hearts. For these three voices tell us that we are men, yes, but men with a destiny divine! These three tell us that we are branches of the Vine, members of His Body, parts of the Mystical Christ.

That changes the whole universe for us, Sister. Life and living take on a fuller, more sacred, meaning. The men of all lands come closer to us. They are members, actual or potential, of our members, and Christ is our Head! This is a dogma that not only dignifies, but actually divinizes! And now the good God goes on and on, through His gifted writers ever clarifying this ennobling doctrine and showing us its various applications.

Recently I received "Mary in Our Soul-Life," a charming little book by the glittering Raoul Plus, S.J. In it he treats a phase of the Mystical Body that has always intrigued me. — I might as well confess here, Sister, that the dogma of the Mystical Body has absorbed me. I am an enthusiast for it. It has so gripped me that, with Emile Mersch, S.J., the author of "The Whole Christ" and of "Morality and the Mystical Body," I am quite convinced that when this doctrine has become known and loved and **lived**, the world is saved! I have read everything that I could lay my hands on treating of the dogma, but I had to wait until Raoul Plus wrote before I found a treatise on the Mother of the Mystical Body — Mary Immaculate. And how beautifully he does it! He admits the difficulty of Mary, who is a member of that Body, being also Its mother. He alludes to the well-known anatomical function assigned Mary by the early Fathers of the Church — that of the Mystical Neck. But then he does what I always wanted to do, or have someone else do, he **proves** from Scripture, Tradition and Reason that Mary is truly the Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ.

I cannot begin to tell you how thrilled I was; for it confirmed me in a view that I had taken long ago, and it now gives me solid grounds for telling you of a concept which I think will help you greatly. I can now talk of "Doubles" for the Mother of God.

Sister, for centuries you have been called "The Spouse of Christ." It is a delightful concept. Spiritual writers take texts from the Old and the New Testament, texts which primarily deal with the Church or the individual soul, and apply them by accommodation to you. It is legitimate. It can be in-

spiring; for it helps immensely when we can concretize and capture the whole spiritual life in a concept, sublimate, as it were, our entire existence in a symbol. Sister, I think I have found a new concept for you, a new concretion, a fascinating sublimation and symbolization. It grew out of my pondering on the various applications of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. It is this: To me, Sister, your whole life is summed up in the phrase "DOUBLING FOR THE MOTHER OF GOD." Do you like the concept? Do you catch all that is contained in the symbol? Do you thrill to the thought of being a "double" for the Mother of God? You know what a "double" is, Sister, and what a "double" does — she **reproduces the Original perfectly!**

At first I thought the idea a bit of fetching fancy, but I kept on pushing it and pushing it, and, Sister, I came to see that it was not only legitimate but absolutely solid, safe and substantial. So I give it to you for what it is worth. Now understand me clearly, Sister, this is NOT a new revelation! You do not have to accept it. But if you will think along with me and see how apt the concept is and how perfectly applicable to your life, I feel sure that you will have found something that not only helps you to understand much that has puzzled you in the years that are gone, but something that will shed light even on the days that are to come.

You see, Sister, when St. Paul says that he "fills up in his flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," he tells us that, though the Drama of the Redemption is ended, the Great Drama of the Redeeming still goes on. Christ satisfied for us once, and did it superabundantly. But that satisfaction must be applied! The Physical Jesus

redeemed mankind twenty long centuries ago by the awful sufferings of His Passion and Death. And because of what St. Paul says, I like to think of the Mystical Jesus as redeeming mankind this moment by filling up in His Body "those things that are wanting." In other words, Sister, I conceive life as nothing other than **The Great Drama of the Redeeming**, a drama that is now going on and in which every baptized person has his or her particular role. Yours, I take to be that of doubling for Mary Immaculate.

"Why?" you may ask.

Because, Sister, of the many motherly things you do to the members of the Mystical Christ. I know something of what Mary did to and for the Physical Jesus. I know more of what you do to and for the members of the Mystical Jesus. Hence, I find a parallel that is just about perfect, and I think you will, too, if you will but think along with me.

WILL YOU ADMIT THIS ANALOGY?

You remember the birth of the Physical Christ, don't you, Sister? There was much cruelty, heart-wrench and piercing anguish connected with it. But Mary was there, and that changed much! Have you ever thought of the birth of many who are destined to be Christ's mystical members? There are modern Bethlehems, Sister, of closed doors and crowded inns. There is a whole world of human cruelty, heart-wrench and piercing anguish connected with them. Ah, but there are also modern hillside caves and there are modern Marys who croon over the new-born members of Christ. We find them wearing religious garb, living in infant asylums, orphan asylums and foundling homes. Obviously, they are doubling for the Mother of God.

You see that, don't you, Sister? And you see what a difference their presence makes to the new-born babes!

You remember Nazareth and the Boy Christ, don't you, Sister? You remember how Mary took the golden-haired Son of God and taught Him how to walk, to read, to write, to sing and to pray. There are little boy and little girl members of the Mystical Christ, and from Seattle to Key West, from San Francisco and San Diego to Boston and New York they are being taught how to walk, to read, to write, to sing and to pray by women whom the world calls "Nuns" but whom I call "Doubles for the Mother of God." You will admit that parallel, won't you, Sister?

And then the Man of Sorrows — How many of His mystical members merit that same name! Countless indeed are the men and women of deep, deep sorrows. Ah, but they are seldom alone. We find a double for Mary bending over them in hospital room and ward, soothing agonizing bodies and comforting tortured souls. How like the work of the Mother of God is the work of the nursing nuns!

And, Sister, when the mystical members die, many of them, like their Head, look down upon those whom they have called "Mother." Little Sisters of the Poor, Sisters of Mercy and of Providence, and others stand by the agonizing members of the Mystical Christ and stand by until the end!

And how like Mary are the contemplatives, those silent souls behind cloister walls and heavy grills! You remember how the Mother of God watched and wept over and lovingly adored the Broken Host of Calvary's first Mass, don't you, Sister? Then you must

see how aptly the Poor Clares, the Carmelites, the Dominicans of Perpetual Adoration, the Trappistines, and all others of like nature are called "Doubles for Mary Immaculate." They do what she did. They weep over and lovingly adore the outraged God of the tabernacle.

And you haven't forgotten how Mary comforted and consoled those in the Uper Room, have you, Sister? The apostles and disciples wanted to hear many things about their Christ, things that Mary knew intimately, things that Mary told ardently. That scene is reproduced today. There are Sisters of the Cenacle who tell members of the Mystical Body things about their Head and tell them with ardor and love.

You see how naturally the analogy works itself out, but naturally you will wonder as I did; you will wonder if this concept of doubling for the Mother of God is not pure fancy, or at best a mere surface analogy. The parallel between the Physical Christ and His Mother and the work of the Nuns with the various members of the Mystical Body is clear and quite striking. But does it end there? You won't think so, Sister, if you will only

GO BACK TO YOUR NOVICESHIP DAYS

What was the deepest lesson taught you in those happy days? Was it not that your great work in life was "to form Christ in you"? Did not your Mistress of Novices insist that you labor at this task in season and out of season? Is it not the summation of the whole spiritual life? Of course it is, Sister. And everyone who has ever had charge of you, everyone from your Mistress of Novices to your last Superior and your present Spiritual

Guide, can say with St. Paul: "I am in labor . . . until Christ be formed in you." Sister, Customs, Rules, Constitutions and Vows have no other end! And I know that you have caught this truth. I feel sure that that has been the fundamental resolution of your exery retreat, the one object of all your years of striving and the predominant petition in your ceaseless prayers. But, Sister, I wonder if you realize that that was the work of Mary Immaculate in cooperation with God the Holy Ghost. That was what her "Fiat" started — the formation of Christ in her. See how like Mary you are, then; for your one great work in cooperation with that same Holy Ghost is to see to it that "Christ be formed in you." Would anyone be wrong, then, in calling you a double for Mary Immaculate? Hardly!

True of your interior life, it is more strikingly true of your exterior life. Do you recall your earliest lessons on how to deal with others? Don't you remember how you were taught to look upon all human beings as images of God and members, actual or potential, of Jesus Christ? Were you not told to see Jesus in everyone from first Superior to latest postulant, and everyone from the Pope of Rome to the janitor of the school or the elevator man of the hospital? Don't you remember how you were trained to say, "Dominus est," and, "Fiat," to everyone and everything that crossed your path? It was sound training, Sister; for after all, is not this seeing of Christ in everyone and welcoming His will in everything the whole secret of sanctity and the deepest foundation of a substantial spiritual life?

Would it not be **tragedy** to do anything else? If you do not see Jesus in the children you teach in school, or the children you care

for in the asylum or home, if you expend all your energies of body and soul on angel-faced, bright-eyed boys and girls without seeing in those angel-faces and bright-eyes the Infant Jesus and the Boy Christ, are you not wasting your years and stultifying yourself with a greater stultification than the one the sneering world attributes to you?

If it is humanity you serve as you take in Magdalens, orphans, or decrepit old age, if it is humanity you educate from kindergarten to cap and gown, if it is only broken humanity you nurse in your many hospitals, and crazed humanity you care for in your institutions for the insane, if it is only troubled humanity you guide in your Cenacles, then the worldly world is right — and you have missed your whole ascetical training.

But no, Sister, it is not humanity that you serve. Never! It is divinity in humanity! And that combination is found only in Jesus Christ and the **members of His Mystical Body**. I am sure that, as you look into the winsome, laughing eyes of youth in your schools, as you bend over broken and sick humanity in your hospitals, as you care for the old, the ugly and the discarded in your homes, as you croon foundlings and orphans to sleep, you are conscious of what you are doing. I am sure that you realize, in some vague way at least, that you are doing for members of the Mystical Jesus what Mary did for the Physical Jesus. And hence, I expect you to understand me when I say you are acting as a double for Mary Immaculate and your whole life is summed up in the phrase "Doubling for the Mother of God." Does not that concept make life very worth while living, Sister, and bring Heaven very, very near? You are taking care of Jesus, for as Emile Mersch,

S.J., always insists, there is only ONE Christ — the WHOLE CHRIST!

As you see, Sister, what at first seemed like a mere happy figure that could be accepted because of surface likenesses is found to have roots deep in ascetical theology. Doubling for the Mother of God is metaphorical and yet most actual! Sister, were one to tell you that it is a very sure way to Heaven, you should not start or be surprised; for then one would be but paraphrasing the words of Infinite Truth Himself — our Head. Jesus one time said, "Amen I say unto you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it unto me." That text tells us how near God is, and it also tells us how legitimate is our concept. But, Sister, I quote it to call your attention to the fact that Christ was here giving His reason for taking certain people into HEAVEN! That is where we all want to end. You can get there by doubling for the Mother of God!

SEE HOW NATURAL THIS MAKES THE SUPERNATURAL

The spiritual life is hard at times, isn't it, Sister? Very hard. I think one of the reasons is that we too often mix up our prefixes. We think that the **super**-natural is **un**-natural and make the awful mistake of taking the **un**-natural to be **super**-natural.

Everyone admits that grace perfects nature and does not destroy it. Almost everyone will tell you that you should build your supernatural on the natural. And yet most of us fail to apply these principles in our actual practices. Most of us are afraid to be natural in our supernatural works. It is a common error, Sister, and a very grievous

mistake. What am I leading up to? Just this, Sister; that, if you will take this concept that you are doubling for the Mother of God and make it your own, if you will acquire the habit of looking out on life and all things in life **through the eyes of Mary**, you will find that the spiritual life is normal, natural and easy.

Let us take one example. Let us take meditation for an instance. You have had periods of dryness, haven't you, Sister, and found meditation an awful bore? I think that you will greatly reduce the number of such periods and the dryness of them if you will take this concept and remember your role. St. Luke tells us what Mary did. Twice in his second chapter he tells us. After the visit of the shepherds he says, "But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." And after the finding in the Temple he says, "And His mother kept all these words in her heart." "These words," you know is a Hebraism meaning "these events." You see, then, Sister, how aptly that phrase sums up the contemplative life; and you are a contemplative. There is no such thing as a purely active life for women. Meditation, then, when done as a double for Mary, becomes a heart talk of a mother with her boy. And mothers are never silent, nor are their hearts barren and dry when their boy is near!

Mothers love to recall baby-days and baby-ways. They live on the memories of their growing children. And when their babies become men, then they take pride in their every accomplishment. That is your method of meditation, Sister. Be womanly in your method and manner. Do as Mary did. Look upon Jesus through her eyes! Feel for Him and love Him with the motions of a mother's

heart. If you do this, contemplation on the Incarnation will become a mother's ecstasy and your colloquy will be like the crooning of a lullaby. Meditation on the Hidden Life will be but a tissue of mother's memories, gladsome memories of the growing Boy. Can't you see Him, Sister, as Mary did? He is only a toddling tot. See Him take those early baby-steps, so full of effort. See Him fall, and hear Him cry. See Mary pick Him up, kiss away the hurt and the tears, and stop those sobs by telling her God that He is her "Little Man." Can't you see Him following His Mother from room to room, singing those wordless songs that babies sing and that make of home a heaven? You must remember that Christ was a Baby, then grew to be a Boy and a Man. Look at Him through Mary's eyes, and meditation and contemplation becomes a delight. Follow your womanly nature in prayer and you'll learn to love your God the way He wants to be loved by you. Further, you'll learn to live your role in the Mystical Body!

If you will but double for the Mother of God, meditation on the Public Life of Christ will become a series of thrills; for you will be looking upon Galilee's Wonder-worker through the eyes of His Mother. His sermons will sing their way into your very soul. Your heart will dilate as you witness the miracles of Mary's young Man. Sister, be like Mary, and the Gospels will be your album of blessed memories. Do you see how natural the supernatural can become?

As for the Passion, I will be silent. I have not a mother's mind or a mother's heart. Death is too sacred, too intimate, too heart-deep for me to intrude. But you, you are a woman. You know how to suffer and sorrow

with the Son of God as Mary did. You know how to comfort and console the Man of sorrows. It is a woman's blessed prerogative. Yes, and you know how to die with Christ as Mary did with her dying Boy.

I can appreciate Mary's longing for Heaven. Part of her died when Jesus gave up the ghost. It is true of every mother, part of her dies with her dying child. So Mary longed to be brought back to life with Him who had arisen. She longed to be joined to her Baby-Boy. So, too, you should meditate on Heaven. So, too, you should live the Unitive Way. So, too, you should yearn for union with the Son of her for whom you double.

I know that your deepest craving is for a more intimate union with the God who made you. I know that you want to give Him all the glory you possibly can by loving Him with all your heart and soul. But, Sister, that is exactly my point. Look! A star gives glory to God by shining in silver splendor; the moon, by waxing and waning in a light that she borrows; the sun, by giving golden radiance to all the world; the sea, by being ever restless, yet governed by the magic of the moon; a violet glorifies God by being a lowly bit of purple loveliness; a rose, by being radiance and soft beauty among thorns; a man by being a man; and a nun, by being a woman! by being motherly! by being a double for Mary! That is my whole point, Sister — **Be yourself!** If you will learn to live your role as mother to the Mystical Jesus, your whole spiritual, interior life will be warmed and colored by what is richest and deepest in you — your womanliness! Yes, I say it again: **Be yourself!** Act towards God the way He wants YOU to act. Follow those

instincts He placed deep in your soul, those womanly instincts that make you so generously loving and so sweetly tender. Be natural in your supernatural life, because grace perfects nature, it does not destroy it!

SEE HOW THIS COLORS YOUR RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

Let this concept that you are doubling for Mary become part of you, Sister; I mean an active part, not an idle fancy, but a pulsating, palpitating part of you; let it become an everyday fact for you, and you will see that your attitude towards everybody and everything will change. You will be living the doctrine of the Mystical Body then, and Superiors, inferiors, and equals, those wearing the veil and those without the veil, will be looked upon as parts of yourself, parts of Mary's Boy, parts of Christ's Mystical Body. What a different color that gives to persons and things! Don't you see how easy this will make the spiritual life? If not, then perhaps my confession will show you.

I'll be honest and most open with you, Sister. I'll tell you in all sincerity that I have never been able to see Christ in all people. I fail to find any of His lineaments in an overbearing and inconsiderate superior; I look in vain for His likeness in an arrogant, assertive and over-aggressive inferior; I cannot discern a single resemblance to Him in small-minded, wizen-souled, shriveled-hearted individuals, whether they be in religious attire or not. And this failure hurt my spiritual life. For years I sweated and strained and tried to be overcharitable. But I could never be dishonest. I simply could not see Jesus in every individual. Now I do not try.

And I have more peace and much more truer charity. For, Sister, I have done what I advise you to do; I have reversed the process! Instead of trying to see Jesus in all others, I now see all others in Jesus. You know, Sister, a small-mind is only a small-mind and can never be the mind of Christ; a shriveled-heart is only a shriveled-heart and can never be the Heart of Christ; and a cross-grained individual is a cross-grained individual, and NOT Jesus Christ. BUT ... every single person, no matter what his or her characteristics, can be looked upon as a member, either actual or potential, of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and thus he or she can be seen in Christ even when Christ cannot be seen in him or her!

You see my point, Sister. All people are put in a different perspective. I have more reverence, more respect, more Christian love for them. And you will, too, Sister, if you will always remember your dignity and your destiny — your role in the Great Drama of the Redeeming as Double for the Mother of God.

**SEE HOW THIS CONCEPT
EXPLAINS YOUR PAST**

Look back upon the years that have gone, Sister; look back upon your life conscious of your role, and see what a different aspect things assume. The thing that will startle you is to see how like the years of Mary your own past years have been. I think that you will learn from the Leading Lady, the First Lady of Heaven and Earth, how to account for many things that have happened to you since you first became a nun.

Look! At an early age Mary spoke five words. She said, "Fiat mihi secundum ver-

bum tuum." "Be it done unto me according to thy word." She meant every one of those words, and they meant salvation for mankind! It was Mary Immaculate's profession. It brought God into her womb. — Some years ago, you, too, spoke five words. You said: "Voveo paupertatem, castitatem et obedientiam." It was your religious profession. I am sure that you meant every one of them. I know they brought God into your soul in a new way. So far, then, the parallel is perfect. Now, go on!

What happened to Mary after her profession?—From that moment everything seemed to go wrong! Joseph, her spouse, doubted. It hurts to have people doubt us, doesn't it, Sister? It hurts to have superiors misunderstand and equals or inferiors misinterpret. It hurts not to be trusted implicitly; and very specially does it hurt us who have consecrated ourselves to God alone. But remember, Sister, that you are doubling for Mary. See what happened to her. See what has happened to you. It will happen again, Sister; but now you know what to do — double for Mary! She was silent! **Virgo prudentissima!**

Yes, doubting has come and doubting will come. It hurts, and it is hard. But remember that it is God's way of fashioning the soul of His Mother. Seemingly, He has only one pattern and one plan. It is **the Cross**. He traced it on the soul of Mary Immaculate from the moment of His conception until the day of His crucifixion. He will do the same on yours. The Cross was present at the Incarnation. He sent His Mother to a hillside cattle cave. She brought forth her firstborn among beasts. Hardly had her Boy been born when she was told to flee. She did not argue.

She could have reasoned and shown the absurdity of a God running away from one of His puny creatures. But no! Her consecration read, "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." She lived that consecration. She went into Egypt. — Haven't you had commands that seemed absurd and could have been easily reasoned away? It was God fashioning the soul of His Mother's double! You'll have them again, Sister. But now you know what to do. Go into Egypt. You are doubling for Mary.

Look at that scene in the Temple. That beautiful Boy could have smiled and said, "Mother, I am going to remain in the Temple for three full days." Mary would have said, "Fiat." But no! He wanted to trace the Cross on the soul of His Mother, so He silently slipped away; and we have that heart-breaking scene of a Virgin Mother with streaming eyes searching through Temple and town for three endless days and three interminable nights. You see, Sister, sorrow is often Sanctity's sculptor! — You are doubling for Mary. Sorrow has come. Sorrows will come. But when they do, remember that God, the Sculptor of all sanctities, is putting on the finishing touches to the saintly soul of His Mother's double. When they do come, do what Mary did, seek your Jesus! You will find Him in the Temple! He will wipe away the tears.

Sister, do not expect to understand all that God does to you. Mary Immaculate did not. Even when Jesus spoke to her in the Temple, she did not understand. St. Luke tells us so explicitly: "And they (Mary and Joseph) **understood not** the word that He spoke unto them." — Have you not had days and weeks, and even years, when you did not and could

not understand? There are times when our whole world goes black. And even when Jesus speaks to us from behind the tiny candle flame of the sanctuary lamp, we cannot understand. No! our hearts are sore and our minds are sick; we have to sway and stagger and grope our way along not understanding the why of things or the ways of God. Reason cannot help us. Our horizons are black. There are stabs in the dark. We have to go on blinded. Ah, but, Sister, revelation does light up our way, even if it does not light up our minds. Revelation tells us that Mary, for whom you are doubling, did not always understand. But she went on! For twenty-one long years she went on, pondering over what He had done and what He had said in the Temple. And for twenty-one years she did not understand; she understood only on Calvary, when He had given up the ghost.

So, Sister, when puzzled and perplexed, when bewildered by the ways of God, go on! go on trustingly! go on as Mary did. You'll understand one day. If Calvary does not reveal it, Heaven will!

* * *

As you note, Sister, my manner of speech has changed. I have assumed that you have thought along with me and that you are willing to accept the concept. I am now going to plunge and tell you many things about you and your role, but before I do I want to give you what I consider a very fetching figure.

People talk of "vocation," don't they, Sister? They say that you had "a call" to the religious life. We know what they mean. It is a figure of speech, a perfectly legitimate one, for we liken the grace God gave you to

a voice speaking. Then, Sister, why cannot you and I take another figure, one equally legitimate, and, in connection with your role as double for the Mother of God, one that is more apt? Instead of calling the great grace that God gave you a "vocation," why can't we name it an "annunciation"? Why cannot we say that just as Mary was told that she was to be the Mother of the Physical Jesus in somewhat the same manner it was "announced" to you that you were to be the mother of members of the Mystical Jesus, that you were to be a Mystical Mother? Some might say that I strain, but I do not think so, Sister; the metaphor is new, but I think it every bit as legitimate as the metaphor of the "voice." Logically, then, it is allowable. Psychologically it is thrilling, for it makes you that much more like unto her for whom you are doubling. If you like it, take it, Sister. To me it is a fetching figure. But now for some facts. I am going to plunge, Sister, are you ready?

THIS CONCEPT REVEALS YOUR FUTURE

The Drama of the Redemption is ended, Sister; but the Great Drama of the Redeeming still goes on. Calvary was the final scene of the first; it was but the prologue to the second. Our Head merited, and merited superabundantly; but we, the members, must share in those sufferings if we are to have part in that satisfaction. The dogma of the Mystical Body is only a doctrine saying: "The Great Drama of the Redeeming still goes on!" And in that drama, Sister, you and I are the principal actors.

Now you know upon whom the success or failure of a drama depends—entirely upon the

leading lady and the leading man. Hamlet needs a superb Prince of Denmark and a winsome Ophelia. Macbeth must have an ambitious Thane of Cawdor and a fiendish woman for a consort. The Merchant of Venice needs a charming Portia and a shrewd, sly Shylock.

But that is all fiction. True to life, but not life. The Great Drama of the Redeeming, however, **is** life! Life in time and life for eternity. And you, Sister, take the leading feminine role. You are going to fail and fail miserably; you are going to miss your cues, forget your lines, omit your gestures; you are going to fail completely in your portrayal of the character of the Leading Lady, you are going to misinterpret and misrepresent Mary, the Immaculate One, **UNLESS . . . UNLESS**, I say, you study her prayerfully. Remember, Sister, this is not play-acting. This is working out your salvation! The Great Drama of the Redeeming was planned to be a Divine Romance, but you can make of it an Eternal Tragedy, if you fail in your role as double for the Mother of God.

You are not an understudy in this Drama. You are not a mere extra. You do not stand in the wings and watch. Never! Your place is in the center of the stage. You are the Leading Lady. You are doubling for the Mother of God. Hence, you are to do just what Mary did, and you are to do it just as Mary did it! You are to walk like, talk like, think like, act like, live like, **BE** like Mary. Yours is a tremendous role, Sister. Yours is a fear-filled part. For Heaven or Hell can depend on how you double for the Mother of God. And the terrifying part of it all is that you go neither to Heaven or Hell alone. I doubt that any adult does! Hence, if you

once assume this role of "Mother," that will connote "children"; and whether you be engaged in school, hospital, asylum or home, whether you be behind grating and grill as silent contemplative or out in the madding crowd, you will be a "mother," you will be doubling for the Mother of God and hence, you'll take "children" with you to Heaven or to Hell.

You see, then, the necessity for close study. You must reproduce the Maid of Nazareth perfectly, else tragedy, eternal tragedy, results for untold souls; and for your own first of all! Daily, hourly, you have to walk like, talk like, look like, act like, live like, be like the Mother of Jesus; hence, you must know her mind and mannerisms, you must know her heart, her will and all her ways. Why, Sister, you must know Mary much more intimately than you know yourself. It is the only way to success.

This is the study that aids you in that putting off of self of which all the ascetical writers speak. This is the study that transforms you into what God wants you to be, what He planned you to be from all eternity, and what the world, blase, weary, and wicked though it is, expects you to be — a double for the Mother of God. That is the prayerful study that most call meditation, **daily meditation.**

You know, Sister, to insure perfection in their portrayals great actresses **live** the character they assume. On stage and off stage, they submerge themselves and concentrate with a fierce intensity on being the woman they are to represent. Every lift of the eye, every turn of the head, every movement of the hand is done with a consciousness of the

way in which the person they are to reproduce would do them. **They never step out of character!** That is the secret of their success. Neither must you, Sister, if you are to be a success. Every movement of your body and soul must be a movement mindful of the Mother of God. Then study her you must, but also **study yourself**. And this study is called by most the **daily examen**. Make it faithfully, to see if you ever step out of character!

But how will you learn your part? Where will you find Mary's life? — In the Gospels, Sister! The Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has written her life in six lines. Those are the lines that you are to **learn**, Sister; and those are the lines that you are to **live** if you want to be a perfect double for the Mother of God. You meant those five tremendous words you one day spoke: "Voveo paupertatem, castitatem et obedientiam," didn't you, Sister? Well, you can look upon that day as the day you signed a life's contract, a contract that calls for a perfect doubling for the Mother of God.

Only six lines to learn. Not an overwhelming task, is it, Sister? Learn them perfectly. Then live them, and the Great Drama of the Redeeming, as far as you are concerned, is a smashing success. Live them, and in very truth, you have shown the world its Saviour. Now let me show you the lines.

●



**THE
FEW LINES
YOU MUST
LEARN AND LIVE**



LILIES ARE LOFTY

The first line that you will have to learn and live is the line Mary spoke to the angel. It is a question. Mary said to the Messenger from Heaven, "How is this to be, because I know not man?"

What a line to learn! What a line to live! Mary so loved **purity** that seemingly she would send Gabriel back to Heaven's high halls with a negation. She would refuse to be Mother of God rather than violate her virginity. That is sincerity for you. That is purity. That is love.

Have you learned that line, Sister? Have you lived it? It means a constant watch on your imagination and your readings. It means a very close guard on your affections. It means a continual consciousness of your dignity, your majestic, queenly dignity. Mary was never over-demonstrative. Mary was never given to purely natural and particular friendships. Mary was ever mindful of the solemn consecration and the sacred dedication she had made of her heart, her affections and her flesh to God. Hence, a modesty that was the quintessence of charm won all hearts to her; a reserve that was both a delightful invitation and a royal demand that all keep their distance, inspired respect and enkindled devotion. Mary was distant to no one; she was dignified with all.

Sister, this is a line that is quite easily learned, but not so easily lived. Let me tell you that I know grayhaired men who still carry the shock of their boyhood with them, the shock given by a nun who momentarily **stepped out of character**, forgot her role and became a trifle overdemonstrative. Mary was affectionate always, overdemonstrative, never.

It is this momentary stepping out of character that does harm. Not necessarily always to self, but inevitably always to others. I once saw rouge and lipstick under a wimple. A trifle, isn't it, Sister? Just a passing vanity, a momentary slip back to girlish ways and the conceits of cosmetics. And yet, Sister, that trifle loomed to such tremendousness in the eyes of some worldlings that they likened it to the abomination of abominations in the Holy of Holies. See what the world expects of you? It expects you to be what you vowed to be — an angel in the flesh! It expects you to be dead to all vanities and girlish conceits. Don't disappoint that world!

Sister, our battle consists in this — we are bound to live in the world of spirit, and yet we are ever attracted to the spirit of the world. It is a bitter battle. The natural is ever calling to us; and yet, we must be supernatural. We must be very different and yet, we find ourselves very often alike! Would you safeguard yourself, Sister, so that you can live this first line, this line of purity? — Then, watch **Poverty and the Parlor!**

Remember your first vow and the first beatitude. I am not talking about poverty of the purse. We all observe that fairly well. But I am talking about poverty of the heart and mind. That is not so universally observed. Examine your room and your wardrobe. Do they bespeak the poverty of the wife of Nazareth's carpenter and the mother of the carpenter's Son? Examine your mind. What is your attitude towards food and clothing and lodging? Are you happy with what poor people have? Or do you look for, expect and even demand better, and sometimes, the best? You know, Sister, if most of us had remained in the world, we would never have

the dental care and the medical care that we get; because we could never afford it! We would never be housed or clothed or fed as we are; we would never be as comfortable or as worry-free! I know that all this is part of the hundredfold promise by your Head, but the point I make is this: are our hearts and our minds the hearts and the minds of poor people, or has the spirit of the world crept in?

Secondly, the parlor. Much good, very much good can be done in the parlor; but so can very much harm! Some crave popularity. That is the spirit of the world. Some love to be in demand. That is the spirit of the world. Some long for the news, the distractions, the affections that come through the parlor, and then wonder what is wrong with their prayer and their spiritual life. Can you picture Mary Immaculate in the parlor? How would she entertain? Would it be gossip or God? You are doubling for Mary. Use the parlor for God! not for self; else you will never live this first line!

Sister, be wise! Do not allow a neglect of poverty or an overindulgence in the parlor to rob you of the promise of the first beatitude or of the sixth: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

VIOLETS ARE LOVELY

It was to the Angel also that Mary spoke her second line. She said, "Ecce ancilla Domini."

Learn that line, Sister, and live it! Your first line showed you the lofty lily in all the splendor of its majestic purity. This line shows you the lowly violet in all the loveliness of its true humility. The angel said,

“Blessed art thou among women,” thou art to be the Mother of God. Mary answered, “I am His handmaid.” Daughter of David, but servant of God.

Live that line, Sister! It is the lesson that our day needs. It is not impurity that we have to battle so much. It is pride! If men and women were not so arrogant, self-satisfied, puffed up with high-blown pride, nine-tenths of the world’s impurities would never be committed.

This is the hardest line that you will be asked to learn, and the hardest line that you will try to live. We all like to go up; but we all must go down, and there is no one who likes it. Pride created Hell and closed Paradise. Pride caused the first war in Heaven and the latest war on earth. Pride changed angels into demons, men into wandering exiles on earth, and crucified God. Pride caused the slaughter of the innocents when the Physical Christ was born. It is still causing the slaughter of the innocents and preventing potential members of the Mystical Christ from being born. Pride took birth in the mind of Lucifer and caused catastrophe. Pride took root in the hearts of Adam and Eve and caused catastrophe. Pride was born with you and with me; it is in the marrow of our bones and the corpuscles of our blood. It has already caused catastrophe in our lives and will do so again if we do not go down! Pride is the first of the Capital sins; humility a part of the first of the Cardinal Virtues. Double for Mary, Sister, and you shall crush the serpent’s head!

Remember that pride is as insidious as a serpent. It will insinuate itself in a hundred different ways, and be manifest in a million.

The lowering of an eyelid oft tells of a monstrous pride in a human heart. And the pity of it is that we, who are filled with pride, hate the semblance of it in others. How careful you have to be, Sister! You are ever in the center of the stage; on you is focused the spotlight. And the whole world from tiny tot in baby-grades to old-age tottering to the grave is quick to detect in you the slightest indication of pride. It scandalizes. And "woe to them by whom scandal cometh." Learn your lines and live them!

Beware of little scandals. They do the most harm.

A nun's apostasy will stir a parish for a time; yet, the talk will die down; but an impatience, an injustice, an open display of jealousy or pettiness before others will stay in the minds of the witnesses forever. I could not begin to tell you the vocations that have been blighted by little scandals. And know well, that every one of these little scandals is rooted in self-love, in pride.

Remember, Sister, that the eyes of youth are all-seeing eyes; the eyes of middle age are critical; the eyes of old-age are deeply discerning. You are ever before such eyes! They are the eyes of a camera, the eyes of the candid camera! Show them a perfect likeness of Mary. She was humility itself. Learn your second line, Sister . . . "Ecce ancilla Domini" . . . and live it!

Need I tell you the second half of that line? It tells of obedience: It was "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." Ah, Sister, undoubtedly the hardest of our vows to observe and the hardest of the virtues to acquire is **obedience**. Most people say it is because we love our own will. I wonder if they are

right. I think it is because we love our **own mind**, our own **opinion!** St. Ignatius, who wrote the classic on obedience, places the perfection of this virtue in the obedience of the **understanding**. I think that he is most right; and I further think that all our trouble comes from an attitude of mind. If we can only hold on to the concept that it is not a human being who is commanding us, not this individual who happens to be in office, but God Himself, then all our difficulty is ended.

When you receive a telegram, Sister, do you look at the messenger-boy to learn what the message is and who sent it? When you are called to the phone, do you give your attention to the receiver or to the voice that is coming through that receiver? When you listen to a broadcast, do you focus your attention on the loudspeaker or on the program that comes through that loudspeaker? You never scrutinize these instruments, do you? Then, why do it with regard to the instruments whom God uses to transmit His messages to you? A foolish attitude of mind, isn't it?

I have never been able to figure out how or why God selects certain people to be superiors; and I defy anyone to do it. But He does! That is enough. "Ours is not to reason why"! Mary never reasoned it out. Mary never argued and analyzed the matter. Do you recall the Flight into Egypt? Could not Mary have started as we usually do, "What a strange command!" She could have gone on, as we so often do: "What a crazy command!" She could have argued: "This is Joseph talking. Only a man. The man who doubted me. Further, he says he heard all this in a **dream!** I believe him. It is a dream, and a bad one. Imagine a God running away!" But she did

NOT. She said, "Fiat." "Let us start at once." Her attitude of mind was: "I must save my Son." "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Handmaids only obey." You are doubling for Mary, Sister, get that attitude of mind!

Of course you are allowed, and at times obliged, to represent. Superiors are instruments of God; but they are human instruments and must act "humano modo." They can be misinformed. They can be uninformed. You may, and at times you must, inform them. But now note, Sister, that I say "represent." I do not say "argue," or "defend your point of view." I most certainly do not say "demand your way." No! I merely say "represent" and I think that St. Benedict has expertly detailed the qualities that should be found in every representation. In the sixty-eighth chapter of his Rule he says, "... let them represent with **calmness and circumspection** ... and exhibit no sign of **pride, contradiction or resistance.**" He then adds, "But if the superior insists ... relying on God's assistance, obey." And, Sister, he is here talking about times when the **impossible is commanded!**

You will hardly ever be commanded the impossible. But if you are, obey. For then you will be fashioning your key to Heaven. If you ever get the opportunity, watch a key-maker at work. He puts a bit of steel in a vise. He then takes a file that bites and with it rasps away at that bit of steel. Sister, look upon every act of obedience, every "Fiat" that you say, as a rasp on the steel of your soul. Sometimes it will be a biting, tearing rasp; at such times, rejoice! for you are then giving your key the exact form that will fit it to the tumblers in the lock of the gate of Heaven. That lock, you know, was forged by

disobedience; first of the angels, then of man. The only key that has ever opened it, and the only key that will ever open it, is the key of obedience. Christ was an expert Locksmith. He came only to obey. Your Model was also an expert Key-maker. She said "Fiat," and meant it. You have said, "Voveo"; if you really meant it, every "Fiat" is another expert filing on your key to Heaven!

Go to Egypt, Sister, even if it is only a dreamer who tells you to go. Mary did it and saved her Son. You shall do the same if you imitate her! Obedience may take you out into a sea of sand, it may give you days that are mercilessly hot and nights that are star-studded but lonely and chill; but what do you care? You can press to your bosom, even as Mary did, the Infant God! Yes, go to Egypt, Sister; it is Heaven—for God is there! Isn't obedience beautiful and profitable? Live this line, and you will never find sadness or any uneasiness of conscience in your nights or your days.

THE LADY OF THE SMILING EYES AND THE SINGING HEART

It was to her cousin that Mary spoke her third line. She sang it. It was a heart-burst of joy "Magnificat anima mea Dominum." That is your work, Sister. "Magnify the Lord! Make Him great!" — Make Him greatly loved, greatly served. But words will never do it. Works will!

You know it is the easiest thing in the world to develop "pious lips." It can become second nature and positively instinctive with us to drop such sweetly pious phrases from our lips as "Praise be to God," "God's holy will be done," "Dominus est,"

“Fiat,” “All for Thee, O Heart of Jesus.” But do we mean them? — Our actions give the answer. “Verba sonant; actus tonant!” How true it is that what we **are** shouts so loud that people can never hear what we **say**. Actions do speak much louder than words, don’t they, Sister?

They say that there is no spiritual thermometer, or any gauge by which to take the blood-pressure of a soul. I think that they are wrong. I think that I can take the temperature of a soul and rather accurately read its blood-pressure. I think that the spiritual health of an individual can be very exactly known. All that one has to do is to look at the joy that is manifest in her works. “The Lord loves a **cheerful** giver,” and so does everyone else. That much, at least, we have in common with the Creator. A nun’s countenance tells very clearly whether she is modeling on Jeremias or Mary. The tone of her voice tells whether she will do for “Tenebrae” or for “Alleluia.” Her very carriage speaks clearly and says whether her heart is throbbing in tune with the “Magnificat” or a “Lamentation.”

Ah, Sister, it is a thrill to hear people ask, “What makes nuns so cheerful?” It is amusing to hear some of the answers. Of course, there is only one true reply. It is: “They are doubling for the Mother of God; they have the Child Jesus in their hearts.”

Yes, it is an inspiration to see a cheerful nun; but a desecration to see one frivolously dissipated. Joy does not mean hilarity or levity. Light-heartedness is not shown in light-headedness. To be religiously agreeable and agreeably religious one has to be vivid, but not excessively vivacious. Which reminds me of a danger. In their dealings

with lay people, the sons of St. Ignatius have a plan which says: "Go in their door, but come out your own." It is a good plan, a grand plan; but one that is difficult to follow. Many have tried it. Not all have succeeded. The going in is easy; but the coming out presents the difficulty.

I am told that at a recent Sodality Convention nuns were seen **lounging** in the corridor of a hotel. No doubt they meant to be friendly. They intended to "be natural." But others expected them to be supernatural and never to be familiar, as is evidenced by the aggrieved tone of the people who spoke of it and from more than one vocation that was shaken!

Sister, **never** step out of your role. You can be sure that the Mother of God was always cheerful. Even on Calvary there was a song in her soul. It was "Magnificat." You can be equally sure that she was never worldly-wise nor wisely-worldly. Remember, Sister, you are **not** like the people of the world. You have been called "out of the world." Do not go back! Do not adopt their ways, their words, their gestures or their jokes. It may seem and sound "smart." It most certainly is not wise. And remember that Mary is the "Seat of Wisdom." You are not to be stiff. You are not to be formal, frigid or coldly distant. You are to be dignified and charmingly cheerful, because Mary is "Causa nostrae laetitiae," and you are her double.

I know that there are some who are afraid of joy. But these are wrong. They are clinging to an inheritance direct from paganism and heresy. It was the ancient Greeks, pagans, who depicted their gods as jealous of the laughter of men. They are the ones who

said that anger and the spite of the gods pursued men who did not weep enough. There are some of us who have caught the spirit of that superstition and sip our joys, as it were, on the sly; persuading ourselves somehow that in experiencing real joy we are somewhat unfaithful to God. Sister, that is heresy! It was our Lord Himself who said, "Ask and you shall receive, that **your joy may be full.**" St. Luke ends his Gospel, the good-tidings, with the words, "**cum gaudio magno**" — with great joy! Joy is the ultimate purpose of God's revelation. It is a fruit of the Holy Ghost. And, Sister, holy joy is the surest sign of a soul's predestination.

How can you be other than joyful? God has selected you from among millions to be a double for His Mother. That is a cause for endless joy! Look at your day. You rise early to make a prayer. What a privilege it is to be allowed to pray. To lift up mind and heart, up above the petty cares and worries of the world, up above the paltry things of time, up above the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, up to the very throne of God, and talk with Divinity. What a joy! Then the Mass. Love is slain for you. Love is given to you. Love abides with you. Your work? It is hard, I know. But when you love your work, it becomes easy. And why not love it? Looked at as a penance, it is a source of joy; for you need such penance, other souls need your penance, the world needs your penance. Looked at as a labor of love, looked at as doing something for God, looked at as ministering to the Mystical Body of Christ, drudgery becomes a delight, weariness a comfort, fatigue a consolation. Work, Sister, is a wellspring of joy, when you work as a double for Mary.

Now understand me. I am not talking about sentiment or mere feeling. I am not talking about the surface joy of the senses or of the superficial pleasure of animal good-spirits. No, I am talking about deep joy. You know, as well as I, that down in the deepest deep of your soul, you have a citadel, a last stronghold, that can never be taken. It is away down there that you meet God's grace. To reach it at times takes courage. To stay there at all times takes heroism. But that is where true joy is found; for joy is not a pleasant feeling, it is a fruit of genuine, soul-deep Faith. To obtain that joy you have to fight. To maintain it you have to put up a continual struggle. But you know that there is much blood on the road that leads to the glory of the resurrection, and that is why you can and do hold on to your joy even in the midst of heart-breaking sorrow.

When a whole world of woe threatens to overwhelm you, then go down as pearl-divers do with closed eyes. Go down to the deepest deep of your soul and lay strong hold on your Faith. You are bound to find joy!

Sister, if you will but reflect, you will always be joyful. Reflect on the fact that God is using you; that nothing you do is ever lost; that the eight beatitudes are eternal; that Christ and you are not two, but one; that you are doubling for Mary Immaculate, and your heart will always sing.

That is the real secret and the source of your constant joy. Mary sang, "Magnificat anima mea Dominum . . . quia fecit mihi magna" — "Because He hath wrought great things for me." You can sing the same, Sister. You can sing, "I rejoice because He hath wrought great things for me." It is true. He hath made you exceeding great. You are one

in millions. Remember that. Remember that the "Angel" who "announced" to you that you were to be a mother of God is seldom "sent" on so glorious a mission. The world does not know that you have been made great, but you do! How like your Model that makes you! How many knew that she was great? Elizabeth knew. An angel told Joseph. She sang it herself. But who else in the whole wide world realized it? Why, even the apostles did not appreciate it until almost at the end.

So keep that "Magnificat" singing in your soul; let it shine out through your eyes and be seen in your constant smile. Sorrows will come, but they can never dampen the joy in your heart, if you will but remember your role. Sister, the sorrowful mysteries lasted twenty-four hours. The joyful mysteries are still going on. They will never know an end. Life is a wind. Eternity is tomorrow. Be joyful! "Magnificat Dominum."

Show this joy to the world. It needs the sight, for despite its mad rush after pleasure, it is a sad and sorrowful old world. Show it the Lady with the smiling eyes and the singing heart — Mary of the Magnificat.

DO NOT LOSE YOUR GOD

Mary's second line was in sharp contrast to her first; her fourth is in even sharper contrast to her third. Her song of joy is followed by tears. The heart that overflowed in a "Magnificat" was broken for three long days and three endless nights. Mary had lost her Son. Your fourth line, Sister, is: "Behlode, Thy father and I have sought Thee, **sorrowing.**"

This is a line that you must learn, Sister, but one you do **not** have to live!

When the world was very young, our father and mother moved from Paradise to this Valley of Tears, and that is why sadness and suffering is in the legacy they left us. Sister, there are much sadness and many sufferings in life, but there is only **one sorrow**; and that is **the loss of God**. Sin loses you your God. And that is why I say that you must learn this fourth line, but you do not have to live it.

For you, the danger of losing your God by mortal sin is very remote; but be careful of venial sins and imperfections. Watch out for little things; they can bring tremendous disaster.

Now I know that a little thing is only a little thing and can never be a big thing. I know that a venial sin is only a venial sin and can never be a mortal sin. And yet I say: Watch out for little things; watch out for venial sins. For as St. Augustine has so well said, "It is not their **magnitude**, but their **multitude**, that brings disaster."

A rain-drop is a tiny thing, isn't it? One fell one day in the arctic and froze. Then another and another and another fell and froze. In the course of the years there grew from those tiny rain-drops that fell and froze, a mighty mountain of ice. One early spring that mountain split open; half of it slid into the sea and started to drift. About the same time, the "Titanic," the largest ship afloat, at that time, majestically slipped from dock in the harbor of Queenstown and pointed her prow for New York. It was her maiden voyage. Those two met, and the drifting mountain of ice ripped that mistress of the sea from stern to stern, sending hundreds to a watery grave and burying a fortune in freight and equipment beneath the cold waves

of the icy North Atlantic. Little things had caused a tremendous disaster.

A snowflake is a tiny thing, isn't it? From out gray Russian skies one fluttered down one day and melted on the hand of one of Napoleon's soldiers as he marched toward Moscow. Then another and another and another fell. Soon Russian roads were covered and heavy artillery had to be left behind. Snowflakes kept on falling, and light artillery was abandoned. Snowflakes still fell, and with them fell the muskets from the frozen hands of France's finest and fairest. The "Little Corporal" knew tremendous disaster because of little things.

The flame of a kerosene hand-lamp is a tiny thing; but one started the conflagration that leveled the city of Chicago.

While she was in southern waters, a tiny match started a smouldering in the hold of the "Moro Castle." Four days later, off the Jersey coast, we saw the terror of the sea — a ship enveloped in flames. Hundreds met their death. Indeed, tiny things have caused tremendous disasters.

And in the spiritual order it is equally true. Eve started with a little conversation. David, with a look. Judas, with a tiny attachment! And you, Sister, will never fill your role if you are careless about tiny things.

St. Alphonsus gives the explanation when he says, "A careless soul deprives herself of God's illumination and inspiration." A whole theological treatise is captured within the confines of that tiny sentence. Briefly, it is this: actual grace consists in God's illumination and inspiration and actual grace is absolutely necessary for every salutary act. Without actual grace one cannot long observe

even the Natural Law; while even the just, those in sanctifying grace, need a special actual grace to avoid venial sin for any length of time. That is all sound dogma.

You see the application, Sister. The careless soul deprives herself of actual grace. The result is inevitable. Sin. You become more distant from your God. And, as the Holy Ghost says, we fall "little by little." You can lose your God, Sister. You will lose Him if you are tepid! He Himself has said so. In one of the most frightening passages of all Scripture, a passage that is, as Father Faber has said, without parallel, He says: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."

Think of it! Infinite Love, He who died that all men might live, cannot stomach one whom He chose to double for His Mother when she is **habitually** careless about little things.

"Catch the little foxes," Sister. They will ruin your life! A little attachment, a little antipathy, a little distraction voluntarily entertained, a little laziness, a little jealousy, a little vanity — **habitually indulged** — means that one day you are going to lose your God. Be careful! That day could be the Dawn of Eternity!

Appalling, isn't it? You who were selected to play the role of "Mystical Rose" can be blighted. You who were chosen to be "Tower of Ivory" and "House of Gold" can be destroyed.

You know the safeguard, Sister. It is not to "seek your God sorrowing." No. It is to be ever mindful of your part in the Mystical Body! It is to see that you never step out of character! You can be sure that Mary

Immaculate never grew careless about little things.

Sister, I beg you to admit the possibility. I plead with you to recognize the danger. The law of gravity, you know, is absolute and universal. It admits of no exceptions. Stars fall. Birds fall. Leaves fall. The law of gravity in the spiritual order is likewise absolute and universal. It admits of no exceptions. We all have a tendency down! Angels fell. Apostles fell. You and I can fall!

Don't lose your God. Take as your particular examen: "Am I doubling for Mary?" "Am I conscious of my role?" "Do I step out of character?" "Do I make every effort to play my part in the Mystical Body perfectly?" Keep it for years and years, and you will never lose your God!

THE LAST LINES

The last lines that you will have to learn are lines that you will have to live. St. John gives us the setting. It is at a wedding. "And the Mother of Jesus was there." The wine failed. Not a catastrophe. Wedding-feasts lasted for weeks in those days. For the wine to fail was no great mishap. But a heart filled with genuine human sympathy, a soul throbbing in loving unison with other souls, will do all she can to spare the newly-weds even a momentary embarrassment. "The Mother of Jesus sayeth to Him, 'They have no wine.'"

Sister, learn that line. Live it! — Be charitable! And remember that charity begins at **home**. Your sisters are human. They are your **sisters**. Mystically, they are parts of yourself, members of your members, and Christ is your Head. St. Paul said, "No man

hateth his own flesh"; meaning, of course, that everyone loves himself. Then show that love to your sisters, be they superiors, seniors or juniors. They have hearts of flesh and souls that can be wounded. See to it that no word, look or gesture of yours ever hurt a member of your community. Give! Give! Give! Give kind words, generous smiles, warm encouragement. Be not stinting with praise. Hold jealousy so far below you that you hardly know its name. Root out all meanness from your make-up. Lavish the sincere affection and pure love of your soul upon those with whom God has decreed that you should play your motherly role in the Great Drama of the Redeeming. Give the best that is in you to those of your own household. And when you have beggared yourself of loving kindness, genuine, tender sympathy, womanly, sisterly amiability and affection, when you have poured out the last drop of your honied sweetness and shed the full splendor of your soul's sunshine on your own, then turn to your God as Mary turned to her Son and say, "They have no wine."

Our lives are made up of little things, Sister; and that is why a little smile, a little word, a little expression of appreciation or affection means so much. Give them!

The one word that a mother seems to know best is the monosyllable, "Give." From conception until death she gives. She lavishes her very self on her own. With her selflessness is instinct. Sister, you are a mother. No one is nearer to you than those of your own household; those who in God's wise plan of redemption are your other selves. Be a mother to them. If you are a superior — praise, be patient, sympathetic and appreciative. If you are an inferior — cooperate! Remember

that those in office are human. They have sensitive hearts. They need encouragement, appreciation and cooperation. Give it! Let them hear kind words. Let them see open hands. Let them bask in the radiant sunshine of your ever-ready smile. Don't be a sycophant. Don't be a politician. But do be a sister to your sisters, for you are mothering the one same Mystical Jesus Christ. Do your part, and your God will change the water in your characters to rich, red, rare wine!

It was from one of your own that I garnered the paraphrase of "They have no wine." She put it in the form of a prayer. Janet Stuart, a wonderful woman, prayed, "My God, give to each of us a heart too noble, too pure to be disturbed by little misunderstandings, petty prejudices, mean, unworthy thoughts." Take that prayer, Sister, and make it your own. Say it daily for yourself and your community. That will be being Mary-like. That will be saying, "They have no wine."

It was the same grand character who prayed, "Grant me, O God, strength enough to be gentle and calmness enough to be strong." Pray that prayer, Sister, for yourself. You need it. We all need it. We need that strength to be gentle, gentle in our thoughts, words and actions, but especially in our **thoughts!** And we all need great calmness so that we can play our roles with perfection.

From out the past there comes an echo to me. I hear a former retreat-master of mine saying, "If I were Pope, I would command every religious superior, under pain of excommunication, to have burned into the brick over the monastery's entrance this one

imperative: **HAVE CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS."**

I paraphrase him, Sister, as I say to you: Burn into your being the truth that you are doubling for the Mother of God, and you will always be the soul of charity toward your own. You will be Mary at the wedding-feast, who turned to her Son and said: "They have no wine."

You know Mary's last line. She turned to the waiters and said, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." It must have seemed strange to these waiters to hear guests ordering the household about. But they obeyed, and that wedding-feast became immortal.

That last line of Mary's sums up the message you have for men. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." To many it will seem strange that you should order them about. But if they obey, they will become immortal. You do your part fearlessly, Sister; let God, with His grace, do the rest. Mary did not work the miracle; she merely pointed out the need to her Son. Do the same, Sister. You need not be a miracle worker; you must be a mediatrix; and that you will be if you will play your part as double for the Mother of God and the Mother of men!

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**SOME
STAGE-DIRECTIONS
FOR
THE LEADING LADY**

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SHOW THYSELF A MOTHER

In the early pages of this little chat, I said that you had a special function in life — to show the world its Saviour. I mean that, Sister, and I do not change it now as I say, "Show thyself a mother." You cannot hold out a Physical Babe as Mary did to shepherds and to Magi. You cannot point out a Physical Boy as Mary did to Egypt and Nazareth. You cannot walk beside a Physical Man as Mary did in all Judea, but you can show Jesus Christ to the world! and you shall do it by showing yourself a mother!

Sister, the doctrine of the Mystical Body must be **lived**. The world has sorry need of learning it. But the world will never learn it from books. It must get it from lives; lives like yours and mine. America needs high spirituality, but the only spirituality she will ever accept is the spirituality that is wrapped up in flesh and blood. America needs the highest spirituality, that of the Mystical Body of Christ; but the only way she will ever get it is from you and me and the other members of His Body. We mystical members of Christ must act as members of Christ. We must love and labor and suffer and die with Christ and in Christ, for all the immensity of His Body. We are over three hundred million members actually, but two billion potentially. You see, then, that our work is large. We must remember that leaves will wither and branches get broken and die if we do not play our part. You must remember that the weak will never grow strong, the sick, well, nor the dying come back to life again unless you show yourself a mother.

Sister, our sin-sodden world needs YOU!

Literature, looked at as a mirror of life, gives a lurid picture of our present-day rottenness. The world is sex-mad. Homes are divorce-riddled. Marriages are sin-filled. Middle-age is lustful and lust-filled. Youth is pleasure-bent and promiscuous. Society presents a hateful sight. The whole world is hideous. Look at Russia that is Bolshevik; Spain that is still staggering after being Red-rent; Mexico that is Communistic; and the whole mad realm dominated by Germany's upstart, Hitler. Mary's Son is gone from them. So, too, is Mary. And when a Mother goes, a home always breaks up!

Do you see your work? It is not teaching this handful of boys or girls. It is not taking care of these few orphans or foundlings. It is not caring for a home full of old people. It is not conducting a Cenacle or becoming a contemplative. No! those are only means. Your work is to play Mother to all Men! You must be the Mystical Rose! You must cooperate with Jesus Christ in the Redeeming of Mankind! You must suffer and sorrow and live and die that men come back to their God, that the wandering world find its way home to its heart-broken God and His heart-broken Mother. There is nothing little about your life, Sister. You are saving the world!

The world of today is not God-oblivious. It is God-defying and God-denying. The one spectacle that will strike that world and compel it to admit that Christ still lives and that He is God is the spectacle of selfless souls who double for Mary Immaculate.

When that cynical, skeptical, self-centered, self-satisfied, self-intoxicated world sees women like you forget themselves, renounce themselves, abandon themselves, in order to live in Christ to God and all mankind, it

catches its breath and blinks. The world has forgotten what abnegation means. It needs to relearn that word and its meaning; for the only way to an exaltation is through abnegation. It can re-learn and it will re-learn both the word and its meaning from you. More! It will learn that God lives. Sister, when the world sees that word written large in the lives of yourself and your sisters, lives that are nothing but one long death to self in order that others might know life and live; when it sees self-effacement blazoned before them by women who spend themselves in the service of Church and humanity; when it sees utter dedications and entire consecrations of individuals to all the children of God; then, like Didymus of old, the world will fall down on its stiff knees and say, "My Lord and my God!"

That is your life, Sister. Show Christ to the world by showing yourself a mother, a double for the Mother of God. Make it your one role. Receive it jealously. Carry it out perfectly, else you betray the human race and your Son, who loves it so!

That is what the doctrine of the Mystical Body means. I am not spinning poetic fancy or giving vent to flaring rhetoric. I am talking fact! By showing yourself a mother you can show Christ to Red Russia, Nazi Germany, Communistic Mexico, pagan England and indifferent America. You can prove to atheist and indifferentist that Jesus Christ lives, lives just as vitally today as He did when He walked Judean Hills; that He loved doubter, scoffer, denier, with the same blood-love that He had for High-priest, Scribe and Pharisee, follower, disciple and apostle — a love that took Him to death.

You must show yourself a mother by praying and working for these. They are your mystical children potentially. Yes, Hitler and Stalin are vivified by the breath of God, and on the soul of every Nazi and Red is stamped the image of our Father! For them you must live and love, for them you must work and slave, for them you must suffer, sacrifice and finally die; for the Mother of God was made the Mother of men by Christ's last will and testament, and you are Mary's double.

Do you say, "Impossible"? Then I say that you do not understand your role nor the Drama in which you have a part. You do not know the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Let me see if an example will clarify it. Sister, you may feel small. You are small. But small things can do great harm or great good. A tiny diseased nerve in a toe or a tooth makes your whole being miserable, doesn't it? Well, fail to show yourself a mother and you will affect the whole Mystical Body of Christ, for we are one!

Here is a better example. If you cut your little finger and it becomes infected, what happens? Your whole body is affected, because you are a unit. Then immediately the leucocytes, those tiny, healthy, life-giving corpuscles in your blood-stream, rush from every part of your body to do battle unto death with the phagocytes which are causing the infection. Because you are a unit, the healthy parts speed aid to the member that is diseased. It is the law of life. Christ's Mystical Body is just as much a unit and has just as much a law. But some parts are diseased and dying and some parts are dead; so you, a tiny, robust, vigorous leucocyte,

must give your strength to the weak, health to the diseased and life to the dying and the dead. You fulfill that law of life by showing yourself a mother.

Oh, Sister, the world is like a lost child. It is weeping. It is wandering. It is bewildered. From all lands I hear but one cry. From the steppes of Russia to the waters of the English sea, from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, from dark Africa and yellow Asia and the land "down under" I hear a cry that rises and rises; it is the cry of a weeping child. And here in America the same voice wails. I hear it. You must hear it if you love Christ. The whole wide world is crying "Mother! Mother! I want my Mother!" It is the cry of the Child of God lost in the maze of the mad material world. Sister, save that child!

Our God is weeping, too. I hear Him. Can't you? He is weeping over the same mad modern world. Through tears that blur and blind Him, He looks on a sorry, sorry race of men and says, "If thou hadst known, if thou hadst known...!" Sister, it will never know unless you show yourself a mother, unless you go on ever more perfectly doubling for the Mother of God, unless you learn six lines and live them: Purity — Humility — Joy—Seeking Christ—Consideration for others — Charity. — But, no! I am wrong. There are not six lines. There is only one! The world will be lost unless you learn and live — LOVE! Mother's love! The LOVE of the Mother of Christ for the whole Christ!

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TO

LEARNING YOUR LINES

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SOME PARTING SUGGESTIONS

It is a beautiful role that God has assigned you, Sister; it is the leading feminine role in the Great Drama of the Redeeming. And I suppose that as you sit reflecting on what you have read, you say to yourself, "How can I keep it alive?" You want to know some method of keeping conscious of your part in the Mystical Body; some means to prevent you from ever stepping out of character.

I understand, Sister. Perfectly! Though from the skin out we be clothed in garments that are religious; though we live in a house that is religious; though we be surrounded by pictures and statues and crucifixes that are religious; though we have as our immediate family only those who are religious; we seem to be unable to keep conscious of our religious state. We have been given ideals before. We have thrilled to them; but they faded. We have made retreats and read treatises before, and they fired us to generous resolutions. But we broke them. We sometimes shake ourselves and wonder what is wrong. We feel that we are little more than seculars in religious garb, I understand, Sister. Perfectly!

Usually, we lay the blame on our work. We say that we become so absorbed in the harvest that we forget the Lord of the harvest; so concerned with the vineyard that we neglect the vineyard's Master. It is a common, a universal complaint. Teachers become intent on teaching and say that they forget the Teacher. Nurses become absorbed in curing and say that they neglect the Divine Physician. Little Sisters tell me that they so fall in love with the old folk that

they pay not enough attention to the Father of us all. Those in homes and asylums say that they are entirely taken up with the homes and asylums and look not enough to Eternal Mansions and to Him who has prepared them. Why, Sister, even contemplatives complain of their work!

I know the complaint. I further know that there are spiritual writers and retreat-masters who are talking about the Heresy of the Twentieth Century, the heresy of WORK!

But, Sister, pause for a moment and think! You have seen mothers washing clothes, preparing meals, sweeping rooms, haven't you? You have seen them busy about the house from dawn to dusk. Tell me, who works more than a mother? And let me tell you that she is intent on her work. Very intent. But does that make her less a mother? Does that absorption in getting those clothes clean, those meals palatable, those rooms spotless, take anything from her love for her children? Is it not rather a wonderful manifestation of her selfless heart? Love has direct and indirect manifestations, you know. Words are the direct, works the indirect. And, Sister, the indirect are often more trustworthy than the direct! Do not take my word for it, but recall what our Master said, "Not all who say: Lord, Lord, shall enter Heaven."

Work, your specific work, is the will of God in your regard. How, then, can absorption in it take you from Him? A general talks to a soldier, giving him a message for a distant command. The soldier leaves the presence of his general to carry out his command. Is that soldier neglecting his leader? The President talks to an ambassador, telling him the policy to follow in a foreign land. The ambassador sails away and carries out

that policy in that foreign land. Is he neglecting his President? Then, how are you?

Work, Sister, is an indirect prayer. Prayer is a direct work. St. Benedict said, "Ora ET labora," not "Ora AUT labora." But we often confusedly suppose that we should hop from one to the other, like a canary jumping from side to side of its cage. We imagine that we should be ever interrupting our work to lift our minds and hearts to God. We look on work and prayer as if they were parallel lines. They are not! They are not juxtaposed like twin brother and sister; they are interposed like yeast in the dough or the soul in the body. God works with you, Sister. His grace precedes and accompanies your every salutary act. So you need not divert yourself from your work to find your God. He is your work!

There is no heresy in work, or in absorption in work. It is but the visible manifestation of the spirit of faith and love by which we live. Prayer should not distract from work, nor work be an interruption of your converse with God; they are one when you have a pure intention.

I can almost hear you shout, "But work IS a distraction!"

Of course, I am not now talking to those who have become such slaves to their employments that they no longer pray. Those few do not need this pamphlet. What they need is what St. Ignatius gives his sons at the close of their studies — a third year of probation in which to recapture the religious spirit. These few have become executives or members of institutional staffs; they have ceased to be religious.

But to the almost universality of you — you who make the Morning Offering and mean it; you who start every big action with a little prayer; you who make daily meditation and examen; you who are religious but who are ridden by that bugaboo of “work is a menace to union with God”; to you who shout, “But work IS a distraction,” I say . . .

All right, Sister. Then to solve the difficulty and help you learn your lines and live them, I give three suggestions. All are tangible. All are material. All are connected with your work. To employ them effectively calls for a little mental discipline. But you will make the slight effort, I am sure; especially since their tangibility renders even this discipline relatively easy. I made them material, for our minds are more at home in the quantitative and dimensional than in the ideal and the abstract. Our souls are still in our bodies! And it is this oversight that makes us frequently fallacious. We are still human, we want to be angelic. We want the absorption of Heaven, that complete immersion in God and God alone, even while we walk on earth. We are not going to get it. But perhaps these may help you somewhat. . . .

I. LET THOUGHTLESSNESS REMIND YOU!

You say that your work distracts you. Well and good. Then I say make these very distractions a means to recollection. Your two biggest distractions are discouragement and disappointment. Use them as means to remind you of your role.

How?

This way. You teach a little class, walk a hospital floor, look after some very old people, nurse a foundling or an orphan, take

in a few Magdalens or live behind a grating and a grill, and you feel that your trifle of occupation, absorbing as it is, means nothing to the wide world or to the great God. It is most true, Sister, that you do very little in this very big world. But let me ask you: "Did Mary do more?" See how Mary-conscious, Mother-conscious and hence, Christ-conscious even distractions of this discouraging nature can make you? Sister, Mary Immaculate did not do as much as you do, yet she showed the whole world its Redeemer. Take courage! When these depressing thoughts come, laugh and say, "How like Mary I am!"

Another source of trouble is routine. The sameness dulls our spirits and renders life drab. I know it, Sister. But tell me, what does a mother do? Can you picture a more monotonous life? Today she prepares three meals and cleans the house; tomorrow she will clean the house and prepare three meals. And that goes on for years! Keep smiling, Sister, and when routine bothers you say, "I am doubling for the Mother of God!"

Again, you may say that you have too much work. I know, Sister. What you mean is that your **works** are never done; for you have only one **work**, that is to make of life an act of love! But it is true that your works are never done. But are a mother's? I am quite sure that we will all go to our graves with our works unfinished. That is our lot. But use it to remind you of your role. And see to it that you do not go to your grave with your one work, your act of love, unfinished!

Finally, your life is unappreciated. That is a tremendous disappointment. Pupils are never grateful. The sick only care to get well and to get as far from you and your hospital

as they can. The Magdalens often feel that they are in prison. Old folks can be very sour and cranky, while orphans and foundlings know nothing. Yours is a thankless life. I know it. And if you are a contemplative, you will, at times, experience a human loneliness and lovelessness that borders on dereliction. The more intense you are in your work, the greater will be your disappointment. Why, there are times when even superiors seem most unappreciative. Ah, Sister, use this distraction to bring you in closest union with God; for herein you are being every inch the mother. Are mothers ever properly thanked or rightly appreciated? Hardly ever. Most certainly not until the children are fully grown. Sometimes not until mother has gone!

You are a mother, Sister. You are mothering a world of souls for Christ. That world is not fully grown. It does not appreciate and will not thank. But realize that this makes you the Mater Dolorosa — a beautiful part to play opposite the Man of Sorrows!

Yes, Sister, use the thoughtlessness and the thanklessness of those you serve as a means to keep you mindful of your role. The members of the Body do not understand or appreciate. The Head does. Take courage. The world one day will be fully grown. On that day it will appreciate. For on that day it will know Christ as the King of kings and Judge of the living and the dead. That day it will know you as the woman who doubled for Mary Immaculate.

II. MEET ST. JOHN

That brings me to my second suggestion. If you want to keep conscious of your role, read the Apocalypse. It says much about

you. In the seventh chapter you will find the verse: "After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number . . . clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." That is for you, Sister. You are of that mighty number. You will be robed in white; for you have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb — Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Communion! You will be robed in white; for purgatory here and hereafter makes one white! Yes, I say, purgatory here! Those heartaches, headaches, backaches and earaches; those desolations, discouragements and disappointments are purgatory here. Use them, Sister; use them to make you white as the Immaculate One you reproduce. The palm will be yours, too. Victories! Victories won by the Valiant Woman!

Read chapter twelve. That is you! A woman clothed with the sun . . . and being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered." Indeed, that is you, Sister. You are in pain as you mother the mystical members of Christ.

Read the fourteenth chapter. "They are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." In life you followed the Lamb; not only in the Commandments, but also in the counsels; you mothered mystical members for Him; in death, then, you shall be high above Sion, singing the song only the few know. Yes, Sister, that is for you!

Take the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters and dream over them. The New Jerusalem. Your home. "And God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes and death shall be no more. . . . Behold I make all things new . . . And they shall see His face!" You shall know your own in Heaven, Sister. You shall know all whom you mothered directly

and indirectly. You shall know our Head! Read the Apocalypse, Sister. It says much about you!

That is my way of saying, "Keep your eye on Eternity!" That is all that Time is for. Be not near-sighted. Read the Apocalypse and learn how to look up and beyond, to look so far up that you see the New Jerusalem. Then you'll remember to double for Mary!

III. USE DOORS!

If the above be not tangible enough for you; if you say: "It's too spiritual, and I'm material. It's too idealistic, and I'm realistic. It's too mystical, and I'm only a muddled wayfarer groping my way." Then I say: USE DOORS!

Let me explain. I know full well that our fight is to die to the spirit of the world and to live in the world of the spirit. I also know that this concept of doubling for the Mother of God is most practical. I further know that it will fade unless we devise some tangible way of keeping it bright. I had thought of a little picture of the "Madonna of the Sleeping Child." That concretizes and epitomizes this booklet. But I was torn between the representation of Love just born and Love just consummated. I did not know whether the Madonna or the Pieta was more representative of your happy lot. Mothers of the Mystical Christ must go from Bethlehem to Golgotha, else the Great Drama of the Redeeming will be incomplete. I could not decide.

My next thought was an apt title for each of you. "Refugium Peccatorum" fits the Good Shepherds. "Salus Infirmorum" is exact for all who work with the physically or mentally

ill. "Consolatrix Afflictorum" is true for the Little Sisters of the Poor and all in orphan or foundling homes. "Auxilium Christianorum" is the title for teachers. "Vas Insigne Devotionis" I select for contemplatives. But the one title that fits you all is "JANUA COELI."

Mothers are portals to life. Mystical mothers are gates to Heaven. So I say, "Use Doors!" Use every door you pass through as a reminder of what you are supposed to be! You are a double for the mother of God and therefore a "GATE TO HEAVEN"!

As you see, Sister, these three suggestions have as their end a focusing of your attention on Heaven. I want you to keep your eye on eternity. Life is a wind. Eternity is tomorrow! So I again say, "Use Doors!" Use every door as an Inquisitor who asks you: "Are you a Gate to Heaven for yourself? Are you a Gate to Heaven for others? Are you doubling for the Mother of God?"

* * *

I must end, but before I do, let me tell you, Mystical Mother of God, that you have had most of your mysteries. You have had your Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation and Finding. You are now living the Passion. Your glorious mysteries will soon begin! I will not promise you an Assumption, but I will fearlessly prophesy your Coronation if you go on doubling for the Mother of God!

Will you be like the Mother of God to me? Will you "pray for me, a sinner, now and at the hour of my death"? Please! Life is a wind, you know, Eternity is tomorrow!

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