

# Mechtild of Magdeburg



## THE TREASURE OF THE SOUL

Our Lord in the kingdom of heaven  
 Extols the soul that loves Him in the kingdom of  
 earth,  
 And says: Behold! He who has wounded me  
 Is coming, She ascends!  
 She comes like a hunted stag  
 To the fount that is I.  
 She comes like an eagle soaring  
 From the depths to the height.

'Love quickens you and goads your wing,  
My queen, what is it that you bring?'

Lord, I bring you my treasure  
That is greater than the mountains  
That is wider than the world,  
Deeper than the sea,  
Higher than the clouds,  
Fairer than the sun,  
More manifold than the stars.  
It weights heavier than all the earth.

'O image of my godhood,  
Honoured by my humanhood,  
Adorned with my holy spirit,  
What is the name of your treasure?'

Lord, it is called my heart's delight,  
That I withheld from the world,  
That I kept within myself  
And denied to all creatures  
Now I can carry it no further.  
Lord, where shall I lay it down?

'Nowhere shall you lay down your heart's delight  
But in my godly heart,  
And on my human breast.  
There shall my spirit kiss you,  
There only you shall rest.'

#### GOD AND THE SOUL HOLD CONVERSE

O Emperor of all honours! O Crown of all princes!  
O Wisdom of all masters! O Giver of all gifts!

O Deliverer from all bondage!

‘I come to my beloved  
As the dew to the flower.’

What joyful vision! What lovely greeting!  
What rapturous embrace!  
Lord! Your wonders have wounded me,  
Your mercy has mowed me down.  
O towering rock, so well and firmly wrought  
That none may rest in you  
Save dove and nightingale.

‘Welcome, sweet dove,  
You flew so high on earth  
That your wings are grown  
In the kingdom of heaven.  
Your savour of grapes,  
Your scent is that of balsam,  
Your radiance is like the sun,  
You are the waxing of my highest love.’

O God who gushes His gifts!  
O God who laves with his Love!  
O God who sears with desire!  
O God who melts in the fusion with His Body!  
O God who rests on my breast, I cannot breathe  
without you!

‘O beautiful rose among thorns!  
O bee that flew to the honey!  
O dove whose day is serene!  
O sun with beautiful sheen!  
O moon in the fullness of light!

I cannot turn from you.  
 You are my bed,  
 My most secret rest,  
 My want that grew and grew.  
 My highest honour.  
 You are the joy of my godhood,  
 The solace of my humanhood,  
 A river for my blaze.'

You are my mountain of mirrors, the feast of my eyes,  
 The loss of myself, a tempest in my heart,  
 The fall and failing of my strength,  
 My greatest surety.

#### YEARNING FOR HOME

Sick with love, with ailing heart,  
 Pain, duress and bitter smart –  
 Kept me all too long apart  
 From my dearest Lord!  
 How shall I do so long without you, Love?  
 Ah~! too far from you I grieve,  
 Should you not receive  
 My lament, O Lord, then I  
 Must return to mourn and sigh,  
 And wait and suffer, openly and veiled,  
 For you, dear Lord, know very well  
 How much with you I yearn to dwell

#### LOVE'S LONGING

O could I die of love!  
 I would that this might be,  
 I saw the One I love,

With eyes that learned to see.  
 I saw within my soul  
 That He was waiting there,  
 A bride who welcomed her Beloved  
 Need never seek elsewhere

### THE POWER OF LONGING

Ah! Lord, if only once  
 It happened on a day  
 That to my heart's desire  
 I look on you, and lay  
 My arms around you lovingly,  
 The rapture of your holy love  
 Would flood my soul with ecstasy,  
 That men have known upon their earthly way!  
 And I would suffer after this  
 More than the tongues of men can ever say.  
 A thousand deaths would be too light,  
 I yearn for you so greatly, Lord!  
 And wait for you so faithfully.  
 If you will suffer me, O Lord,  
 I shall pursue and seek you long, in agony.  
 For well I know: You, Lord, must be  
 The first to feel a want of me.

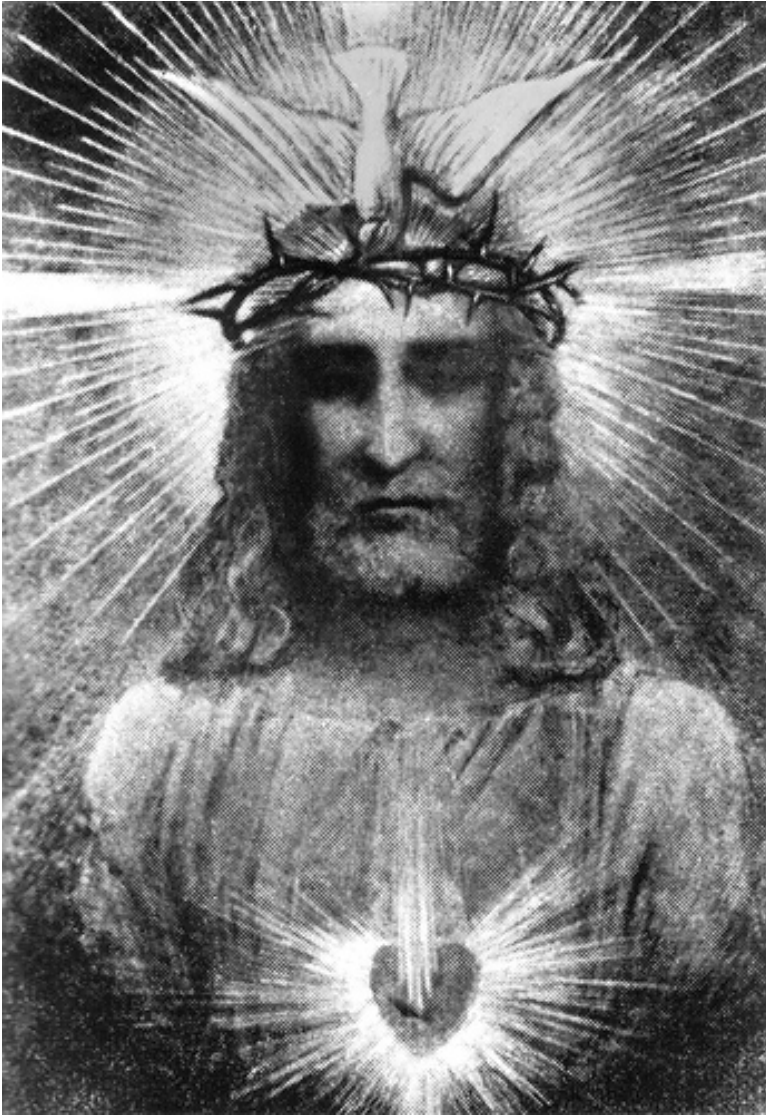
### THE PAIN OF LOVE

O noble eagle! O sweet lamb!  
 O blaze of fire, kindle me!  
 How long shall I be cold and stark?  
 One hour is too long for me.  
 One day is like a thousand years.  
 If you should be remote from me

No more than a week and a day,  
In Hell I should prefer to stay,  
Where I already am  
When God is alien to the loving soul.  
That is pain beyond death,  
And pain beyond all pain.  
Believe me! Must the nightingale  
Not sing her song  
When Nature tells her loving tale?  
To bid her hush were death indeed.  
Ah! Mighty Lord, have pity on my need!

*Mechtilde of Magdeburg*

# Father Leonce de Grandmaison



O Holy Virgin,  
 Keep my heart as that of a child,  
 Pure, fresh, and wide and glad,  
 Transparent as a spring.  
 Give me a simple heart,  
 That does not savour sadness,  
 A heart that glories when it gives itself,  
 A heart aware of frailty  
 And open to compassion,  
 A faithful and a generous heart  
 That remembers every benefit  
 And does not cherish rancor for a hurt.  
 Grant me a tender, humble heart,  
 That loves and asks for no return,  
 Happy to efface itself in another heart,  
 In the presence of your divine Son,  
 A heart great and indomitable,  
 That no ingratitude can lock,  
 And no indifference render slack,  
 A heart tormented with the glory of Jesus Christ,  
 And wounded by His love,  
 A wound that only shall be healed in heaven.

*Father Leonce de Grandmaison*



# St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi



"She was filled with perpetual fervor. Her heart melted, she thought incessantly of God, she spoke incessantly of God, and she wrought for God incessantly. Often it seemed as though she had lost her senses and were entirely within God. At times her inner fire was so great that she could not contain it within her breast: it flamed in her face and poured into her actions and words. She, who as a result of penance performed, usually looked weak and feeble, pale and emaciated, grew strong when these flames of love overwhelmed her. Her face became rounder and fervent, her eyes were like two shining stars, and her gaze was serene and joyful like that of a blessed angel. Then she was restless and could not be still. To pour out this fervor that she could no longer contain, she was forced to bestir herself and she was strangely impelled to move about. And so, at such times, one saw her moving quickly from place to place. She ran through the convent as if crazed with love, and cried in a loud voice: 'Love, love, love!' And since she could not endure this conflagration of love, she said: 'O Lord! No more love, no more love!' . . . And she said to the sisters that followed her: 'You do not know, beloved sisters, that my Jesus is nothing but love, yes, mad with love. You are mad with love, my Jesus, as I have said and as I shall always say. You are very lovely and joyous, you refresh and solace, you nourish and unite. You are both pain and slaking, toil and rest, life and death in one. Is there anything that is not within you! You are wise and willful, lofty and unmeasurable, miraculous and unutterable.' At other times she was consumed with desire that this loving God might be known and adored by men, and turning her face to heaven, she said: 'O Love, O Love,

give me so strong a voice, O Lord, that when I call you love, I may be heard from East to West, and in all parts of the world, and even down to Hell, so that you may be known and adored as the true Love. O Love, you suffuse and transfix, you rend and blind, you govern all things, you are heaven and earth, fire and air, blood and water. You are both God and man."

*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi*

### SPIRITUAL WEDLOCK

"I saw how Jesus united with His bride in closest embrace. He laid His head over the head of His bride, His eyes upon her eyes, His mouth upon her mouth, His feet upon her feet, all His members upon hers so that His bride became one with Him and wanted all her Bridegroom wanted, saw all that her Bridegroom saw, and savoured all that her Bridegroom savoured. And God wants nothing but that the soul unite with Him in such wise, and that He may be utterly united with her. And when the soul leans her head against the head of Jesus, she has no other desire save to unite with God, and to have God unite with her. God sees Himself in Himself alone and draws His power from Himself alone, and He sees Himself in all His creatures, even in those that have no sensation, and in them He feels Himself through the power with which He gives them their being, and causes them to be of use and to bear fruit. Thus, when the eyes of the soul are upon those of Jesus, she beholds herself in God and God in all things.

After holy communion, I reflected upon the great union of the soul with God through the sacrament, and for an instant I felt wholly united with

God, changed into God, and beyond all bodily sensation, so that had I been cast into a fiery oven and burned, I should have felt nothing at all. I did not know whether I was dead or alive, whether I was in the flesh or in the spirit, whether I was upon earth or in heaven. I only saw the whole glory of God, God in Himself. I only saw Him love Himself with pure love, recognize Himself in His boundlessness, embrace all things created with pure and boundless love. I saw One in Three, an undivided Trinity, a God infinite in love, supreme in goodness, unfathomable and impenetrable. And I was with Him and knew nothing of myself. I only saw that I was in God, but I did not see myself – only God!"

*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi*

"He who desire to attain to My purity must not concern himself with any created thing . . . not even with the sacred humanity of My Word. The soul must fix itself only upon My divine essence, rejecting every thought and affection that does not pertain to My essence. The slightest attachment for any creature will be an obstacle to the acquisition of this purity or will be a stain on this purity if it is already possessed . . . But to make you better understand these great truths, it is necessary that I blind you, for purity sees nothing, recognizes nothing, knows nothing . . . Therefore you cannot acquire it except by total renunciation of your being, your knowledge, and your will. Yet you must not for that reason cease to work according to the virtues, following the interior attraction of My grace which directs you in all things.

You must work without having a clear knowledge of your operations.:"

*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi*

# St. Margaret Mary



"This only love of my soul appeared to me once holding in one hand the portrait of the happiest life imaginable for the soul of a religious: a life of peace spent in the enjoyment of interior and exterior consolation, together with perfect health and the applause and esteem of creatures and many other things agreeable to nature. In the other hand He held the picture of a life poor and abject, continually crucified by all kinds of humiliations, contempt and contradictions, in fin a life of suffering in mind and body. He held out these two pictures to me saying: "Choose, my daughter, the one which pleases thee best. I will give thee the same graces with the one as with the other." Prostrating myself at His Feet to adore Him, I said: "O my Lord, I wish for nothing but Thee and am content with the choice Thou wilt make for me." After He had strongly urged me to choose, I exclaimed: "Thou art sufficient for me, O my Go! Do for me whatever will glorify Thee the most, having no regard either to my interest or satisfaction. It is sufficient for me to know that Thou art satisfied." Then He told me that, with Magdalen, I had chosen the better part which should not be taken from me, since it would be my inheritance forever; and presenting me with the picture of the crucifixion: "Behold," said He, "what I have chosen for thee; this it is which is most agreeable to Me, both in order to accomplish My designs and to render thee conformable to Me. The other is a life of enjoyment, not of merit: it is for eternity." I forthwith accepted this picture of crucifixion and death and kissed the Hand which offered it to me; and although my nature shuddered at the sight, I embraced it with all the affection of which I was capable. As I pressed it to my

heart, I felt it so strongly imprinted on me, that I seemed no longer to be aught but a compound of all I had seen portrayed therein."

*St. Margaret Mary*



# John of St. Sampson



“This way is quite fittingly called the mystical way, because it is hidden from those who tarry long in the senses. Such souls raise themselves up to God through the knowledge of sensible things, and through the activity of their understanding. Still, this in itself would be quite an achievement if they really sought to know him as much as possible in this common way without seeking themselves, and if they also added ardent affections without loitering in a subtle speculation which they call contemplation. While giving them much satisfaction, this speculation actually draws them away from God to some truth. Most often it draws them into themselves, and not into God. Besides, they are not at all elevated, except in their own nature, which, while giving them certain very pleasant savors, persuades them to believe that they are contemplatives, and that they have access to God. In reality, they are as far from him as they are full of themselves. In short, although they are inquisitive contemplators of all the virtues, these men are unmortified animals, who adore themselves and the subtle idols they have invented.

The soul must practice this first way of contemplation for at least one good year with every possible effort, until it feels greatly illumined and inflamed by love. After that it will enter more easily and advantageously into the way which is secret and mystical.

This way is a wisdom that fills the soul with infinite splendor and delights, a divine science that carnal men cannot comprehend, because it is divinely infused through gratuitous love. The animal man

considers it a madness, since an early effect of this way is to overwhelm the senses and the powers of the soul. It becomes simple and one in the fire of love which consumes its whole being. Here it is held in a profound, luminous and delightful embrace beyond all expression. Simple within, it now becomes entirely spirit in the Divine Spirit, in whom it is more acted upon than acting. In this state the soul experiences more of enjoyment than it does labor, although one or the other may be present . . .

When the soul is accustomed to aspiration, it becomes as easy as breathing. Then it can turn to the simple and delightful consideration of the divine perfections, which is an excellent practice. After this comes the loss of self. But the purely mystical way, which is the very flow of wisdom reduces everything to itself, that is to say, to God, whom it sees and tastes with constant delight . . .

When the soul is accustomed to be recollected and lost in God, the entire lower man becomes subject to the spirit. All actions of the senses therefore, also belong to the spirit. So simple and unifying is this state that it can enrapture the soul to the point where it no longer feels any opposition between either of these parts.

The exclamations of such a soul, if it can still form any when it is entirely lost in the depths of its spirit, might be the following, "O Love! O Majesty! O Beauty! O Essence of all essence! O infinite Love! Infinite Mercy! O my All! O my dear Spouse! O my Life! O

consuming Fire! O infinite Goodness!" etc. When you feel full of wonder over the beauty and marvels of God, you might use these burning exclamations for affirmations."

*John of St. Samson*

# Julian of Norwich



"Thus I saw that God rejoices that He is our Father, God rejoices that He is our Mother, and God rejoices that He is our true Spouse and that our soul is His beloved wife And Christ rejoices that He is our Brother, and Jesus rejoices that He is our Savior.

These virtues and gifts are treasured for us within Jesus Christ, for at that same time that God knitted Him to our body in the Maiden's womb, He assumed our fleshly soul.... Thus Our Lady is our Mother in whom we are all enclosed and out of her we are born in Christ (for she who is Mother of our Savior is Mother of all who shall be saved within our Savior). And our Savior is our true Mother in whom we are endlessly born and never shall come to birth out of Him.

Thus in our creation, God All Power is our natural Father, and God All Wisdom is our natural Mother, with the Love and the Goodness of the Holy Spirit — who is all one God, one Lord. And in the knitting and in the one-ing, He is our most true Spouse, and we are His beloved Wife and His fair Maiden. With this Wife He is never displeased, for He says: "I love thee and thou lovest me, and our love shall never be separated in two."

...the Second Person of the Trinity is our Mother in human nature in our essential creation. In Him we are grounded and rooted, and he is our Mother in mercy by taking on our fleshliness. And thus our Mother is to us various kinds of actions (in Whom our parts are kept unseparated) for in our Mother Christ, we benefit and grow, and in mercy He redeems and

restores us, and, by the virtue of His Passion and His death and resurrection, He ones us to our essence. In this way, our Mother works in mercy to all His children who are submissive and obedient to Him.

As truly as God is our Father, so truly God is our Mother. (And that He showed in all the showings, and particularly in those sweet words where he says "It is I" — that is to say" "It is I: the Power and the Goodness of the Fatherhood. It is I: the Wisdom of the Motherhood. It is I: the Light and the Grace that is all blessed Love. It is I: the Trinity. It is I: the Unity. I am the supreme goodness of all manner of things. I am what causes thee to love. I am what causes thee to yearn. It is I: the endless fulfilling of all true desires.") I understood three ways of looking at motherhood in God: the first is the creating of our human nature; the second is His taking of our human nature (and there commences the motherhood of grace); the third is motherhood of action (and in that is a great reaching outward, by the same grace, of length and breadth and of height and of depth without end) and all is one love.

The mother can give her child such from her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with Himself; and He does it most graciously and most tenderly with the Blessed Sacrament which is the Precious Food of true life. And with all the sweet Sacraments He supports us most mercifully and graciously.

This fair lovely word "mother" is so sweet and so kind in itself, that it can not truly be said of anyone nor to anyone except of Him and to Him who is true Mother

of life and of all. To the quality of motherhood belongs natural love, wisdom, and knowledge – and this is God....The kind, loving mother who is aware and knows the need of her child protects the child most tenderly as the nature and state of motherhood wills. And as the child increases in age, she changes her method but not her love. And when the child is increased further in age, she permits it to be chastised to break down vices and to cause the child to accept virtues and graces. This nurturing of the child, with all that is fair and good, our Lord does in the mothers by whom it is done. Thus He is our Mother in our human nature by the action of grace in the lower part, out of love for the higher part.

. . . And in the same showing [of Christ bleeding on the Cross) suddenly the Trinity almost filled my heart with joy. (And I understood it shall be like that in heaven without end for all that shall come there.) For the Trinity is God, God is the Trinity; the Trinity is our Maker, the Trinity is our Keeper, the Trinity is our everlasting Lover, the Trinity is our endless Joy and Bliss, by our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Our Lord God] made everything in fullness of goodness, and therefore the Blessed Trinity is always completely pleased with all His works. And all this He showed most blessedly, meaning this: "See, I am God. See, I am in everything. See, I do everything. See, I never lift my hands from my works, nor ever shall, without end. See, I lead everything to the end I ordained for it from without beginning by the same Power, Wisdom, and Love with which I made it. How would anything be amiss?"



Ah, Jesus wishes that we take heed to the bliss of our salvation that is in the blessed Trinity and that we desire to have as much spiritual pleasure, with His grace, as was said before. (That is to say, that the pleasure of our salvation be like to the joy that Christ has about our salvation as much as it can be while we are here.) The whole Trinity acted in the Passion of Christ (ministering an abundance of strengths and plenitude of grace to us by Him) but only the Maiden's son suffered (about which the whole blessed Trinity endlessly rejoices).

And so our good Lord replied to all the questions and doubts that I could raise, saying most reassuringly: "I am able to make everything well, and I know how to make everything well, and I wish to make everything well, and I shall make everything well; and thou shalt see for thyself that all manner of things shall be well. Where He says, "I am able," I understand as referring to the Father; and where He says, "I know how," I understand as referring to the Son; and where He says, "I wish to," I understand as referring to the Holy Spirit; and where He says, "I shall," I understand as referring to the unity of the blessed Trinity (three persons and one truth); and where He says, "Thou shalt see for thyself," I understand the one-ing of all mankind that shall be saved into the blissful Trinity.

. . . At this time I wished to look up from the Cross, and I dared not, for I was well-aware that while I gazed on the cross I was secure and safe.... Then I had a proposal in my reason (as if it were like a friend) which said to me, "Look up to heaven to His

Father." I answered inwardly with all the powers of my soul and said, "No, I cannot, for Thou art my heaven." (This I said because I wished not to look up, for I had rather have been in that pain until Doomsday than to have come to heaven otherwise than by Him, for I was well-aware that He who bound me so painfully, He would unbind me when He wished.) So was I taught to choose Jesus for my heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time. I delighted in no other heaven than Jesus, who shall be my bliss when I come there. And this has ever been a comfort to me: that I chose Jesus for my heaven, by His grace, in all this time of suffering and sorrow. And that had been a learning for me that I should evermore do so, choosing only Jesus for my heaven in well and woe."

*Julian of Norwich*

# Blessed Angela of Foligno



“My soul was enraptured, and I saw God with a clarity superior to any clarity I had ever known and in a plenitude far surpassing all other plenitude . . . I saw God in a darkness, . . . because everything that I could think of seemed disproportionate to Him and there was given me a perfect trust, a certain hope, a security . . . that was ceaseless and guaranteed. I recollected myself totally in the infinite good which appeared to me in that darkness, and in its depth I found peace, the certainty that God was with me: *Emmanuel* . . . My hope is buried in that certain and secret good which I perceive in the immense darkness. In Him I know and possess all that I wish to know or possess; in Him is all good . . . I see nothing, and yet I see all; I have the absolute certainty of the Good which I possess. The more this supreme Good is seen in darkness, the better does the soul realize that He surpasses all goods. He is the hidden mystery . . . All else is darkness; all else that can be thought of is as nothing beside Him. The divine power, wisdom, and will, which I have seen marvelously at other times, all seem much less than this. This is the whole, and all things else are but a part of the whole. These latter things, do indeed bring with them a great joy which redounds to the body; but when God manifests Himself in this darkness, there is no smile on the lips, no fervor or devotion or love in the heart, and no trembling or movement of the body . . . All the caresses which God has lavished upon me, which are numerous and unspeakable, all His sweetness and gifts . . . are nothing when compared to Him whom I see through the darkness . . . Alas, the words I speak seem to me to be nothing. What am I saying? My very words cause me horror. O supreme obscurity! My

words are veritable blasphemy. Silence! Silence! Silence! . . . When I dwell in that obscure darkness, I remember nothing at all of the humanity of Jesus Christ nor ought of any other form. I see all things and yet I see nothing. Coming forth from that obscurity, I again see the God-man, who sweetly draws my soul to Himself."

*Blessed Angela of Foligno*

# Ven. Mary of Agreda



“In this tribulation I cried to the Lord with all my heart that He help me and if it be his will that I should be freed from this danger and burden. Although it is true that the Lord had prepared me sometime beforehand and commanded me to accept the office, and although when I tried to excuse myself on account of my pusillanimity, He always consoled me and reiterated his command, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but rather augmented them. For I perceived and understood in the Lord that, although He showed this to be his holy will, which I could not hinder, yet I was aware at the same time that he left me free to retire and resist, and, if I wished, to act according to my weakness as a creature and in the consciousness of my total insufficiency; such is the prudence of the Lord in his dealings with men. Relying on this kindness of the Lord, I increased my efforts to be relieved from this evident danger, which is so little estimated by our human nature with its bad habits and disorderly passions. The Lord, however, repeated continually that it was his will and He consoled me, admonishing me through his holy angels to obey.

I fled in this affliction to our Queen and Lady as to my only refuge in all troubles, and after I had manifested to Her my way of life and my desires, She deigned to answer me in these sweetest of words: “My daughter, console thyself and do not be disturbed in thy heart on account of this labor; prepare thyself for it and I will be thy Mother and Superior, whom thou shalt obey; and the same I will be to thy subjects. I will supplement thy deficiencies and thou shalt be my agent, through whom the will of

my Son and my God shall be fulfilled. In all thy temptations and troubles thou shalt take refuge with me, confer about them with me, and take the advice, which I will give thee in all things. Obey me, and I will favor thee and will continue to be attentive to thy affliction." These were the words of the Queen, as consoling as they were soothing to my soul. From that day on the Mother of mercy multiplied her mercies toward me, her slave; for She became more intimate with me and continued her intercourse with my soul, receiving me, listening to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giving me counsel and encouragement in my affliction, filling my soul with the light and knowledge of eternal life and commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in her presence. Finally this our most amiable Mother and Lady revealed Herself still more fully to her slave, withdrawing the veil from the hidden sacraments and magnificent mysteries which are contained, though unknown to mortals, in her most holy life. And, although this blessed and supernatural light was uninterrupted, and especially clear on her festival days and on other occasions when I was instructed in many mysteries; yet it was no so full, frequent and clear as that which was afterwards vouchsafed to me when She added the command that I write the history of her life according as her Majesty herself should dictate and inspire me. Particularly on one of these festivals of the most holy Mary the Most High informed me that He had in reserve many hidden sacraments and blessings, which He had conferred upon this his heavenly Mother in the days of her pilgrimage and that it was his intention to manifest them to me, in order that I might write them



down according to her guidance. This will of the Most High, though I resisted it, was continually present to my mind for the space of ten years, until I attempted the first writing of this divine history.

Consulting about my doubts with the holy princes and angels, whom the Most High had appointed to direct this work of writing the history of our Queen, and manifesting to them how great was my disturbance and affliction of heart and how stuttering and mute was my tongue for such an arduous task, they replied over and over again that it was the will of the Most High that I write this life of his most pure Mother and our Mistress. On one day especially, when I made many objections and declared to them my difficulties, and my incapability and great fears, they spoke to me these words: "With good reason thou fearest and art disturbed, O soul, doubttest and hesitatest in a matter, where we angels ourselves would do the same, as considering ourselves unable worthily to describe the high and magnificent doings of the Omnipotent in the Mother of Piety and our own Queen. But remember, dearest soul, that the firmament, the whole machinery of the world and all things created will sooner fail than the words of the Most High. Many times He has promised to his creatures, and in the holy Scriptures it is recorded, that the obedient man shall speak of victories over his enemies and shall not be reprehensible in obeying (Prov. 21, 28). And when He created the first man and gave him the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge, he established the virtue of obedience, and swearing He swore, in order to give greater assurance to man. For the Lord has repeatedly given

such an oath; for instance, when He promised to Abraham that the Messiah should descend from his race . . . . Remember, Mary, that all obedience takes its rise from God as from its first and principal source, and we angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his most just will. We cannot contravene or ignore it, because we see the immutable being of God face to face and we perceive that his will is holy, pure and true, most equitable and just. Now this certainty, which we angels possess through the beatific vision, you mortals also possess in its proper proportion as wayfarers through the words of the Lord concerning your prelates and superiors: "He who hears you, hears Me; and who obeys you, obeys Me." (Luke 20, 16). Now since obedience is rendered on account of God, who is the principal Cause and who is the Superior of all, it is befitting to his almighty Providence that He take the consequences of obedience, whenever that which is commanded is not in itself sinful. Accordingly the Lord assures us of these things by an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist, though this is impossible, than that he will fail in this word.

. . . Such encouragement and instruction my holy angels and lords gave me at this time. On many other occasions the prince saint Michael informed me of the same wish and command of the Most High. By the continual enlightenments, favors and instructions of this great prince, I have understood great sacraments and mysteries of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven; for this angel was one of those, who guarded and assisted Her and who were delegated from the angelic choirs . . . He is at the same time the general

patron and protector of the holy Church. He was a special witness and faithful minister of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. This I have often heard of saint Michael himself, who showed me singular favors in my troubles and dangers, and has promised me his assistance and direction in this undertaking.

. . . He (the Lord) said to me one day on the festival of the Presentation of most holy Mary in the temple: "My spouse, many mysteries pertaining to my Mother and the saints have been made manifest in the Church militant; but many are still hidden, especially the interior secrets of their lives, and these I wish now to make known; and I desire thee to put them down in writing according as thou art directed by the most pure Mary. I will reveal and explain them to thee; for until now I have, according to the hidden designs of my wisdom, kept them in reserve, because the time for revealing them was not befitting or opportune to my Providence. Now, however, it is, and it is my will that thou write. Obey, soul!" (Regarding the writing of 'The Mystical City of God')

*Ven. Mary of Agreda*

# St. Catherine of Alexandria



"The oldest reference to St. Catharine is made in the *Menologium Basilianum*, a collection of legends compiled for Emperor Basil II who died in 886. In this she is called Aikaterina, and the report runs as follows:

"The martyr Aikaterina was the daughter of a rich and noble prince of Alexandria. She was very beautiful, and being at the same time highly talented, she devoted herself to Greek literature as well as to the study of the languages of all nations, and so she became wise and learned. And it happened that the Greeks held a festival in honor of their idols; and seeing the slaughter of animals, she was so greatly moved that she went to the King Maximinus and expostulated with him in these words: 'Why hast thou left the living God to worship lifeless idols?' But the Emperor caused her to be thrown into prison, and to be punished severely. He then ordered fifty orators to be brought, and bade them to reason with Aikaterina, and confute her, threatening to burn them all if they should fail to overpower her. The orators, however, when they saw themselves vanquished, received baptism, and were burnt forthwith, while she was beheaded."

The report of the *Menologium* has been elaborated in other versions of which we have two in Greek, one by Simeon Metaphrastes (10th century), another by Athanasius. Upon the latter the Latin legend of St. Catharine is founded, from which again all later versions in Italian, French, and Old English have been derived. We must make special mention of the

version made by Jean Mielot at the request of Philip the Good of Burgundy, because in addition to the incidents mentioned above it contains the story of the mystic marriage of St. Catharine to the Saviour which, however, is believed to have been derived from an older source.

Marius Sepet tells us of the marriage of King Costus with Queen Sabinella and the birth of their daughter, Catharine, who from a tender age was most carefully educated in all the arts and sciences. She distinguished herself in all virtues, especially in wisdom and moral purity. King Costus died, and Queen Sabinella retired to Mount Ararat where she was converted to Christianity by Ananias, a godly hermit. When she tried to induce her daughter to adopt the new faith she defended paganism with all the arguments of profane science, and her mother was unable to convince her.

Catharine had scarcely reached her eighteenth year when the grandees of the empire sought her hand in marriage and her mother was anxious to have her choose a good husband who would be a worthy leader and could protect the kingdom against all its enemies.

But Catharine refused all suitors and said: "Bring me a bridegroom who is as learned, as beautiful, as noble, as rich,—in short, is of equal rank with me, and I am ready to accept him for my husband." The story continues in the modernized version of M. Sepet as follows:

"One evening when mother and daughter lay sleeping together, the Queen of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, appeared to them surrounded by a great host of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and many other saints, all of whom shone in radiant beauty. The Virgin Mary approached St. Catharine and said to her:

"Look, my daughter! all these are kings, and indeed the greatest in the kingdom of my Son, the Emperor of Glory. I know that thou art still unwedded. If thou wouldst have any one of these for a bridegroom choose the one which best pleases thee and I will bring it about that thy desire shall be fulfilled!"

"But St. Catharine answered that she did not wish to marry any one of them. Thereupon Jesus Christ himself, the Emperor of Glory, appeared unto her in the presence of his gentle mother and a countless host of angels. Mary, the Blessed Virgin, said to Catharine, 'Wouldst thou choose this one for thy Bridegroom?'

"And when Catharine beheld his beauty, power, and wisdom, she fervently replied, 'Yea! Him do I desire whosoever he may be,—him and none other.' But Sabinella, her mother, looked at her with astonishment and said, 'How darest thou select for thy bridegroom one whom so many kings obey? Be content to choose one of the other nobles for thy husband, for all are great and mighty princes.'

"But the daughter sighed and answered, 'Dear mother mine! blame me not that I should wish this one for my husband, for I see none here who far

surpass myself in all things excepting him alone. Oh, go at once and seek out the Empress, his mother, that she may soften his heart and that he may accept me as his bride, for if I may not be his handmaiden, I will never marry another.'

"The mother went at once to that lady and offered her daughter to her as bride for her son, the Emperor. The Queen of Heaven and of the angels then spoke to her well-beloved Son, 'Dearest Son, desirest thou this maiden for thy bride?' But he answered, 'No, my Mother, I desire her not. Rather remove her from thee, for she is not a Christian. I am the King of Christians, and must never have a pagan bride. But if she will be baptized, I give her my word that I shall betroth her soon afterwards by giving her a ring as to my spouse.'

"After this miraculous vision had vanished, Queen Sabinella and her daughter awoke and told each other what they had seen as an actual occurrence. But from this time on Catharine wept constantly and said that she would nevermore find rest until she had received the Emperor of Glory as her husband. Impatient to be baptized she urgently besought her mother to take her at once without delay to the godly hermit, and her request was complied with.

"When they had come together to the hermitage the mother told Ananias privately the vision as related above. The pious hermit, suddenly enlightened by our Lord Jesus Christ, called Catharine and her mother and said to them, 'The Emperor whom you have seen was our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Queen was his mother, [p. 670](#) the glorious Virgin



Mary. The hosts which you saw with them were their companions, the angels and saints of Paradise.'

"The godly hermit added that if Catharine wished for her bridegroom this Heavenly King whom she saw in her vision, she must needs become a Christian."

The story tells how Catharine became a pious Christian and received baptism at the hands of Ananias, after which follows an account of the mystic marriage.

"Once, when St. Catharine was praying fervently in her chamber, Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, appeared before her, clad in fine apparel and accompanied by a great throng of angels and saints. As testimony that he accepted St. Catharine for his bride he placed a real ring upon her finger and promised to perform great things for her if she would remain faithful in her love, and when our Lord Jesus Christ had disappeared she knew at once that vision was to be understood in a spiritual sense. She was completely converted to a great divine love and reverent tenderness toward Jesus Christ, her spouse. From this time forth she often received great tasks of consolation from him, and in order that she might take comfort in him more fully she consecrated all her time and all her study and meditations to prayer and the reading and contemplation of Holy Scripture. As formerly she had studied most zealously and had become learned in vast numbers of volumes of profane science, now, after her conversion she applied herself to the books of Holy Scripture, especially to

the writings of the Evangelists, giving to these her attention above all else. She said to herself: 'Alas, sinner that I am, how long have I wasted my time in the darkness of profane books! Oh Catharine, here is the Gospel of thy spouse. Put all thy heart upon its teachings as faithfully, and constantly as thou canst in order that thou mayest attain the light of truth.'

"Reflecting day by day within her own heart, and questioning also day by day the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom she loved to speak of him, she became a wonderful teacher of truth. Some say that the ring with which Jesus Christ had wedded her was received and preserved in the City of Alexandria, of Egypt, after the death and passion of Madame St. Catharine."

We have not been able to compare this modernized version with Marius Sepet's manuscript, but we would be interested to know whether the original contains mention of St. Catharine taking cognizance at once that "the vision was to be understood in a spiritual sense." In apparent contradiction to it are other passages which insist on the reality of both the vision and the marriage, in token of which a real ring is left on her finger. According to the ascetic atmosphere of Christian mythology the spirituality of this marriage relation is a matter of course and so the narrator of the legend impresses his audience with the belief that St. Catharine is not merely the bride of Christ in the sense that any nun may be so considered, but in the special and true meaning of the word.

In some versions of the legend it is claimed that when St. Catharine was tortured on the wheel no blood came from her wounds, but milk, which is characteristic of her as the representation of absolute purity, because according to the Old Testament notion blood is regarded as impure.

The Roman Breviary for November 25, the day of our saint, contains the account of St. Catharine's life, as approved by the Church, and reads in the English version as follows:

"This Katharine was a noble maiden of Alexandria, who from her earliest years joined the study of the liberal arts with fervent faith, and in a short while came to such a height of holiness and

learning, that when she was eighteen years of age, she prevailed over the chiefest wits. When she saw many diversely tormented and haled to death by command of Maximin, because they professed the Christian religion, she went boldly unto him and rebuked him for his savage cruelty, bringing forward likewise most sage reasons why the faith of Christ should be needful for salvation.

"Maximin marveled at her wisdom, and bade keep her, while he gathered together the most learned men from all quarters and offered them a great reward if they would confute Katharine and [p. 673](#) bring her from believing in Christ to worship idols. But the event fell contrariwise, for many of the philosophers who came to dispute with her were overcome by the force and skill of her reasoning, so that the love of

Christ Jesus was kindled in them, and they were content even to die for his sake. Then did Maximin strive to beguile Katharine with fair words and promises, and when he found it was lost pains, he caused her to be hided, and bruised with lead-laden whips, and so cast into prison, and neither meat nor drink given to her for a space of eleven days.

"At that time Maximin's wife and Porphyry the Captain of his host, went to the prison to see the damsel, and at her preaching believed in Jesus Christ, and were afterwards crowned with martyrdom. Then was Katharine brought out of ward, and a wheel was set, wherein were fastened many and sharp blades, so that her virgin body might thereby be most direfully cut and torn in pieces, but in a little while, as Katharine prayed, this machine was broken in pieces, at the which marvel many believed in Christ. But Maximin was hardened in his godlessness and cruelty, and commanded to behead Katharine. She bravely offered her neck to the stroke and passed away hence to receive the twain crowns of maidenhood and martyrdom, upon the 25th day of November. Her body was marvelously laid by Angels upon Mount Sinai in Arabia."

Note here that in the Breviary the pagan prince is called Maximin, while in the legend he is identified with Maxentius, who was beaten by Constantine in the battle of Saxa Rubra, and after his defeat was drowned in the Tiber. In this way the legend of St. Catharine had become closely affiliated with the final victory of Christianity.

According to Mielot, St. Catharine addresses Christ in a prayer before her execution, and he answers her from out of a cloud with these words: "Come thou, my much beloved, come my bride! The gate of heaven is open to thee. The dwelling of eternal peace is prepared for thee and awaits thy coming. The glorious hosts of virgins descend with great rejoicing to thee with a crown of victory. Come therefore and be assured that I will graciously grant thee all those favors which thou askest. Yea I promise to extend all help, assistance and comfort which thou askest me also to those who in pious faith revere thy passion and will call on thee in danger and extremity. I promise to them all these benefits and the grace of heaven."

According to the legend Mt. Sinai became the burial place of St. Catharine's body, and Marius Sepet claims that the beginning of the public worship of St. Catharine dates from the discovery of her tomb on Mt. Sinai in the eighth century."

*Paul Carus*

# Mary d'Oingies



“How Mary is attracted to the sweetness of the supper with the spirit of God, in the festivals of Christ and the saints.

CHAPTER. 8. The spirit of wisdom; But in order that the work of his wise master in the art, the temple of his high priest, the daughter of the King of his high place to bring the heights of perfection, in the seventh sevenfold gift of the Spirit, as it were, to the work of others, honestly, it beautified, and adorned in an excellent way, namely, the spirit of wisdom, that the first is dignity, but the last to the end of wisdom. She had tasted the flavor of this, she saw the Lord is sweet: when, just as with the fat and filled with the fatness of his soul from the table of the Lord was with Joseph, and when she become inebriated in the south, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved, since the lips of the bridegroom, honey, milk, and eat; of this flowing with honey. Her heart was deeply influenced by the gift of wisdom, and words, and all his works, the sweetness of spiritual anointing [was] a gentle heart, sweet mouth, sweet work, drunk on love. Abstracted from sensible things, and drunken, but she was with love, after some time, when at evening prayer, she heard the knocking at the door, as it were, awake. She questioned and asked whether she was still the first. Sometimes, when in bed for three days continuously, and with the Bridegroom of the rested, because of the great delights of the charm of those days so stealthily slithering, that scarcely a moment he seemed distracted. Accordingly, the variety of emotions of God included that he was hungry, and sometimes he was thirsty. And since it is

written, They that eat me, shall yet hunger and they that drink me shall yet thirst, how much more she felt the Lord, the more the desire grew: distressed over whether she were drawn towards Him or away; she cried and begged that she be allowed to remain with Him, and not to leave in the arms of embracing as it were, drawing, and as that he no longer with tears besought him to show Himself.

Sometimes, however, for three days or more, as she thought about the same drawing forth and the abiding between the breasts; He came as a child, and Himself, quietly lest he might be seen by others, hidden from them. Sometimes it is with him, as if, he were a boy, and sometimes gentle as a lamb according to the lap, and sometimes as a dove, to the comfort of his own daughter. And the pious bride herself pointed out that the Son of the Virgin came sometimes like a battering-ram, having a bright star on the forehead, around the church and the faithful (as she thought) when He visited. For just as the doubts about the Lord occurred among the disciples, He also showed himself under the guise of pilgrims . . . so he is pleased to show his friends for the solace of a friendly appearance, as witnesses. . . .When He came, she saw him as a child, lying in a manger. In the various feasts of the Lord, as it were, made like to a solemnity of his own. He showed himself to her as in the Nativity, almost a boy in the cradle or the breasts of the sucklings, infants of the Virgin Mother, and then as the servant to her, as if they were affected according to the distinct manifestation of the various affections of having one another in each years renewed festivities. On the feast of the blessed Virgin



of the Purification, she saw the Virgin's son as offered in the temple, Simeon watching between his arms and the recipient. And in this vision, she exulted for joy, no less than if she had been present when this happened in the temple . . . But at some time, the passion of the Lord appeared to her on the Cross, but rarely, because she could scarcely bear it. When approaching a great feast, sometimes eight days before the joy of it she felt, and so the whole course of the year in many ways changed, and was wonderfully affected."

*James of Vitry, Rough translation from the Latin*

# St. Bridget of Sweden



## "1. Early Mystical Experiences

Even as a young girl Bridget received extraordinary graces, including at least one apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary when she was six years old and one of Jesus Christ. The latter, when Bridget was ten years old, involved the vision of Christ with freshly received wounds over his whole body. Jesus said to her, "See how I have been wounded!" "Oh, my Lord!" Bridget cried out, terribly shaken by what she was seeing, "who has done this to you?" Christ answered her: "Those who despise me and forget My love."

This profound mystical experience became indelibly marked in Bridget's memory and in her heart, and in the years ahead she would never forget the love of Christ, especially in his redemptive sufferings.

## 2. The Voice of God

Bridget later married and had eight children. Soon after the death of her husband Ulf, she heard the voice of God speaking to her from a bright cloud, inviting her to become Christ's bride as well as a specially chosen instrument of divine revelation to the world. It was from this moment in 1344 that her life became one of unwavering service as a medium of God's word and inspired messenger of his justice and mercy. These divine messages included calls to repentance and reform and prophetic admonitions, including warnings of temporal and eternal punishment for those who spurn God's laws, especially those in positions of power and influence in the Church and in society. St Bridget also received

revelations concerning the life, sufferings and glories of Jesus and Mary, and numerous other matters. But the revelations concerning God's call to repentance and personal and ecclesial reform take on a special relevance today, when the Church is experiencing a crisis of widespread apostasy in many ways similar to that which the Revelations of St Bridget addressed. In fact, in reading some of the revelations which describe the sad moral state of the Church and society in her time, one is tempted to think they were written more for our time than any other."

*Revelations of St. Bridget*

"You will be my bride and my vessel; you will hear and see spiritual things and secrets; and my spirit will stay with you until you die."

*Jesus Speaking to St. Bridget*

# St. Agnes



“We learn from St. Ambrose and St. Augustine that she was only thirteen years of age at the time of her glorious death. Her riches and beauty excited the young noblemen of the first families in Rome to contend as rivals for her hand. Agnes answered them all that she had consecrated her virginity to a heavenly husband who could be beheld by mortal eyes. Her suitors, finding her resolution unshakable, accused her to the governor as a Christian, not doubting that threats and torments would prove more effective with one of her tender years on whom allurements could make no impression. The judge at first employed the mildest expressions and most seductive promises, to which Agnes paid no regard, repeating always that she could have no other spouse but Jesus Christ. He then made use of threats, but found her endowed with a masculine courage, and even eager to suffer torment and death . . . She was then dragged before the idols and commanded to offer incense, but could, St. Ambrose tells us, by no means be compelled to move her hands except to make the sign of the cross . . .

In the midst of the idolatrous rites she raised her hands to Christ, her Spouse, and made the sign of the life-giving cross. She did not shrink when she was bound hand and foot, though the gyves slipped from her young hands, and the heathens who stood around were moved to tears. The bonds were not needed for her, and she hastened gladly to the place of her torture. Next, when the judge saw that pain had no terrors for her, he inflicted an insult worse than death:

her clothes were stripped off, and she had to stand in the street before a pagan crowd; yet even this did not daunt her. "Christ," she said, "will guard His own." So it was. Christ showed, by a miracle, the value which He sets upon the custody of the eyes. Whilst the crowd turned away their eyes from the spouse of Christ, as she stood exposed to view in the street, there was one young man who dared to gaze at the innocent child with immodest eyes. A flash of light struck him blind, and his companions bore him away half dead with pain and terror.

Lastly, her fidelity to Christ was proved by flattery and offers of marriage. But she answered, "Christ is my Spouse: He chose me first, and His I will be." At length the sentence of death was passed. For a moment she stood erect in prayer, and then bowed her neck to the sword. At one stroke her head was severed from her body, and the angels bore her pure soul to Paradise."

*Butler's Lives of the Saints*

# St. Dominic





"The miraculous way in which the devotion to the holy Rosary was established is something of a parallel to the way in which God gave his law to the world on Mount Sinai, and it obviously proves its value and importance.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructed by the Blessed Virgin as well as by his own experience, Saint Dominic preached the Rosary for the rest of his life. He preached it by his example as well as by his sermons, in cities and in country places, to people of high station and low, before scholars and the uneducated, to Catholics and to heretics.

The Rosary, which he said every day, was his preparation for every sermon and his little tryst with our Lady immediately after preaching.

One day he had to preach at Notre Dame in Paris, and it happened to be the feast of St. John the Evangelist. He was in a little chapel behind the high altar prayerfully preparing his sermon by saying the Rosary, as he always did, when our Lady appeared to him and said: "Dominic, even though what you have planned to say may be very good, I am bringing you a much better sermon."

Saint Dominic took in his hands the book our Lady proffered, read the sermon carefully and, when he had understood it and meditated on it, he gave thanks to her.

When the time came, he went up into the pulpit and, in spite of the feast day, made no mention of Saint John other than to say that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. The congregation was made up of theologians and other eminent people, who were used to hearing unusual and polished discourses; but Saint Dominic told them that it was not his desire to give them a learned discourse, wise in the eyes of the world, but that he would speak in the simplicity of the Holy Spirit and with his forcefulness.

So he began preaching the Rosary and explained the Hail Mary word by word as he would to a group of children, and used the very simple illustrations which were in the book given him by our Lady.

Carthagera, the great scholar, quoting Blessed Alan de la Roche in *De Dignitate Psalterii*, describes how this took place.

"Blessed Alan writes that one day Father Dominic said to him in a vision, 'My son, it is good to preach; but there is always a danger of looking for praise rather than the salvation of souls. Listen carefully to what happened to me in Paris, so that you may be on your guard against this kind of mistake. I was to preach in the great church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and I was particularly anxious to give a fine sermon, not out of pride, but because of the high intellectual stature of the congregation.

"An hour before the time I had to preach, I was dutifully saying my Rosary - as I always did before

giving a sermon - when I fell into ecstasy. I saw my beloved friend, the Mother of God, coming towards me with a book in her hand. "Dominic," she said, "your sermon for today may be very good indeed, but no matter how good it is, I have brought you one that is very much better."

"Of course I was overjoyed, and I took the book and read every word of it. Just as our Lady had said, I found exactly the right things to say in my sermon, so I thanked her with all my heart.

"When it was time to begin, I saw that the University of Paris had turned out in full force, as well as a large number of noblemen. They had all seen and heard of the great things that the good Lord had been doing through me.

"I went up into the pulpit. It was the feast of Saint John the Evangelist but all I said about him was that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. Then I addressed the congregation:

"My Lords and illustrious doctors of the University, you are accustomed to hearing learned sermons suited to your refined tastes. Now I do not want to speak to you in the scholarly language of human wisdom but, on the contrary, to show you the Spirit of God and his greatness."

Here ends the quotation from Blessed Alan, after which Carthagera goes on to say in his own words, "Then Saint Dominic explained the Angelic Salutation

to them, using simple comparisons and examples from everyday life."

Blessed Alan, according to Carthagena, mentioned several other occasions when our Lord and our Lady appeared to Saint Dominic to urge him and inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more in order to wipe out sin and convert sinners and heretics.

In another passage Carthagena says, "Blessed Alan said our Lady revealed to him that, after she had appeared to Saint Dominic, her blessed Son appeared to him and said, 'Dominic, I rejoice to see that you are not relying on your own wisdom and that, rather than seek the empty praise of men, you are working with great humility for the salvation of souls.

"But many priests want to preach thunderously against the worst kinds of sin at the very outset, failing to realize that before a sick person is given bitter medicine, he needs to be prepared by being put into the right frame of mind to really benefit by it.

"That is why, before doing anything else, priests should try to kindle a love of prayer in people's hearts and especially a love of my Angelic Psalter. If only they would all start saying it and would really persevere, God in his mercy could hardly refuse to give them his grace. So I want you to preach my Rosary."

In another place Blessed Alan says, "All priests say a Hail Mary with the faithful before preaching, to ask for God's grace.' They do this because of a revelation

that Saint Dominic had from our Lady. 'My son,' she said one day, 'do not be surprised that your sermons fail to bear the results you had hoped for. You are trying to cultivate a piece of ground which has not had any rain. Now when God planned to renew the face of the earth, he started by sending down rain from heaven - and this was the Angelic Salutation. In this way God reformed the world.

"So when you give a sermon, urge people to say my Rosary, and in this way your words will bear much fruit for souls.'

"Saint Dominic lost no time in obeying, and from then on he exerted great influence by his sermons." (This last quotation is from "The Book of Miracles of the Holy Rosary," written in Italian, also found in Justin's works, Sermon 143.)

I have been very pleased to quote these well-known authors word for word for the benefit of those who might otherwise have doubts as to the marvellous power of the Rosary.

As long as priests followed Saint Dominic's example and preached devotion to the holy Rosary, piety and fervour thrived throughout the Christian world and in those religious orders which were devoted to the Rosary. But since people have neglected this gift from heaven, all kinds of sin and disorder have spread far and wide."

*St. Dominic*

# Blessed Alan de la Roche



## ST. DOMINIC

"Later on, when these trials were over, thanks to the mercy of God, our Lady told Blessed Alan to revive the former Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Blessed Alan was one of the Dominican Fathers at the monastery at Dinan, in Brittany. He was an eminent theologian and a famous preacher. Our Lady chose him because, since the Confraternity had originally been started in that province, it was fitting that a Dominican from the same province should have the honour of re-establishing it.

Blessed Alan began this great work in 1460, after a special warning from our Lord. This is how he received that urgent message, as he himself tells it:

One day when he was offering Mass, our Lord, who wished to spur him on to preach the holy Rosary, spoke to him in the Sacred Host. "How can you crucify me again so soon?" Jesus said. "What did you say, Lord?" asked Blessed Alan, horrified. "You crucified me once before by your sins," answered Jesus, "and I would willingly be crucified again rather than have my Father offended by the sins you used to commit. You are crucifying me again now because you have all the learning and understanding that you need to preach my Mother's Rosary, and you are not doing it. If you only did that, you could teach many souls the right path and lead them away from sin. But you are not doing it, and so you yourself are guilty of the sins that they commit."

This terrible reproach made Blessed Alan solemnly resolve to preach the Rosary unceasingly.

Our Lady also said to him one day to inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more, "You were a great sinner in your youth, but I obtained the grace of your conversion from my Son. Had such a thing been possible, I would have liked to have gone through all kinds of suffering to save you, because converted sinners are a glory to me. And I would have done that also to make you worthy of preaching my Rosary far and wide."

Saint Dominic appeared to Blessed Alan as well and told him of the great results of his ministry: he had preached the Rosary unceasingly, his sermons had borne great fruit and many people had been converted during his missions.

He said to Blessed Alan, "See what wonderful results I have had through preaching the Rosary. You and all who love our Lady ought to do the same so that, by means of this holy practice of the Rosary, you may draw all people to the real science of the virtues."

Briefly, then, this is the history of how Saint Dominic established the holy Rosary and of how Blessed Alan de la Roche restored it."

*Blessed Alan de La Roche*



# St. Louis De Montfort



## THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

### I

“The Cross in mystery  
Is veiled for us below;  
Without great light to see,  
Who shall its splendor know?  
Alone the lofty mind  
Shall this high secret trace;  
And none shall heaven find  
Who grasps it not by grace.

### II

Nature the Cross abhors;  
Reason gives it a frown;  
The learned man ignores It.  
Satan tears it down.  
Despite a pious art,  
Even the fervent soul  
Oft takes it not to heart,  
But plays the liar's role.

### III

Essential is the Tree,  
And we who know its cost  
Must mount to Calvary  
Or languish and be lost.  
As Saint Augustine states  
With outcry ominous,  
We all are reprobates  
Unless God chastens us.

### IV

Its Necessity

One road to Heaven runs:

The highway of the Cross.  
 It was the royal Son's,  
 His road to life from loss.  
 And every stone of it  
 That guides the pilgrim's feet  
 Is chiseled fair to fit  
 In Zion's holy street.

## V

Vain is the victory  
 Of him who, conquering  
 The world, lacks mastery  
 Of self through suffering;  
 Vain if he has not Christ,  
 Slain Christ, for exemplar,  
 Or spurns the Sacrificed  
 For dread of wound and scar.

## VI

## Its Victories

Christ's Cross, restraining Hell,  
 Has conquered Eden's curse,  
 Stormed Satan's citadel,  
 And won the universe.  
 Now to His faithful band  
 He gives that weapon bright  
 To arm both heart and hand  
 Against the evil sprite.

## VII

In this auspicious Sign  
 Thou shalt be conqueror,  
 Said He to Constantine,  
 Who that proud Standard bore;  
 A glorious augury,  
 Of whose prodigious worth

The records all agree  
In Heaven and on earth!

VIII  
Its Glory and Merit

Despite deceitful sense  
And reason's fickle shift,  
The Cross with confidence  
We take as Truth's own gift.  
A princess there we see  
In whom, let faith confess,  
We find all charity,  
Grace, wisdom, holiness.

IX  
God's love could not resist  
Such beauty or its plea,  
Which bade Him keep a tryst  
With our humanity.  
Coming to earth, He said:  
This, Lord, and nothing more:  
Thy saving Cross imbed  
Here in My bosom's core.

X  
He took it, found it fair,  
An object not of shame  
But honor, made it share  
His love's most tender flame.  
From childhood's morning hour  
His longing kept in sight  
As beauty would a flower  
The Cross of His delight.

XI  
At last in its caress

Long sought for eagerly,  
 He died of tenderness  
 And love's totality.  
 That dear supreme baptism  
 For which His heart had cried,  
 The Cross became His chrisom,  
 Love's object undenied.

## XII

Christ called the Fisherman  
 A Satan scandalous  
 When he but winced to scan  
 What Christ would bear for us.  
 Christ's Cross we may adore,  
 His Mother we may not.  
 O mystery and more!  
 a marvel beyond thought!

## XIII

This Cross, now scattered wide  
 On earth, shall one day rise  
 Transported, glorified,  
 To the celestial skies.  
 Upon a cloudy height  
 The Cross, full-brillianted,  
 Shall, by its very sight,  
 Judge both the quick and dead.

## XIV

Revenge, the Cross will cry  
 Against its sullen foes;  
 Pardon and joy on high  
 And blessedness for those  
 Of proved fidelity  
 In the immortal throng,  
 Singing its victory  
 With universal song.

## XV

In life the Saints aspired  
 To nothing but the Cross;  
 'Twas all that they desired,  
 Counting all else but loss.  
 Each one, in discontent  
 With such afflictions sore  
 As chastening Heaven sent,  
 Condemned himself to more.

## XVI

St. Peter, prison-chained,  
 Had greater glory there  
 Than when at Rome he gained  
 The first Christ-Vicar's chair.  
 Saint Andrew, faithful, cried:  
 O good Cross, let me yield  
 To thee and in thee hide,  
 Where death in Life is sealed.

## XVII

See how the great St. Paul  
 Depicts with meagre gloss  
 His rapture mystical,  
 But glories in the Cross.  
 More admirable far,  
 More merit-rich is he,  
 Behind his dungeon bar  
 Than in his ecstasy.

## XVIII

## Its Effects

Without a Cross, the soul  
 Is cowardly and tame;  
 Like fire to a coal

The Cross sets it aflame.  
 One who has suffered not,  
   In ignorance is bound;  
   Only in pain's hard lot  
   Is holy wisdom found.

## XIX

A soul untried is poor  
 In value; new, untrained,  
   With destiny unsure  
 And little wisdom gained.  
   O sweetness sovereign  
   Which the afflicted feels  
 When pleased that to his pain  
   No human solace steals!

## XX

'Tis by the Cross alone  
 God's blessing is conferred,  
 And His forgiveness known  
   In the absolving word.  
 He wants all things to bear  
 The mark of that great seal;  
 Without it, nought is fair  
   To Him, no beauty real.

## XXI

Wherever place is given  
 The Cross, things once profane  
 Become instinct with Heaven  
   And shed away their stain.  
 On breast and brow, God's sign,  
   Worn proudly for His sake,  
 Will bless with Power Divine  
   Each task we undertake.

## XXII

It is our surety,  
 Our one protection,  
 Our hope's white purity,  
 Our soul's perfection.  
 So precious is its worth  
 That Angels fain would bring  
 The blest soul back to earth  
 To share our suffering.

## XXIII

This Sign has such a charm  
 That at the altar-stone  
 The priest can God disarm  
 And draw Him from His throne.  
 Over the sacred Host  
 This mighty Sign he plays,  
 Signals the Holy Ghost,  
 And the Divine obeys.

## XXIV

With this adorable Sign  
 A fragrance is diffused  
 Most exquisite and fine,  
 A perfume rarely used.  
 The consecrated priest  
 Makes Him this offering  
 As incense from the East,  
 Meet crown for Heaven's King.

## XXV

Eternal Wisdom still  
 Sifts our poor human dross  
 For one whose heart and will  
 Is worthy of the Cross,  
 Still seeks one spirit rare  
 Whose every pulse and breath  
 Is fortitude to bear



The Christ-Cross until death.

Ardent Apostrophe

XXVI

O Cross, let me be hushed;  
 In speech I thee abase.  
 Let my presumption, crushed,  
 Its insolence erase.  
 Since thee I have received  
 Imperfectly, in part,  
 Forgive me, friend aggrieved,  
 For my unwilling heart!

XXVII

Dear Cross, here in this hour,  
 I bow to thee in awe.  
 Abide with me in power  
 And teach me all thy law.  
 My princess, let me glow  
 With ardor in thine arms;  
 Grant me to chastely know  
 The secret of thy charms.

XXVIII.

In seeing thee so fair,  
 I hunger to possess  
 Thy beauty, but I dare  
 Not in my faithlessness.  
 Come, mistress, by thy will  
 Arouse my feeble soul  
 And I will give thee still  
 A heart renewed and whole.

XXIX

For life I choose thee now,  
 My pleasure, honor, friend,

Sole object of my vow,  
 Sole joy to which I tend.  
 For mercy's sake, print, trace  
 Yourself upon my heart,  
 My arm, my forehead, face;  
 And not one blush will start.

## XXX

Above all I possess  
 I choose thy poverty;  
 And for my tenderness  
 Thy sweet austerity.  
 Now be thy folly wise  
 And all thy holy shame  
 As grandeur in my eyes,  
 My glory and my fame.

## XXXI

When, by your majesty,  
 And for your glory's sake,  
 You shall have vanquished me,  
 That conquest I shall take  
 As final victory,  
 Though worthy not to fall  
 Beneath thy blows, or be  
 A mockery to all."

English Rendition by Clifford J. Laube, Litt.D.

*St. Louis de Montfort*

TRUE DEVOTION: POEM TO DIVINE WISDOM

"Divine Wisdom, I love Thee unto folly.  
 I am Thy lover.  
 Thou alone in this world I seek,

Thou alone I desire.  
 I am a man gone mad with love,  
 Forever chasing Thee.  
 Tell me who Thou art,  
 For I am half blind.  
 I can discern only  
 That Thou art a secret I must fathom.  
 Show Thyself fully to my soul  
 Which dies for love of Thee.  
 Where dost Thou live,  
 Wisdom Divine?  
 Must I cross continents or seas  
 To find Thee,  
 Or fly across the skies?  
 I am ready to go wherever Thou art,  
 Not counting the costs, to possess Thee."

*St. Louis de Montfort*

## TRUE DEVOTION TO GOD THROUGH MARY

### **"With Mary**

260. We must do everything with Mary, that is to say, in all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows. In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place. For this reason, we must examine and meditate on the great virtues she practised during her life, especially:

1) Her lively faith, by which she believed the angel's word without the least hesitation, and believed faithfully and constantly even to the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

2) Her deep humility, which made her prefer seclusion, maintain silence, submit to every eventuality and put herself in the last place.

3) Her truly divine purity, which never had and never will have its equal on this side of heaven.

And so on for her other virtues.

Remember what I told you before, that Mary is the great, unique mould of God, designed to make living images of God at little expense and in a short time. Anyone who finds this mould and casts himself into it, is soon transformed into our Lord because it is the true likeness of him.

## **In Mary**

261. We must do everything in Mary. To understand this we must realise that the Blessed Virgin is the true earthly paradise of the new Adam and that the ancient paradise was only a symbol of her. There are in this earthly paradise untold riches, beauties, rarities and delights, which the new Adam, Jesus Christ, has left there. It is in this paradise that he "took his delights" for nine months, worked his wonders and displayed his riches with the magnificence of God himself. This most holy place consists of only virgin and immaculate soil from which the new

Adam was formed with neither spot nor stain by the operation of the Holy Spirit who dwells there. In this earthly paradise grows the real Tree of Life which bore our Lord, the fruit of Life, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which bore the Light of the world.

In this divine place there are trees planted by the hand of God and watered by his divine unction which have borne and continue to bear fruit that is pleasing to him. There are flower-beds studded with a variety of beautiful flowers of virtue, diffusing a fragrance which delights even the angels. Here there are meadows verdant with hope, impregnable towers of fortitude, enchanting mansions of confidence and many other delights.

Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the truths that these material objects symbolise. In this place the air is perfectly pure. There is no night but only the brilliant day of the sacred humanity, the resplendent, spotless sun of the Divinity, the blazing furnace of love, melting all the base metal thrown into it and changing it into gold. There the river of humility gushes forth from the soil, divides into four branches and irrigates the whole of this enchanted place. These branches are the four cardinal virtues.

262. The Holy Spirit speaking through the Fathers of the Church, also calls our Lady the Eastern Gate, through which the High Priest, Jesus Christ, enters and goes out into the world. Through this gate he entered the world the first time and through this same gate he will come the second time.

The Holy Spirit also calls her the Sanctuary of the Divinity, the Resting-Place of the Holy Spirit, the Throne of God, the City of God, the Altar of God, the Temple of God, the World of God. All these titles and expressions of praise are very real when related to the different wonders the Almighty worked in her and the graces which he bestowed on her. What wealth and what glory! What a joy and a privilege for us to enter and dwell in Mary, in whom almighty God has set up the throne of his supreme glory!

263. But how difficult it is for us to have the freedom, the ability and the light to enter such an exalted and holy place. This place is guarded not by a cherub, like the first earthly paradise, but by the Holy Spirit himself who has become its absolute Master. Referring to her, he says: "You are an enclosed garden, my sister, my bride, an enclosed garden and a sealed fountain." Mary is enclosed. Mary is sealed. The unfortunate children of Adam and Eve driven from the earthly paradise, can enter this new paradise only by a special grace of the Holy Spirit which they have to merit.

264. When we have obtained this remarkable grace by our fidelity, we should be delighted to remain in Mary. We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that within her virginal bosom:

**1)** We may be nourished with the milk of her grace and her motherly compassion.

2) We may be delivered from all anxiety, fear and scruples.

3) We may be safeguarded from all our enemies, the devil, the world and sin which have never gained admittance there. That is why our Lady says that those who work in her will not sin, that is, those who dwell spiritually in our Lady will never commit serious sin.

4) We may be formed in our Lord and our Lord formed in us, because her womb is, as the early Fathers call it, the house of the divine secrets where Jesus and all the elect have been conceived. "This one and that one were born in her."

### **For Mary**

265. Finally, we must do everything for Mary. Since we have given ourselves completely to her service, it is only right that we should do everything for her as if we were her personal servant and slave. This does not mean that we take her for the ultimate end of our service for Jesus alone is our ultimate end. But we take Mary for our proximate end, our mysterious intermediary and the easiest way of reaching him.

Like every good servant and slave we must not remain idle, but, relying on her protection, we should undertake and carry out great things for our noble Queen. We must defend her privileges when they are questioned and uphold her good name when it is under attack. We must attract everyone, if possible, to her service and to this true and sound devotion. We

must speak up and denounce those who distort devotion to her by outraging her Son, and at the same time we must apply ourselves to spreading this true devotion. As a reward for these little services, we should expect nothing in return save the honour of belonging to such a lovable Queen and the joy of being united through her to Jesus, her Son, by a bond that is indissoluble in time and in eternity. Glory to Jesus in Mary! Glory to Mary in Jesus! Glory to God alone!”

*St. Louis de Montfort*



# St. Herman-Joseph of Steinfeld



“As a little boy he would enter a church and converse with the denizens of Heaven. As a little boy he would enter a church and converse familiarly with Our Lady and the Holy Child, as he knelt before their statue. Once, indeed, when he offered them an apple he had the joy of seeing the hand of the Madonna extended to accept it. Sometimes he was uplifted to another plane and permitted to play with the Infant Saviour and the angels; and on one bitter winter’s day when he came to church barefoot, his parents being very poor, a kindly voice, which he took to be that of the Mother of Mercy, bade him look under a stone near by and he would find money wherewith to buy shoes. He looked and the coins were there!

At the age of twelve, Herman offered himself to the Premonstratensian monastery of Steinfeld, but as he was far too young to receive the habit he was sent on to one of the order’s houses in Friesland to study. There he profited by the general education that was imparted, though he deplored the time spent over profane literature: all study seemed to him unprofitable if it did not lead to the knowledge of God. His schooling completed, he returned to Steinfeld, where he was professed and afterwards set to serve the brethren in the refectory. His duties were exactly performed, but he was perturbed to find that they left him very little leisure for prayer. He was reassured by a vision in which our Lady told him that he could do nothing more pleasing to God than to wait upon others in charity. Afterwards he was promoted to be sacristan, an office after his own heart, because he was able to spend the greater part of the day in church. His life was so blameless and his

innocence so candid that he was jestingly called "Joseph" - a nickname he modestly disclaimed until it was confirmed by a vision in which, in the character of an earthly Joseph, he was mystically espoused by our Lady with a ring. This the scene which Van Dyck has painted in a celebrated picture. It is not known at what date Herman received ordination, but the offering of the Holy Sacrifice was to him a time of extraordinary exaltation. Often he would be rapt in ecstasy, and would remain so long in that condition that it came to be increasingly difficult to find anyone who was willing to act as his server. Nevertheless he gained the love of his brethren for his eagerness to do kindnesses to others."

*Butler's Lives of the Saints*

# St. John Eudes



St. John Eudes, known primarily for his work in helping prostitutes amend their lives and find suitable means of sustaining their living, wrote what he called a "Contract of Holy Marriage with the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God," and from this time forward wore a ring to symbolize this marriage. He also was the first Saint to address the need for a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The divine revelation for those devotions came one year after his beatification to St. Margaret Mary in 1675 A.D.

CONTRACT OF HOLY MARRIAGE WITH THE  
MOST HOLY BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE  
MOTHER OF GOD

"O admirable and most loveable Mary, Mother of God, only Daughter of the eternal Father, Mother of the Son of God, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Queen of heaven and earth, it is no wonder that thou art willing to be the spouse of the least of all men and greatest of all sinners, who had the boldness to choose thee from his tenderest years to be his most unparalleled spouse, and to consecrate his body, heart and soul wholly to thee. The truth is that thou dost wish to imitate the infinite goodness of thy Son Jesus who is willing to be the spouse of a sinful and wretched soul. May all the angels, saints, creatures and the Creator Himself praise and bless thee eternally for it, and atone for all my countless acts of ingratitude and infidelity toward thee"

*St. John Eudes*

# St. Robert of Molesme



St. Robert of Molesme, originally a Benedictine, is one of the founders of the Cistercian Order. Little is known of the specifics of his mystical marriage with the Blessed Virgin Mary except for the beautiful depiction of the apparition wherein the Blessed Mother placed a ring upon his finger found in a painting at San Bernardo alle Terme in Rome.



# St. Edmund Rich

Archbishop of Canterbury



St. Edmund Rich's mystical marriage commenced when he took a vow of perpetual virginity in front a statue of the Blessed Virgin, At the time, he also placed a ring engraved with the words 'Ave Maria' upon the fingers of the statue.



# Jacob Boehme



“The inward world abides in the eternal speaking Word. The eternal Word speaks it into Being through Wisdom, out of its own powers, colours, and virtue, as a great mystery from eternity. This Being is a breathing from the Word in the Wisdom; it has the

power of generation in itself, and introduces itself into forms, after the manner of the generation of the eternal Word, or, as I might say, out of the Wisdom in the Word.

Therefore there is nothing nigh unto or far off from God; one world is in the other and all are one as soul and body are in each other, and time and eternity. The eternal speaking Word rules through and over all; it works from eternity to eternity; and though it can neither be apprehended nor conceived, yet its work is conceived, for this is the formed Word, of which the working Word is the life.

The eternal speaking Word is the divine understanding or *sound*. That which is brought forth from the love-desire into forms, that, I say, is the natural and creaturely understanding and sound which was in the Word; as it is said, In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The harmony of hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, and smelling, is the true intellectual life. When one power enters into another, then they embrace each other in the sound; and when they are become one they mutually awaken and know each other. In this knowledge consists the true understanding, which, according to the nature of the eternal wisdom, is immeasurable and abyssal, being of the One which is All.

Therefore one only will, if it has divine light in it, may draw from this fountain and behold infinity. From which contemplation this pen has wrote.

In the light of God (which is called the kingdom of heaven) the sound is wholly soft, pleasant, lovely and pure; yea, as a stillness in comparison with our outward gross speaking and sounding. It is as if the mind did play and melodize in a kingdom of joy within itself, and did then hear in a most entire inward manner a sweet, pleasing melody and tune; and yet outwardly did neither hear nor understand it. For in the divine light all is subtle, in manner as the thoughts play and make mutual melody in one another.

And yet there is a real, intelligible, distinct sound and speech used by the angels, according to their own property, in the kingdom of glory. The powers of the formed and manifested Word, in their love-desire, do introduce themselves, according to the property of all the powers, into an external being, where, as in a mansion, they may act their love-play, and so have somewhat wherewith and wherein mutually to play and melodize one with another, in their wrestling sport of love.

God, who is a Spirit, has by and through his manifestation introduced himself into distinct spirits, which are the voices of his eternal pregnant harmony in the manifested Word of his great kingdom of joy: they are God's instrument, in which his Spirit melodizes in his kingdom of joy; they are angels, the flames of fire and light, in a living, understanding dominion.

We are not to think that the holy angels dwell only above the stars beyond the place of this world, as the

outward reason, which knows nothing of God, fancies. Indeed they dwell beyond the dominion of this world, but the place of this world (although there is no place in eternity), and also the place beyond this world, is all one to them. We men see not the angels or the devils with our eyes; yet they are about us and among us. The evil and the good angels dwell near one another, and yet there is the greatest immense distance between them. For heaven is in hell and hell is in heaven, and yet the one is not manifest to the other. Although the Devil should go many millions of miles, desiring to enter heaven and to see it, yet he would still be in hell and not see it.

If evil was not known, joy would not be manifest. But if joy be manifest, then is the eternal Word spoken in joy, to which end the Word, with nature, has brought itself into a creation. Whosoever rightly sees and understands this has no further question about any thing, for he sees that he lives and subsists in God, and that he may further know and will through him and speak what and how he will. Such a man seeks only the estate of lowliness, that God may alone be accounted high.

My will-spirit, which now is in Christ's humanity, lives in Christ's spirit, that shall in his power give sap to the dry tree, that it may arise in the sound of the trumpet of the divine breath in Christ's voice, which is also my voice in his breath, and spring afresh in paradise. Paradise shall be in me; all whatever God has and is shall appear in me as an image of the divine world's being; all colours, powers and virtues of his eternal Wisdom shall be manifest in me, as in

his likeness. I shall be the manifestation of the divine and spiritual world and an instrument of God's Spirit, wherein he makes melody with himself, with this voice which I myself am. I shall be his instrument, an organ of his expressed Word and Voice; and not only I, but all my fellow-members in the glorious choir and instrument of God. We are all strings in the concert of his joy; the spirit from his mouth strikes the note and tune of our strings."

*Jacob Boehme*

# St. Barbara

Martyr



“Then St. Barbara, the handmaid of the Lord Jesus Christ, descended from the tower for to come to see [a bath-house which her father was having built] and anon she perceived that there were but two windows only, that one against the south, and that other against the north, whereof she was much abashed and amarvelled, and demanded of the workmen why they had not made no more windows, and they answered that her father had so commanded and ordained. Then St. Barbara said to them: ‘Make me here another window.’ . . . In this certain space of time, taking only

for her refection honeysuckles and locusts, following the holy precursor of our Lord, St. John Baptist. This bath-house is like to the fountain of Siloe, in which he that was born blind recovered there his sight . . . On a time this blessed maid went upon the tower and there she beheld the idols to which her father sacrificed and worshipped, and suddenly she received the Holy Ghost and became marvelously subtle and clear in the love Jesu Christ, for she was environed with the grace of God Almighty, of sovereign glory and pure chastity. This holy maid Barbara, adorned with faith, surmounted the Devil, for when she beheld the idols she scratched them in their visages, despising them all and saying: 'All they be made like unto you which have made you to err, and all them that have faith in you;' and then she went into the tower and worshipped our Lord.

And when the work was full performed her father returned from his voyage, and when he saw there three windows he demanded of the workmen: 'Wherefore have ye made three windows?' And they answered: 'Your daughter hath commanded so.' Then he made his daughter to come afore him and demanded her why she had to make three windows, and she answered to him and said: 'I have done them to be made because three windows lighten all the world and all creatures, but two make darkness.' Then her father took her and went down into the bath-house, demanding her how three windows give more light than two. And St. Barbara answered: 'These three windows betoken clearly the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the which be three persons and one very God, on whom we ought to believe and

worship.' Then he, being replenished with fury, incontinent drew his sword to have slain her, but the holy virgin made her prayer and then marvelously she was taken in a stone and borne into a mountain on which two shepherds kept their sheep, the which saw her fly . . . And then her father took her by the hair and drew her down from the mountain and shut her fast in prison . . . Then sat the judge in judgement, and when he saw the great beauty of Barbara he said to her: 'Now choose whether ye will spare yourself and offer to the gods, or else die by cruel torments.' St. Barbara answered to him: 'I offer myself to God, Jesu Christ, the which hath created Heaven and earth and all other things . . .'

When she had been beaten, and comforted by a vision of our Lord in her prison, and again scourged and tortured, the judge commanded to slay her with the sword. And then her father, all enraged, took her out of the hands of the judge and led her up on a mountain, and St. Barbara rejoiced in hastening to receive the salary of her victory. And then when she was drawn thither she made her orison saying: 'Lord Jesu Christ, which hast formed Heaven and earth, I beseech thee to grant me the grace and hear my prayer for all they that have memory of thy name and my passion; I pray that thou wilt not remember their sins, for thou knowest our fragility.' Then came there a voice down from Heaven saying unto her: 'Come, my Spouse, Barbara, and rest in the chamber of God my Father which is in heaven, and I grant to thee that thou hast required of me.' And when this was said, she came to her father and received the end of her martyrdom . . . But when her father descended from



the mountain, a fire from Heaven descended on him, and consumed him in such wise that there could not be found only ashes of all his body."

*Butler's Lives of the Saints*

# Angelus Silesius



"What has been said of God  
Does not suffice, I claim.  
The Over-Godhead is  
My life, my light, my aim.

God is my final end;  
 Does he from me evolve,  
 Then he grows out of me,  
 While I in Him dissolve.  
 God loves me more than Him;  
 Than me I love God more.  
 So He gives me as much  
 As I to Him restore.  
 In Spirit senses are  
 One and the same. 'T is true,  
 Who seeth God he tastes,  
 Feels, smells and hears Him too.  
 In God nought e'er is known,  
 Forever one is He.  
 What we in Him e'er know,  
 Ourselves must grow and be.  
 God never did exist  
 Nor ever will, yet aye  
 He was ere worlds began, and  
 When they're gone he'll stay.  
 God Father is a point,  
 God Son the circuit line,  
 And God the Ghost does both  
 As area combine.  
 God is all virtue's end,  
 Its mainspring He's likewise.  
 He too is virtue's cause,  
 He eke is virtue's prize.  
 Thou needst not cry to God,  
 The spring wells up in thee.  
 Don't stop its fountain head:  
 It flows eternally.  
 Who without God as well

As with Him e'er can be,  
 He is at any rate  
 A hero verily.  
 Abandon winneth God.  
 But to abandon God  
 Is an abandonment  
 Which must seem very odd.

Eternity is time  
 And time eternity,  
 Except when we ourselves.  
 Would make them different be.  
 Things in eternity  
 Are all at once in prime,  
 No after nor before  
 Is there, as here in time.  
 Who would expect it so?  
 From darkness light is brought,  
 Life rises out of Death, and  
 Something comes from Naught.  
 Two eyes our souls possess:  
 While one is turned on time,  
 The other seeth things  
 Eternal and sublime.  
 My heart below is strait,  
 On top 't is wide and stout.  
 It must have room for God.  
 But earthly things keep out.  
 O Christian once thou must  
 Down into Hell be led.  
 If not while still in life,  
 Thou must go down when dead.  
 Trust me, my friend, if God

Should bid me not to dwell  
 In heaven, I'd stay here  
 Or go, as lief, to Hell.  
 When quitting time, I am  
 Myself eternity.  
 I shall be one with God,  
 God one with me shall be.  
 What did eternal God  
 Before time had begun?  
 He loved Himself and thus  
 Begot He God, the Son.  
 What you for others wish,  
 You for yourself suggest.  
 If you don't wish them well,  
 Your own death you request.  
 A soul redeemed and blessed  
 No more knows otherhood.  
 It is with God one light  
 And one beatitude.  
 In Heaven life is good:  
 No-one has aught alone.  
 What one possesses, there  
 All others too will own.  
 Plurality God loathes,  
 Therefore He has decreed  
 That all men should in Christ  
 Be only one indeed.  
 Beware man of thyself,  
 Self's burden thou wilt rue.  
 It will impair thee more,  
 Than thousand devils do.  
 Three enemies has man:  
 Himself, Satan, the world;

The first will be the last  
 That to the ground is hurled.  
 Were e'en in Christ himself,  
 Some little will at all,  
 However blessed he be,  
 Surely from grace he'd fall.  
 The highest worship is  
 Like unto God to grow,  
 Christlike to be in life,  
 In habit, and love's glow.  
 Like unto Christ is he  
 Who truly loves his foe,  
 For persecutors prays,  
 And renders good for woe.

What shame! The silkworm works  
 And works till he can fly,  
 While you a man remain  
 And still on earth will lie.  
 Pure as the finest gold,  
 As rock so rigid hard  
 And clear as crystal, keep  
 The soul within thy guard.  
 Had Christ a thousand times,  
 Been born in Bethlehem,  
 But not in thee, thy sin  
 Would still thy soul condemn.  
 He who before the Lord  
 With envy comes and hate  
 Will hatred with his prayers  
 And envy impetrate.  
 I say it speeds thee not  
 That Christ rose from the grave,

So long as thou art still  
 To death and sin a slave.  
 Golgotha's cross from sin  
 Can never ransom thee,  
 Unless in thine own soul  
 It should erected be.  
 Man, thou shalt be St. Paul!  
 In thee must be fulfilled  
 What Christ has left undone  
 And where wrath shall be stilled.  
 The resurrection is  
 In spirit done in thee,  
 As soon as thou from all  
 Thy sins hast set thee free.  
 Thou must above thee rise  
 All else leave to God's grace:  
 Then Christ's ascension will  
 Within thy soul take place.  
 If neither love nor pain  
 Will ever touch thy heart,  
 Then only God's in thee,  
 And then in God thou art.  
 Who not with others bides  
 And always lives alone,  
 If he's not God himself,  
 Must into God have grown.  
 Man should not stay a man:  
 His aim should higher be.  
 For God will only gods  
 Accept as company.  
 "Where is my residence?"  
 Where I nor you can stand.  
 "Where is the final end

Where I at last shall land?"  
 'T is where no end is found.  
 "And whither must I press.  
 Above God I must pass.  
 Into the wilderness.  
 Indeed, who of this world  
 Has taken the right view  
 Must be Democritus  
 And Heraclitus too.  
 The saint is rising higher;  
 He's changed to God in God;  
 The sinner downward sinks,  
 Is changed to dirt and clod.  
 To own much is not wealth,  
 For he is rich alone  
 Who losing all he hath  
 Will not his loss bemoan.  
 Thy will 't is makes thee damned,  
 Thy will that makes thee saved;  
 Thy will that sets thee free,  
 Thy will makes thee enslaved.

The nearest way to God  
 Leads through love's open door;  
 The path of knowledge is  
 Too slow for evermore.  
 Love maketh bold; and he  
 Who God, the Lord, will kiss,  
 With love alone should kneel  
 Before His throne of Bliss.  
 Child, be the bride of God,  
 And be thou His alone.  
 Thou shalt His sweetheart be,



As He's thy lover grown.  
 Will pregnant be of God:  
 His spirit verily  
 O'ershadow must my soul  
 To quicken God in me.  
 The angels are in bliss,  
 But better is man's life,  
 For no one of their kind  
 Can ever be God's wife.  
 You ask what manhood is?  
 'T is plainly understood,  
 For in a word it is  
 The Over-angelhood.  
 God kisseth but himself.  
 His spirit is His kiss;  
 The Son 't is who is kissed,  
 The Father who did this.  
 Thou wishest to behold,  
 O Bride, the bridegroom's face;  
 Pass by God and all else,  
 And thou wilt him embrace.  
 The God-enraptured man —  
 One only pain hath he;  
 He can not soon enough  
 With God his Lover be.  
 To bear a child is joy:  
 God's sole bliss is that He  
 Brings forth His only Son  
 From all eternity.  
 God e'en Himself must die  
 That you may live thereby.  
 How can you gain His life  
 Unless like Him you die?

Death is a blessed thing!  
The stronger death chastises,  
The much more glorious is  
The life that therefrom rises.  
Oh ponder well on death!  
Too many things you try!  
Naught can more useful be,  
Than how one means to die.  
Friend it is now enough.  
In case thou more wilt read:  
Thou must the Scriptures be,  
The essence eke, indeed."

*Angelus Silesius*

# Thomas Kempis



## THE INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS

“WHEN Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. When Jesus

does not speak within, all other comfort is empty, but if He says only a word, it brings great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen rise at once from her weeping when Martha said to her: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee"? Happy is the hour when Jesus calls one from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and vain if you desire anything but Him! Is it not a greater loss than losing the whole world? For what, without Jesus, can the world give you? Life without Him is a relentless hell, but living with Him is a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with you, no enemy can harm you.

He who finds Jesus finds a rare treasure, indeed, a good above every good, whereas he who loses Him loses more than the whole world. The man who lives without Jesus is the poorest of the poor, whereas no one is so rich as the man who lives in His grace.

It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and great wisdom to know how to keep Him. Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and calm, and He will remain with you. You may quickly drive Him away and lose His grace, if you turn back to the outside world. And, if you drive Him away and lose Him, to whom will you go and whom will you then seek as a friend? You cannot live well without a friend, and if Jesus be not your friend above all else, you will be very sad and desolate. Thus, you are acting foolishly if you trust or rejoice in any other. Choose the opposition of the whole world

rather than offend Jesus. Of all those who are dear to you, let Him be your special love. Let all things be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for His own sake. Jesus Christ must be loved alone with a special love for He alone, of all friends, is good and faithful. For Him and in Him you must love friends and foes alike, and pray to Him that all may know and love Him.

Never desire special praise or love, for that belongs to God alone Who has no equal. Never wish that anyone's affection be centered in you, nor let yourself be taken up with the love of anyone, but let Jesus be in you and in every good man. Be pure and free within, unentangled with any creature.

You must bring to God a clean and open heart if you wish to attend and see how sweet the Lord is. Truly you will never attain this happiness unless His grace prepares you and draws you on so that you may forsake all things to be united with Him alone.

When the grace of God comes to a man he can do all things, but when it leaves him he becomes poor and weak, abandoned, as it were, to affliction. Yet, in this condition he should not become dejected or despair. On the contrary, he should calmly await the will of God and bear whatever befalls him in praise of Jesus Christ, for after winter comes summer, after night, the day, and after the storm, a great calm."

*Thomas Kempis*

# St. Faustina Kowalska



"7 From the age of seven, I experienced the definite call of God, the grace of a vocation to the religious life. It was in the seventh year of my life that, for the first time, I heard God's voice in my soul; that is, an invitation to a more perfect life. But I was not always obedient to the call of grace. I came across no one who would have explained these things to me.

8 The eighteenth year of my life. An earnest appeal to my parents for permission to enter the convent. My parents' flat refusal. After this refusal, I turned myself over to the vain things of life, paying no attention to the call of grace, although my soul found no satisfaction in any of these things. The incessant call of grace caused me much anguish; I tried, however, to stifle it with amusements. Interiorly, I shunned God, turning with all my heart to creatures. However, God's grace won out in my soul.

9 Once I was at a dance [probably in Lodz] with one of my sisters. While everybody was having a good time, my soul was experiencing deep torments. As I began to dance. I suddenly saw Jesus at my side, Jesus racked with pain, stripped of His clothing, all covered with wounds, who spoke these words to me: How long shall I put up with you and how long will you keep putting Me off? At that moment the charming music stopped, [and] the company I was with vanished from my sight; there remained Jesus and I. I took a seat by my dear sister, pretending to have a headache in order to cover up what took place in my soul. After a while I slipped out unnoticed, leaving my sister and all my companions behind and

made my way to the Cathedral of Saint Stanislaus Kostka.

It was almost twilight; there were only a few people in the cathedral. Paying no attention to what was happening around me, I fell prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament and begged the Lord to be good enough to give me to understand what I should do next.

10 Then I heard these words: Go at once to Warsaw; you will enter a convent there. I rose from prayer, came home, and took care of things that needed to be settled. As best I could, I confided to my sister what took place within my soul. I told her to say good-bye to our parents, and thus, in my one dress, with no other belongings, I arrived in Warsaw.

11 When I got off the train and saw that all were going their separate ways, I was overcome with fear. What am I to do? To whom should I turn, as I know no one? So I said to the Mother of God, "Mary, lead me, guide me." Immediately I heard these words within me telling me to leave the town and to go to a certain nearby village where I would find a safe lodging for the night. I did so and found in fact that everything was just as the Mother of God told me.

12 Very early the next day, I rode back into the city and entered the first church I saw [St. James Church at Grojecka Street in Ochota, a suburb of Warsaw]. There I began to pray to know further the will of God. Holy Masses were being celebrated one after another. During one of them I heard the words:



Go to that priest [Father James Dabrowski, pastor of St. James' Parish] and tell him everything; he will tell you what to do next. After the Mass I went to the sacristy. I told the priest all that had taken place in my soul, and I asked him to advise me where to take the veil, in which religious order.

13 The priest was surprised at first, but told me to have strong confidence that God would provide for my future. "For the time being," he said, "I shall send you to a pious lady [Aldona Lipszycowa] with whom you will stay until you enter a convent." When I called on this lady, she received me very kindly. During the time I stayed with her, I was looking for a convent, but at whatever convent door I knocked, I was turned away. Sorrow gripped my heart, and I said to the Lord Jesus, "Help me; don't leave me alone." At last I knocked on our door.

14 When Mother Superior, the present Mother General Michael came out to meet me, she told me, after a short conversation, to go to the Lord of the house and ask whether He would accept me. I understood at once that I was to ask this of the Lord Jesus. With great joy, I went to the chapel and asked Jesus: "Lord of this house, do You accept me? This is how one of these sisters told me to put the question to You."

Immediately I heard this voice: I do accept; you are in My Heart. When I returned from the chapel, Mother Superior asked first of all, "Well, has the Lord accepted you?" I answered, "Yes." "If the Lord has accepted, [she said] then I also will accept."

15 This is how I was accepted. However, for many reasons I still had to remain in the world for more than a year with that pious woman [Aldona Lipszycowa], but I did not go back to my own home.

At that time I had to struggle with many difficulties, but God was lavish with His graces. An ever greater longing for God began to take hold of me. The lady, pious as she was, did not understand the happiness of religious life and, in her kindheartedness began to make other plans for my future life. And yet, I sensed that I had a heart so big that nothing would be capable of filling it. And so I turned with all the longing of my soul to God.

16 It was during the octave of Corpus Christi [June 25, 1925]. God filled my soul with the interior light of a deeper knowledge of Him as Supreme Goodness and Supreme Beauty. I came to know how very much God loves me. Eternal is His love for me. It was at vespers. In simple words, which flowed from the heart, I made to God a vow of perpetual chastity. From that moment I felt a greater intimacy with God, my Spouse. From that moment I set up a little cell in my heart where I always kept company with Jesus.

17 At last the time came when the door of the convent was opened for me - it was the first of August [1925], in the evening, the vigil [of a feast] of Our Lady of the Angels. I felt immensely happy; it seemed to me that I had stepped into the life of Paradise. A single prayer was bursting forth from my heart, one of thanksgiving.

18     However, after three weeks I became aware that there is so very little time here for prayer, and of many other things which spoke to my soul in favor of entering a religious community of a stricter observance. This thought took a firm hold of my soul, but the will of God was not in it. Still, the thought, or rather the temptation, was growing stronger and stronger to the point where I decided one day to announce my departure to Mother Superior and definitely to leave [the convent]. But God arranged the circumstances in such a way that I could not get to the Mother Superior [Michael]. I stepped into the little chapel before going to bed, and I asked Jesus for light in this matter. But I received nothing in my soul except a strange unrest which I did not understand. But, in spite of everything, I made up my mind to approach Mother Superior the next morning right after Mass and tell her of my decision.

19     I came to my cell. The sisters were already in bed - the lights were out. I entered the cell full of anguish and discontent; I did not know what to do with myself. I threw myself headlong on the ground and began to pray fervently that I might come to know the will of God. There is silence everywhere as in the tabernacle. All the sisters are resting like white hosts enclosed in Jesus' chalice. It is only from my cell that God can hear the moaning of a soul. I did not know that one was not allowed to pray in the cell after nine without permission.

After a while a brightness filled my cell, and on the curtain I saw the very sorrowful Face of Jesus. There

were open wounds on His Face, and large tears were falling on my bedspread. Not knowing what all this meant, I asked Jesus, "Jesus who has hurt You so?" And Jesus said to me, It is you who will cause Me this pain if you leave this convent. It is to this place that I called you and nowhere else; and I have prepared many graces for you. I begged pardon of Jesus and immediately changed my decision.

The next day was confession day. I related all that had taken place in my soul, and the confessor answered that, from this, God's will is clear that I am to remain in this congregation and that I'm not even to think of another religious order. From that moment on, I have always felt happy and content.

20     Shortly after this, I fell ill [general exhaustion]. The dear Mother Superior sent me with two other sisters for a rest to Skolimow, not far from Warsaw. It was at that time that I asked the Lord who else I should pray for. Jesus said that on the following night He would let me know for whom I should pray.

[The Next night] I saw my Guardian Angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames which were burning them did not touch me at all. My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God. I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The

souls call her "The Star of the Sea." She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my Guardian Angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering.[I heard and interior voice] which said, My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it. Since that time, I am in closer communion with the suffering souls."

*St. Faustina Kowalska*

# Richard Rolle



"There is a third by which God and the truths of Christianity can not only be believed and acted upon, but can in varying degrees be directly known and experienced . . . This knowledge, this experience, which is never entirely separable from an equally immediate and experimental union with God by love, has three main characteristics. It is recognized by the person concerned as something utterly different from and more real and adequate than all his previous knowledge and love of God. It is experienced as something at once immanent and received, something moving and filling the powers of mind and soul. IT is felt as taking place at a deeper level of the personality and soul than that on which the normal processes of thought and will take place, and the mystic is aware, both in himself and in others, of the soul, its qualities and of the divine presence and action within it, as something wholly distinct from the reasoning mind with its powers. Finally, this experience is wholly incommunicable, save as a bare statement, and in this respect all the utterances of the mystics are entirely inadequate as representations of the mystical experience, but it brings absolute certainty to the mind of the recipient. This is the traditional mystical theology, the knowledge of God, in its purest form."

*Richard Rolle*

"I know no pleasure sweeter than in my heart to sing you a song of praise, Jesus my love. I know no happiness greater or more abundant than in my mind to feel the sweet warmth of love. I believe that the very best thing one can ever do is to fix Jesus in one's heart, and never want anything else. He has made a

good start in loving who has loving tears, and a sweet yearning and desire for eternal things. For Christ himself yearns, so to speak, for our love, when he hastened with such fervor to his Cross to redeem us. But it is truly said that 'love precedes the dance, and gives the lead.' It was nothing but love which brought Christ so low.

Come, my Saviour, comfort my soul! Make me steadfast in my love for you, so that I never cease loving. Take the grief from me when it is my time to die, for there is no sinner who cannot rejoice once he be perfectly converted to you. Remember your compassion, Jesus most sweet, that my life may shine resplendent in your power; and so that I can overcome my enemy bestow on me your mighty salvation! I ask all this of you lest I be lost with the son of perdition. Since my mind has been fired with holy love, I am filled with longing to see your Majesty. Therefore I endure poverty, I despise earthly dignity, and I care for no sort of honour. Your friendship is my glory. When I began to love, your love laid hold of my heart, and would allow me to desire nothing save love. Then you, God made my soul flame with your sweet light, so that in you and through you I could die and not feel sad. There is delightful warmth in the loving heart, which has consumed gloom and trouble in its fiery burning love. And from it has issued sweetness, and in particular, music which comes in to soothe the soul, for there you, my God and my comfort, have set up your Temple.

*Richard Rolle*



# St. Therese of Lisieux



"On the morning of September 8, a wave of peace flooded my soul, and, in "that peace which surpasseth all understanding,"[2] I pronounced my holy vows.

Many were the graces I asked. I felt myself truly a queen and took advantage of my title to obtain every favour from the King for His ungrateful subjects. No one was forgotten. I wished that every sinner on earth might be converted; that on that day Purgatory should set its captives free; and I bore upon my heart this letter containing what I desired for myself:

"O Jesus, my Divine Spouse, grant that my baptismal robe may never be sullied. Take me from this world rather than let me stain my soul by committing the least wilful fault. May I never seek or find aught but Thee alone! May all creatures be nothing to me and I nothing to them! May no earthly thing disturb my peace!

"O Jesus, I ask but Peace. . . . Peace, and above all, Love. . . .

Love—without limit. Jesus, I ask that for Thy sake I may die a

Martyr; give me martyrdom of soul or body. Or rather give me both the one and the other.

"Grant that I may fulfill my engagements in all their perfection; that no one may think of me; that I may be trodden under foot, forgotten, as a little grain of sand. I offer myself to Thee, O my Beloved, that Thou

mayest ever perfectly accomplish in me Thy Holy Will, without let or hindrance from creatures."

When at the close of this glorious day I laid my crown of roses, according to custom, at Our Lady's feet, it was without regret. I felt that time would never lessen my happiness.

It was the Nativity of Mary. What a beautiful feast on which to become the Spouse of Jesus! It was the *little* new-born Holy Virgin who presented her *little* Flower to the *little* Jesus. That day everything was little except the graces I received—except my peace and joy in gazing upon the beautiful star-lit sky at night, and in thinking that soon I should fly away to Heaven and be united to my Divine Spouse amid eternal bliss.

On September 24 took place the ceremony of my receiving the veil. This feast was indeed *veiled* in tears. Papa was too ill to come and bless his little Queen; at the last minute Mgr. Hugonin, who should have presided, was unable to do so, and, for other reasons also, the day was a painful one. And yet amid it all, my soul was profoundly at peace. That day it pleased Our Lord that I should not be able to restrain my tears, and those tears were not understood. It is true I had borne far harder trials without shedding a tear; but then I had been helped by special graces, whilst on this day Jesus left me to myself, and I soon showed my weakness.

Eight days after I had taken the veil my cousin, Jeanne Guérin, was married to Dr. La Néele. When she came to see us afterwards and I heard of all the

little attentions she lavished on her husband, my heart thrilled and I thought: "It shall never be said that a woman in the world does more for her husband than I do for Jesus, my Beloved." And, filled with fresh ardour, I set myself more earnestly than ever to please my Heavenly Spouse, the King of Kings, Who had deigned to honour me by a divine alliance.

Having seen the letter announcing the marriage, I amused myself by composing the following invitation, which I read to the novices in order to bring home to them what had struck me so forcibly — that the glory of all earthly unions is as nothing compared to the titles of a Spouse of Our Divine Lord.

"God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, and the Glorious Virgin Mary, Queen of the Heavenly Court, announce to you the Spiritual Espousals of their August Son, Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with little Thérèse Martin, now Princess and Lady of His Kingdoms of the Holy Childhood and the Passion, assigned to her as a dowry, by her Divine Spouse, from which Kingdoms she holds her titles of nobility — *of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face*. It was not possible to invite you to the Wedding Feast which took place on the Mountain of Carmel, September 8, 1890 — the Heavenly Court was alone admitted — but you are requested to be present at the Wedding Feast which will take place to-morrow, the day of Eternity, when Jesus, the Son of God, will come in the clouds of Heaven, in the splendour of His Majesty, to judge the living and the dead.

"The hour being still uncertain, you are asked to hold yourselves in readiness and watch."[3]

And now, Mother, what more shall I say? It was through your hands that I gave myself to Our Lord, and you have known me from childhood—need I write my secrets? Forgive me if I cut short the story of my religious life.

During the general retreat following my profession I received great graces. As a rule I find preached retreats most trying, but this one was quite an exception. I anticipated so much suffering that I prepared myself by a fervent novena. It was said that the good Priest understood better how to convert sinners than to direct the souls of nuns. Well then, I must be a great sinner, for God made use of this holy religious to bring me much consolation. At that time I had all kinds of interior trials which I found it impossible to explain to anyone; suddenly, I was able to lay open my whole soul. The Father understood me in a marvellous way; he seemed to divine my state, and launched me full sail upon that ocean of confidence and love in which I had longed to advance, but so far had not dared. He told me that my faults did not pain the Good God, and added: "At this moment I hold His place, and I assure you from Him that He is well pleased with your soul." How happy these consoling words made me! I had never been told before that it was possible for faults not to pain the Sacred Heart; this assurance filled me with joy and helped me to bear with patience the exile of this life. It was also the echo of my inmost thoughts. In truth I had long known that the Lord is more tender

than a mother, and I have sounded the depths of more than one mother's heart. I know that a mother is ever ready to forgive her child's small thoughtless faults. How often have I not had this sweet experience! No reproach could have touched me more than one single kiss from my Mother. My nature is such that fear makes me shrink, while, under love's sweet rule, I not only advance—I fly."

*St. Therese of Lisieux*

# Pere Lamy



"The Blessed Virgin is dressed in deep blue with a white veil, but when She goes up to Heaven She seems to put on a white garment. You can imagine Her taking off her blue gown; it seems to get white the moment She disappears . . . She is beautiful in the highest degree but not with a sensual beauty. When She is in the presence of Her Son, She radiates love. She speaks a little faster than he does . . .

The angels are a great deal better as a spectacle than the Blessed Virgin. With those fine sparkles which change perpetually on their white robes, they look like brilliant officers beside Her, Who is so simple! I speak of the Blessed Virgin apart from Her light. When she shows Herself with what I call Her great glory, She is a little frightening, for the sun is only a side light beside Her. My description of Her is when She gives only Her lesser glory . . .

Her Immaculate Conception is a favour freely given by God. She knows it well. But how express the goodness and the condescension of the Blessed Virgin in one's own words? All that I repeat seems out of shape when it is not from Her lips?

She has never been touched by a shade of human weakness. Woman She is, and Mother She is in the whole nobility of the word. When you hear Her speak it is all exact and like the Gospel. When Our Lord speaks, it is exact, too . . .

In the Blessed Virgin, joy overflows. She has the fullness of the joys of Heaven. To try to describe Her



joy is impossible to me. You would have to be a good theologian and more . . .

She is endlessly good, but lets nothing pass. I have never known Her pay compliments, but She can give a maternal reproach. What can She find to praise in man? The devil is able to pay compliments; 'You shall be as gods.' We are poor and sorry gods! But she seem to say: 'Look what you have cost My Son . . . And for what silly things you commit sin.'

When she listens to you, She is listening to hundreds, thousands, millions of voices entreating Her. She listens to us all but She gives special preference to the trustful, humble prayer of the little ones. Imperious prayers cannot be heard much. She likes simplicity . . . When She addresses Our Lord . . . She says, 'Jesus,' or 'My Son.' He says, 'Mother,' and They have understood each other . . . She doesn't want you to say more than is necessary."

*Pere Lamy*

# St. Anthony Mary Claret



“Anthony suffered great trials in this virtue of chastity at different times in his life, but he always came out of his temptation harmless, vigorous and pure. The demon, envious of the angelical innocence of the seminarian, presented him, by permission of God, with a last combat. Because it was the last, it was a decisive one, as well as the strangest and the most tenacious.

Anthony was in the second year of Philosophy. The Superiors of the Seminary obliged him to remain in bed because he was exhausted from the effects of a severe cold which might endanger his already delicate health. Anthony obeyed. Soon the demon let Anthony feel his presence. He caused the young man to recall the memory of the world and placed obscene images in his imagination and impure desires in his heart. This troubled him exceedingly. He feared to offend God, a God whom he loved so much! Danger was imminent. The temptation, far from relaxing, increased in intensity every moment. He struggled with all available arms that the Saints and the masters of the spiritual life advise for such combats. Sometimes he fixed his eyes on different objects; at other times he made the sign of the cross, humbly invoking the protection of Our Lord; now he took refuge, like a child, in the lap of the Blessed Virgin, his Mother, praying at the same time to his Guardian Angel and the Saints to whom he was especially devoted. But the temptation did not cease. What else could the youth do in defense of his virginal treasure?

Suddenly, a bright light illumined his room. He looked up and saw a beautiful and graceful figure; it

was the Queen of the Angels, holding in her left hand garlands of roses. Taking one of them with her right hand and placing it on the forehead of a child kneeling near her, in a clear and sweet voice, Anthony heard our Blessed Lady say: "Anthony, this crown is for you, if you conquer." Who can express the torrent of joy that inundated the soul of the youth on contemplating the beauty of Our Lady and experiencing the sweetness of her words?

Later he saw a group of Saints in an attitude of prayer. These were the patrons who were praying for him in his temptation. Again there was a formidable group of dragons who crept across the room, roaring and standing erect as though they were ready to swallow him. All this lasted but an instant. The vision passed. All dangerous thoughts fled from his memory; all obscene figures, from his imagination. Peace and calm took possession of his spirit. He triumphed over the temptation; and now he felt that the crown of roses of the vision rested on his brow."

### *The Miracles of St. Anthony Mary Claret*

Father Claret experienced intimate visions with the Blessed Virgin throughout his holy life.

# St. Blasius



“The soul which contemplates that luminous darkness or obscure light swoons away and, turning back to God, becomes one spirit with Him in the very depths of its being. Engendered there together with the Word which the Father utters, the soul is nobly renewed and made capable of every kind of good. Whence God the Father says of that soul: “This is My beloved daughter in whom I am well pleased” . . . The soul truly submerged and absorbed in God swims in the Divinity with an ineffable joy which redounds to the body so that eternal life begins for it in this exile. It keeps its thoughts firmly fixed on God; it possesses a certain supernatural unity of spirit wherein it dwells as in its proper mansion and it is inclined to the divine essence, toward that supreme unity wherein the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are one. Its conversations are in heaven; that is, with the three divine persons; and when it is supremely united to God, there is no longer any past or future for it but only an everlasting now. In that unchangeable eternity which is God, the soul possesses all things and, free of all representations, it recognizes the supreme order and distinction of things. Thus, surpassing all understanding, the soul flies to its beginning, God, where it is made light in His light. Before this light all the natural and even the infused lights are darkened just as the light of the stars is darkened in the face of the sun, for when the uncreated light is born, the created light vanishes . . . Now all the passions of the soul are subdued, and it is no longer motivated by them. Both in adversity and in prosperity, it enjoys an essential peace . . . Such souls, although they are greatly illumined by the divine light in which they see clearly what is to be done or

omitted, nevertheless subject themselves to others joyfully and for the love of God. They give complete obedience in all things that are in accordance with God's will and they take the lowest place. They do not become proud because of the gifts and talents which they have received, because they are deeply submerged in their own nothingness. They do not presume on themselves for they know that it is God who works all the good they do. Remaining truly humble and filled with a filial fear, they consider themselves unprofitable servants. They avoid even the slightest faults, and the negligences which they incur through weakness are washed and expiated in the blood of Christ. They abandon many of the practices and customs which they formerly employed because now they have no attachment to anything. They are no longer their own, but they are Jesus Christ's. They remain unknown by the world, nor is their simple and truly Christian conversation, which soars to heavenly things, readily heeded except by those who enjoy the same grace. For such souls are not accustomed to manifest outwardly any singular or unusual mannerisms. They appear sweet and kind in all their dealings and affable to all as long as the affair is not sinful. They are not extremely severe, but meek and compassionate. This is one of the proofs that they cannot be separated now from God . . . But because they speak with humility and hold themselves in low esteem, these hidden sons of God are frequently disdained by those who display exterior signs of holiness and especially by those who, through self-will, lead a base life."

*St. Blossius*

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# Bridal Mysticism

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By Marilyn Hughes

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