

Modesty, a Characteristic of Mary's Life

by Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Mary's hidden life possesses a characteristic that distinguishes it from that of Jesus. We do not find in Mary that humility which astonishes and confounds, that admixture of power and weakness, of dignity and of submission, which is so admirable in the life of Jesus. Mary's life is always the same, simple and hidden, profoundly humble and modest. Modesty was a characteristic of Her piety, of Her virtues, and of all Her actions.

I. Mary was modest in Her exterior. She was distinguished neither by an austere demeanor nor by an affected carelessness. Humble and sweet, like unto Her Divine Son, Her whole exterior bespoke Her lowly condition and made Her seem like a woman of the people. We, too, should try to avoid attracting attention to ourselves, by modesty of behavior, if we wish to resemble Our Blessed Mother in Her life.

II. Mary was modest in the world. She eagerly sacrificed Her privacy and the sweetness of heavenly contemplation in order to go to Her cousin Elizabeth, to congratulate her and to render her assistance. For three months, She was her constant companion, humbly waiting upon her; and She was the delight of that privileged household. When Her

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Son's glory demanded it, Mary appeared in public. She was present at the wedding feast of Cana. She spoke no word in Her own praise, nor did She bring forward Her title of Mother of God, nor the power and glory of Her Son in order to gain the esteem of men. In Her modesty, She gave heed to the call of charity and withdrew when She was no longer needed.

III. Mary was modest in Her duties. She fulfilled them all with sweetness, without eagerness, always satisfied, always prepared to take up some new duty. She fulfilled them with that equability of character which never lets any difficulty be seen and never asks for consolation, that never attracts attention, because everything is done *continued on page 2*

simply and as a matter of course. She is therefore a beautiful model for all those who wish to live the life of Jesus Eucharistic. The life of an adorer, consecrated to the service of the Eucharistic King, is composed of little sacrifices which God alone sees and rewards. The lowliness of his service constitutes all the honor, all the joy of his filial devotedness, and his sole ambition is to please his Master by the constant sacrifice of self.

IV. Mary was modest in Her piety. Mary, elevated to the highest degree of prayer to which any creature can attain, lived in the habitual exercise of perfect love, exalted above all the Angels, and forming by Her dignity of Mother of God an order apart in the wonders of God. She served Her Lord, nevertheless, in the common, ordinary way of piety. She followed the prescriptions of the Law, assisted at the legal feasts, prayed with the multitude. Nothing distinguished Her, not even Her modesty, which She kept concealed. Nothing, not even extraordinary fervor, revealed in Her exterior the perfection of Her piety.

V. Mary was modest in Her virtues. Mary possessed all virtues in a supreme degree, and practiced them all in their sovereign perfection, but not in an extraordinary manner. Her humility saw only the goodness of God, and for all the favors that She had received, She showed only humble gratitude, the gratitude of the poor – silent and undemonstrative, unnoticed by the world. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Consequently no attention was paid to Mary.

Behold the great secret of perfection: to know how to find it in what is most simple; to know how to nourish it in what is most common; to know how to preserve it in the midst of indifference and forgetfulness. Virtue that is paraded in public is in a perilous condition; virtue that is lauded and extolled is very near a fall. The flower that every one admires, quickly fades.

Let us, then, love the little virtues of Nazareth, those hidden virtues that are born at the foot of the Cross, under the shadow of Jesus and Mary; then shall we fear neither the tempest that shatters the cedars, nor the thunderbolt that strikes the mountain top.

VI. Mary was modest in Her sacrifices. Mary accepted exile silently and sweetly without a word of repining. She did not esteem Herself the more because She was destined for great sacrifices, nor did She complain or beg for a lessening of their rigor.

She was modest in enduring the anguish of Her holy spouse. Rather than speak to him of the great mystery operated in Her, which would have exalted Her so in his eyes, She submitted to his doubts in silence and waited for Heaven to vindicate Her virtue, calmly abandoning Herself to Divine Providence.

With Her heart pierced with sorrow, Mary followed Her Son bearing His Cross; but She did not fill the streets of Jerusalem with Her cries and Her wails. On Calvary, plunged in an immeasurable sorrow, a sorrow as deep as Her love, Mary suffered in silence; and after having taken a silent farewell of Her Son, She withdrew – broken-hearted, but resigned.

VII. Finally, Mary was modest in Her glory, and this is the most wonderful triumph of Mary's modesty.

Mary, by reason of Her remarkable dignity as Mother of God, has the right to the homage of the universe; yet Mary retained only the anguish and the sacrifice of Her motherhood. Never was She seen in public when Her Son was honored and acclaimed, but when there was humiliation, or suffering to be shared with Him, His Mother was always to be found by His side.

If, then, we desire to be true children of this loving Mother, we must clothe ourselves with Her modesty. Let us often make this virtue the subject of our meditation, for it is the heritage left us by Mary. Let Her modesty be the rule of our conduct. Let Her simplicity, which forgets itself, seeing God alone, which inclines Her towards duty rather than pleasure, to God Himself rather than to His consolation, to love for love's sake – let this single-mindedness, then be our portion, the aim of all our efforts and the characteristic of our life.

Modesty is the sovereign virtue of an adorer, since it is the virtue of the servants of kings, and the virtue of the Angels in presence of the Divine Majesty.

Modesty should, therefore, regulate our demeanor in the presence of God, when we offer Him the homage of our senses and of our faculties. It is the etiquette of His royal service. We must be modest even as Mary, in the service of Jesus! 🌹

Ladder to Heaven

One of the surest ladders to aid us in the progress of virtue, is to imitate Our Lady in devotion to the Way of the Cross. Tradition says that the Blessed Mother of God originated this devotion, often retracing the steps of Her Son on His way to Calvary. She would pause at the spots which recalled to Her some particular incident from that day. The early Christians would accompany Her in flocks; or, on their own, visit the holy places of the *Via Crucis*.

When the places of the Holy Land were seized by the Muslims in the Middle Ages, a Christian could visit these sites only at peril to his life. But the Pope endeavored to encourage all people to pray the Way of the Cross, so he encouraged pastors to erect stations in their churches, and he enriched the devotion with large indulgences. St. Francis of Assisi, who enkindled a faith grown cold when he erected the first Christmas manger, was as instrumental in spreading the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

The Spirago Catechism presents an inspiring lesson on this great devotion – a devotion for the heart of an Apostle who feels his faith to have died to embers, or which desires to grow in virtue:

Daily meditation on the Passion of Christ is more profitable than fasting every Friday in the year on bread and water, or taking the discipline to blood. A single tear shed in compassion for Our Lord's sufferings is of greater value in God's sight than a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We learn how acceptable meditation on His Passion is to Our Lord, from the revelations of St. Bridget. Our Lord once appeared to her, with blood streaming from all His wounds. She asked what had reduced Him to this pitiable condition? He answered: "It is the doing of those who never consider the great love I manifested towards them by all I suffered upon the Cross."

It was as a continual memorial of His Passion that Our Lord instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The same indulgences are granted for making the Way of the Cross as for visiting the corresponding places in the Holy Land. What the indulgences are we do not know precisely; let us be content to know that they are great and



This picture of the 10th Station of the Cross, located within an olive orchard at Fatima and depicting Jesus being stripped of His clothing, was taken by one of Our Lady's helpers during last October's Pilgrimage.

numerous; they can however only be gained once in the day. The wooden crosses must be blessed by a Franciscan, or some priest who has the requisite powers, and the stations must be visited without any break.

The Way of the Cross is a means of obtaining the grace of contrition. As the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery serpents were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent, so sinners are healed of the deadly wound of sin by frequent meditation on the Passion of Christ. The Way of the Cross is also an incentive to the practice of virtue. The saints often tell us that meditation on Our Lord's Passion imparts strength to suffer not merely with patience, but with joy. Our arrogance, our avarice, our anger will be cured by the humility, the poverty, the patience of the Son of God. If, O man, you would progress from virtue to virtue, contemplate with all possible devotion the sufferings of your Lord, for this is most conducive to sanctity. (*Slightly edited*)

What an extraordinary opportunity for each of us to obtain *the same indulgences as for visiting the corresponding places in the Holy Land!* How consoling to Our Lord it must be when people imitate His Holy Mother in re-visiting the stations of this devotion. The Church has endeavored to entice souls to prac-

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News from the Apostolate

This past year at the Fatima Center has been an exciting one. We have had a number of projects going on, all at different stages. Without a doubt, the thrust of 2006 was the "Last Chance for World Peace" Conference of October. Again and again, we marvel at the way the message was received at the Conference. There, Father Gruner launched the "Fatima Movement of Priests," the idea of which seemed to capture the hearts of the attending priests and bishops. In 2007, the Center will extend every effort to spread the word about this movement, to teach clergy how to sanctify their own lives and those of their charges, through the teachings of the Message of Fatima.

Also in 2006, the FatimaOnDemand website was launched; two more distribution centers were opened to extend our reach worldwide. This helped enable the Center to distribute over 10 million pieces of our literature (books, DVD's, *Crusaders*, prayer cards, letters) to people in every corner of the world. Watch the mail for your letter which will highlight all the Center's accomplishments - with which YOU helped! Thank you. Good work. For 2007, let's do more!

A friend of the Fatima Center asks for prayers for a former neighbor of hers who is now approaching death's door. He is a fallen-away Catholic, who had married outside the Church. Please pray with her for "Amos," for the grace to return to the True Faith, and for the grace of a happy death. †



Father Nicholas Gruner studies his notes prior to announcing the launching of the *Fatima Movement of Priests* at last October's *Last Chance for World Peace Conference*.

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tice the Way of the Cross by offering these rich indulgences. But beyond that, how marvelous to grasp this sure tool to help us 'step up' in virtue.

Those who cannot go to church because of serious difficulty, do not be forlorn, for you, too, can gain these same benefits: If a person is not able to make the stations at church because of some serious illness, or a great distance from church, or the like, he may still obtain the indulgence. He must hold his own crucifix (blessed for the stations) in his hand while reciting twenty times the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and the *Gloria*. These twenty groups of prayers honor the fourteen stations, and the five Holy Wounds of Our Lord; the last set is for the intentions of the Holy Father. If others pray with one, it is sufficient that one person hold the crucifix in his hand. (By the way, if a Redemptorist has blessed the crucifix,

one need only pray fourteen sets of prayers!)

The Church devotes the month of February to the Passion of Our Lord. Even before Lent thrusts us into the somber season of penance, we can ask Our Lady to help us prepare to observe Lent well: through the Way of the Cross, and in conjunction with the Holy Rosary, we can incite our love for Our Lord, stir our hearts to contrition and obtain graces to amend our lives and to grow in virtue and holiness. - S.V. †

We'd like to hear from YOU! Write or call:

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