

## The Papal System – XXIII. The Worship of the Virgin Mary



Continued from [The Papal System – XXII. The Invocation and Worship of Saints and Angels](#).

THE most popular form of idolatry that ever captivated the human heart is the worship of Mary. To the unwedded priest of contemplative mind, Mary has every beauty, every charm, every divine grace. Pure enough to be the chosen mother of that human body in which Deity dwelt, unapproached in her unparalleled honors, chaste as the unspotted snow; she is the queen of his imagination, the ravishing idol of his heart. And as the mistress of his affections, he sings her praises, proclaims her glories, and gives her glowing homage. Those who fail to worship Mary, in his sight, are destitute of moral taste and perception; they are blind to beauty; they are governed by heartless ingratitude; they have no ear for the sweetest voice that ever fell on the ears of angels, or sent its thrilling melodies through the wounds of a bleeding heart.

To the masses of the Catholic world, Jehovah does not appear as a pitying Father, governed by a compassion too vast for finite conception, a love which led him to give up his only Son to the nails, the crucifix, the spear, the burning wrath of indignant justice, the ghastly arms of the universal destroyer, and to the loathsome grave, that "he might redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He is the awful God who breathes thunders; whose eyes flash forth lightnings; whose feet, as they touch our world, start the jarring earthquakes; whose voice is like the roarings of many cataracts; who is holy, terribly just, sparing neither age nor sex, and never appalled by the numbers who fall before his avenging righteousness. Jesus is not the God-man. He is simply Jehovah, without anything to make him our brother, to proclaim his intense and eternal human sympathies. The only conception the Catholic masses have of Christ's humanity is a little child sitting in helpless and unconscious innocence on the knees of a loving mother; to them Jesus is the infinite God, moving through the universe as its master, to inflict punishment; and to be coaxed into acts of mercy by a mother whom he loves.

They view Mary as the personification of maidenly modesty, of motherly love,

of all beauty, goodness, and gentleness. There is not a pure and loving quality known to the human imagination which is not attributed to Mary. She has pity in ocean fullness; she is ever ready to intercede for her penitent petitioners; she has unlimited sway over the heart of her Son. She is the queen of love, of goodness, and of heaven. She is the most venerated divinity in the Catholic Church. Little wonder that Mohammad should say: "Believe, therefore, in God and his apostles, and say not there are three Gods, forbear this; it will be better for you." His commentator tells us the three Gods of whom he spoke were the Father, the Son, and the Virgin Mary.

*The Worship of Mary began in Arabia.*

About the end of the fourth century certain women in Arabia, once in twelve months, dressed a car or square throne; spread a linen cloth over it; and on a clear day placed a loaf of bread or cakes called collyrides upon it, which they offered to the Virgin Mary. It would seem that this was a transfer of the services of the Lord's Supper to Mary from her Son. These first worshippers of Mary were called Collyridianians. This service, though offensive to the churches at first, under another and milder form spread rapidly over the East and West.

*The Virgin gives Pope Leo a new Hand.*

When Leo was a young man, he was on one occasion doing penance for sinful acts; and while he was praying before the altar of the Virgin she appeared to him, saying: "O Leo, correct your excesses, and I will promote you to the highest rank." He took her advice, and some time after was elected pope. When celebrating his first mass after becoming pontiff, a woman brought him an offering, and when she gave it to him, "she sweetly pressed the hand of Leo, and kissed it." The lady's charms and love made the pope remember that he was not yet an angel, that he was still a man. Not long after he cut off that hand. From that time he declined to officiate in public, and concealed his injured arm. At last, greatly distressed, he called on the Virgin in earnest prayer to give him another hand, that his reproach might be taken away; and she granted his request, so that no trace of the mutilation could be discovered. "From that time," says Matthew of Westminster, "those who brought offerings were ordered to kiss the pope's foot, and not his hand."

*God and His Mother.*

King Athelstan "determining to seek all the relics of the different saints throughout his kingdom for the sake of praying before them," came to Glastonbury. Elfieda, a niece of the king, who was leading the life of a nun, was greatly exercised about the entertainment of Athelstan, as there was no mead (a fermented alcoholic beverage made from honey and water) in the abbey, which the king preferred to all other liquors. She entered the Church of the Mother of God, and "she prostrated herself in prayer to God and His Mother," and never was any king or company served with such a supply of mead before.

*The Virgin cures a Clerk.*

In A.D. 1134, a clergyman was the victim of a dreadful malady which tormented

him day and night. He cried constantly to the Mother of God for deliverance. One night, when he was grievously tormented, the Mother of God appeared to him in white garments, and stretched out her hand to him. The sick man trembled, but he no sooner felt her touch than he was immediately healed.

*The Virgin appears to St. Godric.*

Once when this servant of God was praying before the altar of His blessed Mother, he saw two girls of tender age and of the utmost beauty, clothed in garments of snowy whiteness. Godric looked from one to the other and "bowed his head in adoration." One of these beautiful young girls said: "I am the Mother of Christ, and through me thou shalt obtain his grace." Godric then threw himself at the feet of the Mother of God, saying: "I commit myself to thee, my lady, and beseech thee to take me under thy protection." She then placed her hands upon his head, and smoothing down his hair, filled the house with a sweet odor.

*The Scapular,*

Is a short mantle worn on the shoulders of Carmelite monks. St. Simon Stock, a general of the Order of Carmelites, who devoutly worshipped Mary, was favored about A.D. 1257 with a visit from her, and he was informed by her that "no person should be eternally lost who should expire in this sacred mantle." Benedict XIV. says of this vision: "We believe it to be true, and think it ought to be so considered by every one."

John XXII. had an interview with the Mother of God in a vision, in which she conferred greater privileges on those who wore her Scapular. For, on compliance with certain easy conditions, she would pay them a motherly visit in purgatory, and their release from its pains might be expected on the next Saturday after death. Those who "show their tender devotion to the Mother of God" shall surely "have her assistance to persevere in the grace of God, and her special and powerful protection in the hour of death."

*Prayers addressed to the Virgin.*

"Most holy and immaculate Virgin, my mother Mary, it is to thee, the Mother of my God, the Queen of the world, the advocate, the hope, and the refuge of sinners, that I have recourse today, I, who am the most miserable of all. I render thee my humble homage, O great Queen, and I thank thee for all the graces which thou hast bestowed upon me till now, particularly for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. I love thee, O most amiable Sovereign, and for the love I bear thee, I promise to serve thee always, and to do all in my power to make others love thee also. I place in thee after God all my hopes. *I confide my salvation to thy care.* Accept me for thy servant, and receive me under thy mantle, O Mother of Mercy; and since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or rather obtain for me the strength to triumph over them till death. Obtain for me, I beseech thee, a perfect love for Jesus Christ. *To thee I look for grace to make a good death.* O my Mother, by thy love which thou bearest to God, I beseech thee to help me at all times, and particularly at the decisive moment of death. Do not leave me till thou seest me safe in heaven, *occupied in*

*blessing thee and singing thy mercies throughout eternity."*

*St. Ephraim's Prayer to the Virgin.*

"O Queen of the universe, and most bountiful Sovereign! Thou art the *great* advocate of sinners, the sure port of those who have suffered shipwreck, the *resource of the world*, the ransom of captives, the solace of the weak, the comfort of the afflicted, *the refuge and salvation of every creature*. O full of grace! Enlighten my understanding, and loosen my tongue that I may recount thy praises, and sing to thee that angelical salutation which thou dost so justly merit. Hail! Thou who art the peace, the joy, the consolation of the whole world! Hail! Paradise of delight, the sure asylum of all who are in danger, *the source of grace*, the mediatrix between God and man."

*St. Bernard's Prayer to the Virgin.*

"Most sweet and amiable Mary, no one can pronounce thy name without feeling the greatest desire to love thee; and those who do love thee cannot call thee to mind without being animated to love thee more. Pray for us to thy divine Son that he may vouchsafe to strengthen our weakness: no one is better entitled to speak in our favor to thy God and ours than thyself, who art the nearest to him. Intercede, then, for us, O blessed Mother, because thy Son hears thee, and thou canst obtain whatever thou wilt ask. O Mary, obtain for me the grace to have constant recourse to thee!"

*Another Prayer of St. Bernard to Mary.*

"Remember, Mary, that it was never heard of, that a sinner had fled to thy protection, and been abandoned by thee. O Mother of God, thou prayest for all; pray then for me, who am the greatest of sinners, and therefore have the greatest need of thy intercession."

*Another Prayer of St. Bernard to the Virgin.*

"Remember, O most merciful Virgin Mary, that it is unheard of, that any one flying to thee for protection, imploring thy help, or seeking thy intercession, was ever forsaken. Animated by this unerring confidence I hasten to thee, O Virgin of Virgins: I fly to thee, O sweet Mother; a wretched sinner, I prostrate myself, groaning at thy feet; despise not my prayer, O Mother of the divine Word, but graciously hear and grant the same. Amen."

*Prayer of Devout Blosius to Mary.*

"O my Sovereign, protect me in my combats, fortify me in my weakness. O most holy Mary, in this great contest which I sustain against hell, aid me always: but if ever thou seest me wavering and ready to yield, O my Sovereign, stretch out thy hand to me without delay, and sustain me still more powerfully. O God, what temptations still remain to be surmounted until death! Ah! Mary, my refuge, my strength and my hope, never permit that I should lose the grace of God, for I am resolved in all my temptations to have always immediate recourse to thee."

*Prayer of St. John Damascen to Mary.*

"Hail Mary! thou *hope* of Christians. Hear the petition of a sinner who wishes to love thee with the greatest tenderness, and to honor thee as thou deservest, and who reposes in thee, next after God, his hope of salvation. Indebted as I am to thee for the preservation of my life, I entreat thee to restore me to the grace of thy divine Son. Thou art the surest pledge of my salvation: deliver me, then, by thy prayers from the heavy load of my sins. Disperse the darkness of my understanding; banish every inordinate affection from my heart; repress the temptations of my spiritual enemies, and so order my life, that, under thy protection, I may arrive at eternal repose in heaven."

*Prayer of St. German to Mary.*

"Most holy Virgin! who art the greatest consolation that I receive from God; thou who art the heavenly dew which assuages all my pains; thou who art the light of my soul when it is enveloped in darkness; thou who art my guide in unknown paths, the support of my weakness, my treasure in poverty, my remedy in sickness, my comfort in trouble, my refuge in misery, and the hope of my salvation; hear my supplications, have pity on me as becomes the Mother of so good a God, and obtain for me the favorable reception of all my petitions at the throne of mercy."

*The Prayer of St. Anselm to Mary.*

"Help us, O Queen of Mercy, without regarding the multitude of our sins. Remember that our Creator took of thee a human body, not to condemn but to save sinners. Hadst thou been chosen to be the Mother of God for thy own benefit alone, thou mightst then be said to have no particular interest in our salvation; but God clothed himself in thy flesh for the sake of all mankind. Help us therefore, and protect us. Thou knowest the need which we have of thy assistance, and we earnestly recommend ourselves to thy prayers. Pray that we may not be eternally lost, but with thee may love and serve Jesus Christ forever."

*Prayer of St. Ildefonsus to Mary.*

"O my Sovereign, and Mother of my God, thou art blessed amongst all women, pure amongst all virgins, and queen of all the heavenly host: all nations call thee blessed. Vouchsafe that I may publish as much as possible thy greatness, that I may love thee to the utmost of my power, and that I may serve thee with all the capacity of my soul."

*Litany of the Blessed Virgin.*

This Litany was composed in Loretto, and sung in the processions in that city; and on that account it is often called, "The Litany of Loretto." Sixtus V., June 11th, 1587, granted to all Christians an indulgence of two hundred days for each time this Litany was piously repeated. This indulgence was confirmed by Benedict XIII., January 20th, 1728.

The portion of it about Mary is blasphemous in the highest degree; it is the

most idolatrous prayer ever presented to a dead woman.

“Holy Mary, pray for us.  
Holy Mother of God, pray for us.  
Holy Virgin of Virgins, pray for us.  
Mother of Christ, pray for us.  
Mother of Divine Grace, pray for us.  
Mother most pure, pray for us.  
Mother most chaste, pray for us.  
Mother inviolate, pray for us.  
Mother undefiled, pray for us.  
Mother most amiable, pray for us.  
Mother most admirable, pray for us.  
Mother of our Creator, pray for us.  
Mother of our Redeemer, pray for us.  
Virgin most prudent, pray for us.  
Virgin most venerable, pray for us.  
Virgin most renowned, pray for us.  
Virgin most powerful, pray for us.  
Virgin most merciful, pray for us.  
Virgin most faithful, pray for us.  
Mirror of Justice, pray for us.  
Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.  
Cause of our Joy, pray for us.  
Spiritual Vessel, pray for us.  
Vessel of Honor, pray for us.  
Vessel of singular Devotion, pray for us.  
Mystical Rose, pray for us.  
Tower of David, pray for us.  
Tower of Ivory, pray for us.  
House of Gold, pray for us.  
Ark of the Covenant, pray for us.  
Gate of Heaven, pray for us.  
Morning Star, pray for us.  
Health of the Weak, pray for us.  
Refuge of Sinners, pray for us.  
Comforter of the Afflicted, pray for us.  
Help of Christians, pray for us.  
Queen of Angels, pray for us.  
Queen of Patriarchs, pray for us.  
Queen of Prophets, pray for us.  
Queen of Apostles, pray for us.  
Queen of Martyrs, pray for us.  
Queen of Confessors, pray for us.  
Queen of Virgins, pray for us.  
Queen of All Saints, pray for us.”

Language is exhausted in applying titles to Mary, pilfered from her divine Son. Not in any tongue used by mortals has such a list of impious compliments been given to a woman living or dead. Nor has any religion or superstition ever showered such praises upon a female divinity. Every sentence is but the

prayer:

"Come, then, our advocate,  
O turn on us those pitying eyes of thine;  
And our long exile past,  
Show us at last  
Jesus, of thy pure womb the fruit divine;  
O Virgin Mary, mother blest!  
O sweetest, gentlest, holiest!"

*Mary and Eve, the Authors of Sin and Salvation.*

The Rev. M. Hobart Seymour, an Episcopal clergyman, spent some time in Rome at the period when Puseyism threatened to carry the Church of England into the arms of the "Scarlet Lady;" and as it was assumed in Rome that he was there to join the Church of the Dark Ages, provided some difficulties were explained, certain Professors of the Collegio Romano, of the order of Jesuits, visited him repeatedly to remove his objections. One of these Jesuits declared to him, "That as it was a woman brought in sin, so a woman was to bring in holiness; that as a woman brought in death, so a woman was to bring in life; that as Eve brought in dissolution, so Mary was to bring in salvation; that as we regard Eve as the first sinner, so we are to regard *Mary as the first Saviour*; the one as the author of sin, the other as the author of its remedy."

*The Virgin More Merciful than her Son.*

One of these professors declared that the "feeling was universal among Romanists that the Virgin Mary was more merciful, more gentle, and more ready to hear than Christ." On another page the same doctrine is taught by one of these Jesuits: "It is the opinion of many of the fathers that God hears our prayers more quickly when they are offered through the blessed Virgin than when offered through any one else." And again: "Many of the fathers were of the opinion that even Christ himself was not so willing to hear our prayers, and did not hear them so quickly, when offered simply to himself, as when they were offered through the blessed Virgin." And again, the professor says: "The Romanists feel that Mary is altogether of their own nature, and that this insures a more perfect sympathy, so as to make Mary more accessible than Christ; and this feeling leads them to pray with more frequency, as well as with more confidence to Mary than to Christ."

*The Two Ladders to Heaven.*

St. Bernard had a vision once, in which he beheld two ladders extending from earth to heaven. At the top of one ladder the Saviour appeared; and Mary at the top of the other; those trying to enter heaven by Christ's ladder were constantly tumbling down, and meeting with perpetual failures; those who attempted to reach the skies by Mary's always succeeded, for she put forth her hands to assist them. Seymour says: "I saw this as an altar-piece (a picture of it) in a church at Milan—none succeeding by the Saviour's ladder, none failing by the Virgin's."

### *The Triangular Trinity.*

In the Baptistery of Parma there is a representation of the Trinity. At the top of a triangle is the Father; at the two angles of the base are the Son and Mary; the two arms of the Father resting on the heads of the Son and Mary, form the legs of the triangle; while the arms of the Son, extended to the head of Mary, form the base. The Sacristan called it the Trinity of the Father, Son and Virgin.

### *Four Persons in the Godhead.*

Seymour quotes from Meyrick's "Working of the Church in Spain," the form of doxology admired in that country:

"Glory be to the Father,  
Glory be to the Son,  
Glory be to the Holy Ghost,  
Glory be to the most Holy Virgin,  
Throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen."

### *The Chief Source of St. Mary's Merits.*

To have had such a Son as Jesus is the common basis of Mary's claim to the peculiar respect of our race; but the Jesuits of the Collegio Romano have discovered another foundation for these merits. "Assuredly," says one of them, "there was merit in the sufferings undergone by the blessed Virgin in giving birth to the child Jesus. There was no necessity whatever; no reason whatever why she should have subjected herself to them; and therefore her having actually undergone such sufferings, was meritorious. She had some claim upon God for it." Here the doctrine is that maternity inflicted on Mary without her consent gave merit to her enforced sufferings. If so, then every case of compelled maternity has overflowing merit to blot out the sins of others, even when the mother is a heathen.

### *The Religion of Italy, the Gospel of Mary, not the Dispensation of Jesus.*

The intelligent observer already quoted confirms the universal testimony of travellers who have visited Italy about the extent of Mary worship. He says: "The whole devotional system of the Church of Rome, the prayers unceasingly offered to the Virgin, the innumerable pictures of the Virgin, the countless images of the Virgin, the many churches dedicated to the Virgin, the universal devotion rendered to the Virgin, the manner in which all the services and prayers of the church and people are impregnated with thoughts of the Virgin, the extent to which, in conversation, all classes went, in speaking of the Virgin, all had impressed me with the feeling that the religion of Italy ought to be called: *The religion of the Virgin Mary, and not the religion of Jesus Christ.*"

"If I enter the church of the Augustines, I see there an image of the Virgin Mary as large as life. Some are decking her with jewels as votive offerings; some are suspending pictures around as memorials of thankfulness; some are placing money in a box at her feet; some are devoutly kissing her feet and



touching them with their foreheads; some are prostrate in profound devotion before her; some are repeating the rosary before her; all are turning their backs upon the consecrated host; upon that which the priest is elevating upon the high altar, and which he and they devoutly believe to be Jesus Christ Himself bodily and visibly among them; turning their backs upon Christ and their faces upon Mary, practically forsaking Christ for Mary, with a prostration the most profound before her image—a prostration that was never surpassed in the days of heathen Rome, and can never be justified in Christian Rome.”

And one of these Jesuits told Mr. and Mrs. Seymour, “That the devotion to the Virgin was very popular; that latterly it had become increasingly so, and that he knew many facts that proved it a growing devotion among all classes. He mentioned the frequency with which he hears the poor and simple people praying to the Virgin, singing hymns to her pictures, at the corners of the streets early in the morning, appealing to her for protection in times of danger; and he narrated an instance of a little child appealing to the Virgin whose piety so touched his heart that a tear glistened in his eye as he told the incident.”

*This Devotion rests upon the highest Authority.*

The Council of Trent gave birth to modern Romanism; its decisions have greater weight in the Papal Church than passages of Scripture. The fathers of Trent had two classes of decrees to which they gave their sanction, the first originated with themselves, the second was made up of bulls, and commandments of other and commonly inferior synods. The Council of Trent in its fifth session, in its article on “Original Sin,” adopted the following from a decree of Sixtus IV.:

“When we investigate with the scrutiny of devout consideration the exalted insignia of the merits with which the Queen of the heavens, the glorious Virgin mother of God, advanced to the celestial dwellings, shining amidst the constellations as the morning star, and revolve beneath the secrets of our breast, that she herself as the path of mercy, the mother of grace, and the friend of piety, the consoler of the human race, the sedulous and vigilant advocate of the salvation of the faithful, who are oppressed by the load of their offences, intercedes with the King whom she has brought forth... that thereby they may become more fit for divine grace by the merits and intercession of the same Virgin.”

Here Mary is the path of mercy, the mother of grace, the consoler of the human race, with merits and intercession to qualify men for divine grace; and that, by the decree of the authoritative Council of Trent.

*The Catechism of the Council of Trent,*

Speaks with equal significance: “Therefore, we, exiled sons of Eve, who inhabit this vale of tears, ought assiduously to invoke the Mother of Mercy, and the advocate of the faithful people, that she might pray for us sinners, and that from her, in prayer, we might implore aid and assistance; for no

one, unless impiously and wickedly, can doubt but that she has the *most surpassing merits with God*, and the highest desire to assist the human race."

*Gregory XVI, in 1832,*

Says, in his Encyclical Letter, published August 15th of that year: "But that all things may have a prosperous and happy issue, let us raise our eyes and hands to the most holy Virgin Mary, who only destroys all heresies, who is *our greatest hope; yea, the entire ground of our hope.*"

Such is the position occupied by that modest, unassuming woman, who gave birth to Jesus, in the Church of Rome. She is adored with a worship of the loftiest order; she is venerated by many millions who neglect her Son and his Father. She is at this moment the great divinity of the papal world. Nor is there a doubt but that she would denounce this impious idolatry if she were on earth, and drive her images and worshipers from every Christian temple.

*Not one Prayer was ever addressed to Mary when living, nor was any Worship ever offered her.*

While her Son lived on earth, she was respected by his followers, simply as the mother of the Baptist, or any other godly woman was esteemed. After his death, there is nothing in the sacred records about her; nor is there one single instance, in the New Testament, of reverence, veneration, *dulia*, *hyperdulia*, or *latria* given to Mary. Romish prayer-books are full of petitions to the Virgin; the Scriptures are absolutely silent about any supplications to and worship of the Saviour's mother.

*The Lord rebukes his Mother for interfering with his Business,*

At the marriage of Cana, when the wine failed, Mary, concerned for the honor of the family, told Jesus, and undoubtedly hinted to him the propriety of performing a miracle. According to the Vulgate, the only Bible recognized by the Council of Trent, the Saviour answered: "What is it to me and thee, woman? my hour is not yet come." The use of the word "woman" by the Saviour, does not lead one to think that he regarded her as "queen of heaven." His answer to her is a refusal, coupled with an intimation that she was ignorant of the time when he should assume his divine authority before men.

*The Saviour decides that every one who does his Father's Will is the equal of his Mother.*

On one occasion, it was announced to Jesus, that his mother and brethren were without, and wished to speak to him: the Saviour's reply, according to the Vulgate, was: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? and, extending his hand to his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brothers; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in the heavens, he is my brother and sister and mother." He refuses to go and speak with the "refuge of sinners, the comfortress of the afflicted," and he makes the declination publicly, as if to show that even his mother must not interfere with him in discharging the duties he owes his Father. And he immediately rebukes the idea that his mother was any more to him, as the Great Teacher, than any

other disciple; whosoever does his Father's will is dear to him, and powerful with him, as "brother, sister and mother."

*The Saviour declares that there is a greater Distinction on earth than that of being his Mother.*

On one occasion, while he was speaking, a delighted woman, most probably a mother, exclaimed, according to the Vulgate: "Blessed is the womb which bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked; and he said: Nay, rather, they are blessed who hear the word of God, and keep it." This woman properly pronounced Mary blessed for giving birth to the Redeemer. But the Saviour, while admitting that Mary had a blessing in being his mother, declares that the hearing and keeping of the word of God was a greater honor—a happier distinction. And if the inferior honor justifies the worship of Mary, on the same principle higher worship should be given to all who hear God's word and keep it. But we very much fear that if this rule was observed, most of the present Catholic saints would be discarded, and millions of godly persons, who were never inside a Romish Church, would have their images put in Catholic shrines, and prayers and devotions presented to them—because they heard GOD'S WORD AND KEPT IT, instead of observing the traditions of men.

A woman so deaf that she can hear nothing, has a powerful son, persons are ignorant of her deafness, and anxious for the favor of the mighty son; they seek the intercession of his deaf mother. But though they plead earnestly, they appeal to her in vain; she cannot hear them. In regard to all earthly prayers and devotions, Mary is a deaf woman; *she cannot hear. She knows nothing of all the words addressed to her.*

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