

And then let him who can, comprehend with what love the Most Holy Trinity blessed her. Let him comprehend the welcome given to his daughter by the Eternal Father, to his Mother by the Son, to his spouse by the Holy Ghost. The Father crowned her by imparting his power to her; the Son, his wisdom; the Holy Ghost, his love. And the three divine Persons, placing her throne at the right of that of Jesus, declared her Sovereign of heaven and earth; and commanded the angels and all creatures to acknowledge her as their Queen, and as such to serve and obey her.

II.

Let us now consider how exalted was the throne to which Mary was raised in heaven.

“If the mind of man,” says St. Bernard, “can never comprehend the immense glory prepared in heaven by God for those who on earth have loved him, as the Apostle tells us,¹ who can ever comprehend the glory that he has prepared for his beloved Mother, who, more than all men, loved him on earth; nay, even from the very first moment of her creation, loved him more than all men and angels united?”² Rightly, then, does the Church sing, that Mary having loved God more than all the angels, “the Mother of God has been exalted above them all in the heavenly kingdom.”³ Yes, “she was exalted,” says the abbot Gueric, “above the angels; so that she sees none above her but her Son,”⁴ who is the only-begotten of the Father.

Hence it is that the learned Gerson asserts that, as all the orders of angels and saints are divided into three

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

² “Quod præparavit gignenti se, quis loquatur?”—*In Assumpt. s. 1.*

³ “Exaltata est sancta Dei Genitrix super choros Angelorum ad cœlestia regna.”—*In festo Assumpt.*

⁴ “Mariam dico exaltatam super choros angelorum, ut nihil contempletur supra se Mater, nisi Filium solum.”—*In Assumpt. s. 1.*

hierarchies (according to the angelic Doctor¹ and St. Denis), so does Mary of herself constitute a hierarchy apart, the sublimest of all, and next to that of God.² And as (adds St. Antoninus) the mistress is, without comparison, above her servants, so is "Mary, who is the sovereign Lady of the angels, exalted incomparably above the angelic hierarchies."³ To understand this, we need only know what David said: *The Queen stood on thy right hand.*⁴ And in a sermon by an ancient author, among the works of St. Athanasius, these words are explained as meaning that "Mary is placed at the right hand of God."⁵

It is certain, as St. Ildephonsus says, that Mary's good works incomparably surpassed in merit those of all the saints, and therefore her reward must have surpassed theirs in the same proportion; for "as that which she bore was incomprehensible, so is the reward which she merited and received incomprehensibly greater than that of all the saints."⁶ And since it is certain that God rewards according to merit, as the Apostle writes, *who will render to every man according to his works,*⁷ it is also certain, as St. Thomas teaches, that the Blessed Virgin, "who was equal to and even superior in merit to all men and angels, was exalted above all the celestial orders."⁸ "In fine," adds St. Bernard, "let us measure the sin-

¹ P. I, q. 108.

² "Constituit Virgo sola hierarchiam secundam, sub Deo Hierarchia primo."—*Sup. Magn.* tr. 4.

³ "Virgo est domina Angelorum; ergo improporcionabiliter est supra omnem hierarchiam exaltata."—P. 4, t. 15. c. 20, § 15.

⁴ "Astitit regina a dextris tuis."—*Ps.* xlv. 10.

⁵ "Collocatur Maria a dextris Dei."—*S. de S. Deip.*

⁶ "Sicut incomparabile est quod gessit, ita et incomprehensibile præmium, et gloria ultra omnes Sanctos, quam promeruit."—*De Assumpt.* s. 2.

⁷ "Reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus."—*Rom.* ii. 6.

⁸ "Sicut habuit meritum omnium, et amplius, ita congruum fuit ut super omnes ponatur."—*S. de Ass. ex Ep.*

gular grace that she acquired on earth, and then we may measure the singular glory which she obtained in heaven;" for, "according to the measure of her grace on earth is the measure of her glory in the kingdom of the blessed."¹

A learned author, Father La Colombière,² remarks that the glory of Mary, which is a full, a complete glory, differs in that from the glory of other saints in heaven. It is true that in heaven all the blessed enjoy perfect peace and full contentment; yet it will always be true that no one of them enjoys as great glory as he could have merited had he loved and served God with greater fidelity. Hence, though the saints in heaven desire nothing more than they possess, yet in fact there is something that they could desire. It is also true that the sins which they have committed, and the time which they have lost, do not bring suffering; still it cannot be denied that a greater amount of good done in life, innocence preserved, and time well employed, give the greatest happiness. Mary desires nothing in heaven, and has nothing to desire. Who amongst the saints in heaven, except Mary, says St. Augustine,³ if asked whether he has committed sins, could say no? It is certain, as the holy Council of Trent⁴ has defined, that Mary never committed any sin of the slightest imperfection. She not only never lost divine grace, and never even obscured it, but she never kept it idle; she never performed an action which was not meritorious; she never pronounced a word, never had a thought, never drew a breath, that was not directed to the greater glory of God. In fine,

¹ "Quantum enim gratiæ in terris adepta est præ cæteris, tantum et in cælis obtinet gloriæ singularis."—*In Assumpt.* s. 1.

² *Assumpt.* s. 1.

³ *De Nat. et Gr.* c. 36.

⁴ *Sess. vi. can.* 23.

she never cooled in her ardor or stopped a single moment in her onward course towards God; she never lost anything by negligence, but always corresponded to grace with her whole strength, and loved God as much as she could love him. "O Lord," she now says to him in heaven, "if I loved Thee not as much as Thou didst deserve, at least I loved Thee as much as I could."

In each of the saints there were different graces, as St. Paul says, *there are diversities of graces.*¹ So that each of them, by corresponding to the grace that he had received, excelled in some particular virtue—the one in saving souls, the other in leading a penitential life; one in enduring torments, another in a life of prayer: and this is the reason for which the holy Church, in celebrating their festivals, says of each, *there was not found one like him.*² And as in their merits they differ, so do they differ in celestial glory: *for star differeth from star.*³ Apostles differ from martyrs, confessors from virgins, the innocent from penitents. The Blessed Virgin, being full of all graces, excelled each saint in every particular virtue: she was the Apostle of the apostles; she was the Queen of martyrs, for she suffered more than all of them; she was the standard-bearer of virgins, the model of married people; she united in herself perfect innocence and perfect mortification: in fine, she united in her heart all the most heroic virtues that any saint ever practised. Hence of her it was said that *the Queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.*⁴ For all the graces, privileges, and merits of the other saints were all united in Mary, as the Abbot of Celles says:

¹ "Divisiones vero gratiarum sunt."—*I Cor.* xii. 4.

² "Non est inventus similis illi."

³ "Stella enim a stella differt in claritate."—*Ibid.* xv. 41.

⁴ "Astittit Regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate."—*Ps.* xlv. 10.

“The prerogatives of all the saints, O Virgin, thou hast united in thyself.”¹

She possessed them in such a degree that, as “the splendor of the sun exceeds that of all the stars united,” so, says St. Basil of Seleucia, “does Mary’s glory exceed that of all the blessed.”² St. Peter Damian adds, that “as the light of the moon and stars is so entirely eclipsed on the appearance of the sun, that it is as if it was not, so also does Mary’s glory so far exceed the splendor of all men and angels, that, so to say, they do not appear in heaven.”³ Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna asserts, with St. Bernard, that the blessed participate in part in the divine glory; but that the Blessed Virgin has been, in a certain way, so greatly enriched with it, that it would seem that no creature could be more closely united with God than Mary is: “She has penetrated into the bottom of the deep, and seems immersed as deeply as it is possible for a creature in that inaccessible light.”⁴ Blessed Albert the Great confirms this, saying that our Queen “contemplates the majesty of God in incomparably closer proximity than all other creatures.”⁵ The above-named St. Bernardine moreover says, “that as the other planets are illumined by the sun, so do all the blessed receive light and an in-

¹ “Omnium Sanctorum privilegia omnia, O Virgo! habes in te congesta.”—*Cont. B. V. c. 2.*

² “Maria universos tantum excedit, quantum sol reliqua astra.”—*In Annunt.*

³ “Sol ita sibi siderum et lunæ rapit positionem, ut sint quasi non sint; similiter et Virga Jesse utrorumque spirituum hebetat dignitatem, ut in comparatione Virginis nec possint apparere.”—*In Assumpt.*

⁴ “Divinæ gloriæ participatio cæteris quodammodo per partes datur; sed, secundum Bernardum, Beata Virgo Maria divinæ sapientiæ penetravit abyssum, ut, quantum creaturæ conditio patitur, illi luci inaccessibili videatur immersa.”—*Pro Fest. V. M. s. 13, a. 1, c. 10.*

⁵ “Visio Virginis Matris super omnes creaturas impropotionabiliter contemplatur majestatem Dei.”—*Sup. Misrus. q. 61, pr. § 5.*

crease of hapiness from the sight of Mary."¹ And in another place he also asserts, that "when the glorious Virgin Mother of God ascended to heaven, she augmented the joy of all its inhabitants."² For the same reason St. Peter Damian says, that "the greatest glory of the blessed in heaven is, after seeing God, the presence of this most beautiful Queen."³ And St. Bonaventure, that, "after God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy is Mary."⁴

Let us, then, rejoice with Mary that God has exalted her to so high a throne in heaven. Let us also rejoice on our own account; for though our Mother is no longer present with us on earth, having ascended in glory to heaven, yet in affection she is always with us. Nay, even being there nearer to God, she better knows our miseries; and her pity for us is greater, while she is better able to help us. "Is it possible, O Blessed Virgin," says St. Peter Damian, "because thou art so greatly exalted, thou hast forgotten us in our miseries? Ah no, God forbid that we should have such a thought! So compassionate a heart cannot but pity our so great miseries."⁵ If Mary's compassion for the miserable," says St. Bonaventure, "was great when she lived upon earth, it is far greater now that she reigns in heaven."⁶

Let us, in the mean time, dedicate ourselves to the

¹ "Quodammodo, sicut cætera luminaria irradiantur a sole, sic tota cœlestis curia a gloriosa Virgine lætificatur."—*Loc. cit.* c. 3.

² "Virgo gloriosa, cœlos ascendens, supernorum gaudia civium copiosis augmentis cumulavit."—*In Assumpt.* s. 1.

³ "Summa gloria est, post Deum, te videre."—*In Nat. B. V.* s. 1.

⁴ "Post Deum major nostra gloria, majus nostrum gaudium de Maria est."—*Spec. B. V. lect.* 6.

⁵ "Numquid, quia ita deificata es, ideo nostræ humanitatis oblita es? Nequaquam, domina! non convenit tantæ misericordiæ, tantam misericordiam oblivisci."—*Loco supra cit.*

⁶ "Magna erga miseros fuit misericordia Mariæ adhuc exulantis in mundo, sed multo major est regnantis in cœlo."—*Spec. B. V. lect.* 10.

service of this Queen, to honor and love her as much as we can; for, as Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "she is not like other rulers, who oppress their vassals with burdens and taxes; but she enriches her servants with graces, merits, and rewards."¹ Let us also entreat her in the words of the Abbot Gueric: "O Mother of mercy, thou who sittest on so lofty a throne and in such close proximity to God, satiate thyself with the glory of thy Jesus, and send us, thy servants, the fragments that are left. Thou dost now enjoy the heavenly banquet of thy Lord; and we, who are still on earth, as dogs under the table, ask thy mercy."²

EXAMPLE.*

St. Peter Damian relates the following of his brother Marinus. The latter having had the misfortune to sin against the holy virtue, went shortly after before an altar of the Blessed Virgin and consecrated himself to her service. As a sign of this oblation, he put a girdle around his neck and addressed the Blessed Virgin in these words: "Dear Lady, thou mirror of purity, I poor sinner have offended God and thee. I know no other remedy but to enter thy holy service. I therefore offer myself to thee today: deign to take a poor rebel and do not reject me. At the foot of the altar he left a sum of money and promised that every year he would offer an equal amount as a mark of his servitude. When after a long and God-fearing life he came to die, he said shortly before expiring: "Arise, arise—and render homage to our loving Virgin Mother. What a favor for me, O Queen of Heaven, that thou shouldst deign to visit thy poor servant. Bless me, my Lady, and do not let me be lost after being honored by thy presence." Shortly after his brother Damian entered and the dying man told him of the appar-

¹ "Regina Maria largitur servis suis dona gratiarum, vestes virtutum, thesauros meritorum, et magnitudinem præmiorum."—*De Laud. M. V.* l. 6, c. 13.

² "O Mater misericordiæ! saturare gloria Filii tui, et dimitte reliquias tuas parvulis tuis; tu ad mensam Domina, nos sub mensa catelli."—*In Assumpt.* s. 4.

tion adding that Mary had blessed him. At the same time he complained because those present had not arisen when Mary appeared to him. In a few minutes he closed his eyes in death.¹

Prayer.

O great, exalted, and most glorious Lady, prostrate at the foot of thy throne we adore thee from this valley of tears. We rejoice at thy immense glory, with which our Lord has enriched thee; and now that thou art enthroned as Queen of heaven and earth, ah forget us not, thy poor servants. Disdain not, from the high throne on which thou reignest, to cast thine eyes of mercy on us miserable creatures. The nearer thou art to the source of graces, in the greater abundance canst thou procure those graces for us. In heaven thou seest more plainly our miseries; hence thou must compassionate and succor us the more. Make us thy faithful servants on earth, that thus we may one day bless thee in heaven. On this day, on which thou wast made Queen of the universe, we also consecrate ourselves to thy service. In the midst of thy so great joy, console us also by accepting us as thy servants. Thou art, then, our mother. Ah, most sweet Mother, most amiable Mother, thine altars are surrounded by many people: some ask to be cured of a disorder, some to be relieved in their necessities, some for an abundant harvest, and some for success in litigation. We ask thee for graces more pleasing to thy heart: obtain for us that we may be humble, detached from the world, resigned to the divine will; obtain us the holy fear of God, a good death, and Paradise. O Lady, change us from sinners into saints; work this miracle, which will redound more to thy honor than if thou didst restore sight to a thousand blind persons, or didst raise a thousand from the dead. Thou art so powerful with God, we need only say that thou art his Mother, his beloved one, his most dear one, filled with his grace. What can he ever deny thee? O most beautiful Queen, we have no pretensions to see thee on earth, but we do desire to go to see thee in Paradise; and it is thou who must obtain us this grace. For it we hope with confidence. Amen, amen.

¹ *Opus* c. 33, c. 4.