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Imitation of Christ, by Thomas á Kempis: Book 4, Chapter 2
That the Great Goodness and Love of God
Is Exhibited to Man in This Sacrament

In confidence of Thy goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near, sick to the Healer, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, needy to the King of Heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to the Creator, desolate to my own tender Comforter. "But whence is this to me," that Thou comest unto me (Luke 1:43)? What am I, that Thou shouldst grant me Thine own self? how dare a sinner appear before Thee?

And how is it that Thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a sinner? Thou knowest Thy servant, and art well aware that he hath in him no good thing, for which Thou shouldst grant him this. I confess therefore mine own vileness, I acknowledge Thy goodness, I praise Thy tender mercy, and give Thee thanks for Thy transcendent love.

From True Devotion To the Blessed Virgin Mary, Nos. 243-254 243.

Loving slaves of Jesus in Mary should hold in high esteem devotion to Jesus, the Word of God, in the great mystery of the Incarnation, March 25th, which is the mystery proper to this devotion, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the following reasons: a) That we might honour and imitate the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary, for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything. b) That we might thank God for the incomparable graces he has conferred upon Mary and especially that of choosing her to be his most worthy Mother. This choice was made in the mystery of the incarnation. These are the two principal ends of the slavery of Jesus in Mary.

245. a) Since we live in an age of pride when a great number of haughty scholars, with proud and critical minds, find fault even with long-established and sound devotions, it is better to speak of "slavery of Jesus in Mary" and to call oneself "slave of Jesus" rather than "slave of Mary". We then avoid giving any pretext for criticism. In this way, we name this devotion after its ultimate end which is Jesus, rather than after the way and the means to arrive there, which is Mary. However, we can very well use either term without any scruple, as I myself do.

246. b) Since the principal mystery celebrated and honoured in this devotion is the mystery of the Incarnation where we find Jesus only in Mary, having become incarnate in her womb, it is appropriate for us to say, "slavery of Jesus in Mary", of Jesus dwelling enthroned in Mary, according to the beautiful prayer, recited by so many great souls, "O Jesus living in Mary".

249. Those who accept this devotion should have a great love for the Hail Mary, or, as it is called, the Angelic Salutation. Few Christians, however enlightened, understand the value, merit, excellence and necessity of the Hail Mary. Our Blessed Lady herself had to appear on several occasions to men of great holiness and insight, such as St. Dominic, St. John Capistran and Blessed Alan de Rupe, to convince them of the richness of this prayer.

Recite: Litany of the Holy Ghost, Ave Maris Stella, Litany of the Holy Name, St. Louis de Montfort's Prayer to Mary, and O Jesus Living In Mary (See Appendix)

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The Virgin Mary's Assumption into Heaven

The soul to its glorious Queen:

My dear Heavenly Mother, I am back in your maternal arms and, as I look at you, a sweet smile appears on your purest lips. Today you are rejoicing, and it seems as if you wish to confide something yet more surprising to me, your child. Holy mother, I entreat you to touch my mind and purify my heart with your maternal hands, so that I may understand your holy lessons and put them into practice.

Lesson of the Queen of Heaven:

My dearest child, today your mother rejoices. I wish to tell you of [the events surrounding] the day in which I finished accomplishing the Divine Will on earth and made my flight to heaven. There was not in me one breath, heartbeat or step in which the Divine Fiat did not discover its complete act. And this complete act embellished, enriched and sanctified me so much that even the angels were left enraptured.

Before departing for my heavenly homeland, I returned again to Jerusalem with my beloved John. It was

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the last time that I would walk the earth in mortal flesh, and all creation, as if realizing this, prostrated itself around me. As I passed by, all creation – from the fish of the sea to the tiniest bird – wanted to be blessed by their Queen. And I blessed them all and extended to them my last goodbye. Then I arrived in Jerusalem and, withdrawing in to the little home where John had brought me, I enclosed myself in it never to leave again.

Blessed child, I began to feel within me such a martyrdom of love; my love, enflamed by the ardent yearnings to reach my Son in heaven, so consumed me that my human nature felt ill with love,⁴⁸ and experienced intense deliriums and pinings of pure love.

Because my human nature was conceived without sin and lived completely in the Divine Will, the seed of natural evils was not in me, thus I experienced neither physical illness nor the slightest malady. And if I experienced so many sorrows, they were all of the supernatural order. For such sorrows provided me with the occasion to render fruitful my maternity and to conquer many of my children – they became honours and triumphs for your Heavenly Mother. Do you see then, dear child, what it means to live in the Divine Will? It means to lose

⁴⁸ Here Mary describes the mystical phenomenon that God produces in the soul where he wounds it with an infusion of the beatific love of heaven. This phenomenon is also described by St. John of the Cross in his 11th stanza of the *Spiritual Canticle* where he writes of “the sickness of love” that cannot be cured except by very presence and image of God.

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the seed of natural evils that produce not honours and triumphs, but weakness, misery and defeats.

Therefore, dearest child, listen to the last words of your mother who is about to make her flight to heaven. I cannot leave for heaven happy if I am not certain that my child will be safeguarded. So before departing, I now wish to bequeath to you my testament,⁴⁹ leaving you the dowry of that same Divine Will that your mother possesses and that enriched me with so much grace that I became the Mother of the Word, the Lady and Queen of the Heart of Jesus, and the Mother and Queen of all creatures.

Now, dear child, this is the last day of the month that is consecrated to me. I spoke to you with great love of what the Divine Will wrought in me – of the great good it can do and of what it means to let oneself be dominated by it. I also spoke to you of the grave evils of the human will. Do you perhaps think that my lessons were a simple narration? By no means; when your mother speaks, she desires to enrich you. So it is with ardent love I spoke to you and, in each word I spoke, I bound your soul to the Divine Fiat and prepared for you the dowry with which you might live enriched, happily and endowed with a divine power.

Now that I am about to leave, accept my testament;⁵⁰ may your soul be the paper on which I write –

⁴⁹ The original Italian texts states: “...voglio fare il mio testamento, lasciandoti per dote quella stessa Volontà Divina...”

⁵⁰ The original Italian texts states: “...accetta il mio testamento.”

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with the gold pen of the Divine Will and with the ink of the ardent love that consumes me – the testimony of the dowry I leave to you. Blessed child, assure me that you will never again do your own will; place your hand on my maternal Heart, and promise me that you will enclose your will in my Heart, so that, no longer feeling your will, you will not have any occasion to do it. And I will bring your will to heaven with me as the triumph and conquest of my child.

Dear child, listen to the last words of your mother as I die of pure love: Receive my last blessing as the seal of the life of the Divine Will that I leave in you, which will form your heaven, your sun, and your seas of love and grace. In these last moments, your heavenly mother desires to inundate you with love and pour herself out in you, and I do so in order that in your last words you may tell me that you prefer to die and make any sacrifice, than to do one act of your own will. Tell me you will do so, tell me so my child!

The soul:

Holy mother, in my ardent sorrow I tell you in tears: If you see that I am about to do one act of my own will, make me die [to it]; come and take my soul into your arms to heaven. And from my heart I promise you, I vow to never ever do my own will.

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The Queen of Love:

Blessed child, how happy I am. I would not have told you of my departure for heaven if you would not have reassured me that you, my child, would allow yourself to be endowed with the Divine Will. Be certain that from heaven I will not leave you; I shall not leave you as an orphan, but I will guide you in all things – from your least to your greatest needs, all you have to do is invoke me and immediately I will come and offer you my motherly assistance.

Now, dear child, listen closely to what your tender mother wishes to tell you. I was already ill with love.⁵¹ In a prodigious way the Divine Fiat consoled the Apostles and me as well, by allowing all of the Apostles, except one, to surround me as I was about to make my flight to heaven. [In acknowledging that these were my last moments on earth] all experienced heartache and wept bitterly, and I consoled them. In a special way I entrusted to all of them the nascent holy Church and imparted my maternal blessing to them that conveyed to their hearts the [grace of] paternal love toward souls. My dear Son, who could no longer be without his mother, paid me continual visits by going back and forth from heaven to earth.⁵²

⁵¹ Cf. footnote 47, p. 180.

⁵² Throughout her writings Luisa refers to Mary and Jesus' visits to each other as "bilocative acts" of the soul, respectively from earth to heaven (when Mary was in the womb of Ann) and from heaven to earth (when Jesus could no longer be without his mother). These acts of

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As I breathed my last out of pure love in the endless sea of the Divine Will, my Son received me in his arms and took me to heaven among the angelic choirs who praised me as their Queen. I can say that heaven emptied itself to come to me and everyone [in heaven] celebrated. In gazing at me, all remained enraptured and with one accord exclaimed: “Who is she who comes from the [land of] exile, completely immersed in her Lord, all beautiful and all holy, bearing the Queen’s scepter?”⁵³ So great is she that the heavens have lowered themselves to receive her. No other creature has entered these heavenly regions so adorned, so striking and so powerful; indeed she has supremacy over all.”

Now, my child, do you wish to know who she is to whom all heaven sang hymns, and who caused all of heaven to be enraptured? It is I, she who never did her will. The Divine Will abounded in me to such an extent that it extended in my soul the most beautiful heavens, the most

bilocation are also rediscovered in Luisa’s descriptions of Adam and Eve, where their souls bilocated in all created things.

⁵³ While one might interpret this phrase to suggest that the angels were unaware of Mary until her Assumption into heaven, Luisa reveals quite the opposite. “*Here I am, Holy mother, near your cradle to witness your miraculous birth. The heavens are astonished, the sun is fixed upon you with its light, the earth exults with joy and feels honoured because it is inhabited by its little newborn Queen; the angels vie to be around your cradle to honour you and act on your every wish. Everyone honours you and wants to celebrate your birth*” (*The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Day 10). Also Luisa was known by everyone in heaven before her death (L. Piccarreta, volume 14, March 10, 1922), and so too are the souls who live in the Divine Will (Ibid, volume 36, May 10, 1938).

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refulgent suns along with seas of beauty, love and holiness with which I could administer light to all. To all I could administer love and sanctity while enclosing everything and everyone within my heavenly soul. All this was the work of the Divine Will operating in me. The Divine Will accomplished in me the great prodigy, whereby I was the only creature to enter heaven with the Kingdom of the Divine Will established in its soul.

Now, in gazing upon me the whole heavenly court stood amazed, for in beholding me they discovered the heavens, and in gazing upon me again, they discovered the sun. And unable to take their gaze away from me, they discovered more deeply within me the sea, as well as the clearest earth of my humanity adorned with the most beautiful flowerings. And enraptured, they exclaimed: “How beautiful she is! She has centralized everything within herself; in her nothing is lacking. Among all the works of her Creator, she is the only complete work of all creation!”

Now, blessed child, this was the first feast of the Divine Will celebrated in heaven [to honour] the very many prodigies wrought by the Divine Will within a soul. Therefore, upon my entrance to heaven, the whole heavenly court celebrated all the beautiful and great things that the Divine Fiat can do within a soul. Since then, this feast has not been repeated, and this is why your mother ardently yearns for the Divine Will to reign in souls in an absolute manner; I yearn for souls to allow the Divine Will to repeat in them its great prodigies and its stupendous feasts.

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The soul:

Mother of love, Sovereign Empress, from heaven in which you gloriously reign, turn your merciful gaze to earth and have pity on me. Oh, how I long for my dear mother, as my life is empty without you. Indeed, without my mother everything in my life is unstable. So, do not leave me halfway along my journey, but continue to guide me until all things in me have converted into the Will of God, so that it may establish its life and its Kingdom in me.

Aspiration:

Today, to honour me, recite three *Gloria's* to the Most Holy Trinity to thank God in my name for the great glory He gave me when I was assumed into heaven. And ask me to come to assist you at the moment of your death.

Exclamation:

Heavenly Mother, enclose my will within your Heart and infuse within my soul the sun of the Divine Will.

Novena to The Divine Mercy

Seventh Day

1224 Today bring to Me the souls who especially venerate and glorify My mercy, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls sorrowed most over My Passion and entered most deeply into My Spirit. They are living images of My Compassionate Heart. These souls will shine with a special brightness in the next life. Not one of them will go into the fire of hell. I shall particularly defend each one of them at the hour of death.

1225 Most Merciful Jesus, whose Heart is Love Itself, receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of those who particularly extol and venerate the greatness of Your mercy. These souls are mighty with the very power of God Himself. In the midst of all afflictions and adversities they go forward, confident of Your mercy. These souls are united to Jesus and carry all mankind on their shoulders. These souls will not be judged severely, but Your mercy will embrace them as they depart from this life.

A soul who praises the goodness of her Lord Is especially loved by Him.

She is always close to the living fountain And draws graces from Mercy Divine.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls who glorify and venerate Your greatest attribute, that of Your fathomless mercy, and who are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. These souls are a living Gospel; their hands are full of deeds of mercy, and their spirit, overflowing with joy, sings a canticle of mercy to You, O Most High! I beg You O God: Show them Your mercy according to the hope and trust they have placed in You. Let there be accomplished in them the promise of Jesus, who said to them, I Myself will defend as My own glory, during their lifetime, and especially at the hour of their death, those souls who will venerate My fathomless mercy.