

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

THE OPEN DOOR

There's a dear old Irish saying That is murmured o'er and o'er; "When misfortunes close around you Sure God leaves an open door."

QUEEN OF THE ROSARY

There is an element of poetry in many of the Church's devotions. She makes an appeal to the senses, the feelings, the heart of man as well as to his intellect and will.

Thus with the coming of the Springtime the month of May is dedicated to the Lily of Israel. Does not the period of promise, of new leaves and budding flowers, the harbinger of the fullness of summer belong to her, just as her birth was the promise of the coming of Him who was to be the complete redemption of Jew and Gentile?

Non-Catholics have not been tardy in proclaiming this fitness of Mary's honor, though failing unfortunately to perceive its supernatural fullness.

Ave Maria, maiden mild! Listen to a maiden's prayer! Thou canst hear through from the wild; Thou canst save amidst despair.

And Wordsworth, in one of his most beautiful sonnets, speaks of Mary as "Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

Mother! whose Virgin bosom was uncrossed With the least shade of thought to sin allied; Woman! above all women glorified, Our tainted nature's solitary boast;

Brighter than eastern skies at day-break strewn With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast, Thy image falls to earth. Yet some I ween, Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend As to a visible form in which did blend

All that was mixed and reconciled in these Of mother's love with maiden purity, Of high with low, celestial with terrene.

Again Edgar Allen Poe could confidently exclaim: At morn, at noon, at twilight dim, Maria, thou hast heard my hymn! In joy and woe, in good and ill, Mother of God, be with me still!

Yet no poem ever dedicated to God's mother can compare to the beauty of the verse which devout Catholics of every rank in life recite so often to the Queen of the Rosary. The statement is proved by the universal consent of Mary's clients. The Vicars of Christ, the Supreme Pontiffs, find strength and consolation in the daily saying of their beads; learned theologians and philosophers turn their weary thoughts from the subtleties of metaphysical disputes to the sweet simplicity of the rosary; the priest tired out from long hours in the confessional and other ministerial works or discouraged at the apparent failure of his efforts finds refreshment in the pouring forth of the repeated "Hail Mary, full of grace!" But no matter what field of labor may be that of the anointed minister of God, no matter to what

heights of sanctity he may attain, his beads are his daily source of help. How beautifully and simply does Father Abram Ryan express the sentiments of all his brethren: Sweet, blessed beads! I would not part With one of you for richest gem That gleams in kingly diadem. Ye know the history of my heart. For many and many a time, in my grief, My weary fingers wandered round Thy circled chain, and always found In some Hail Mary sweet relief. How many a story you might tell Of inner life to all unknown! I trusted you and you alone. But, ah, ye keep my secrets well. Ye are the only chain I wear— A sign that I am but the slave, In life, in death, beyond the grave, Of Jesus and His mother fair.

The case is the same with the devout laity. Who of us does not recall as one of our early childhood impressions a devoted Catholic mother reciting her rosary while perhaps she anxiously watched over her sickbed? And how diligently she taught us the words of the Hail Mary and consecrated us to the protection of the Immaculate Virgin! By meditating on the meaning of the repeated Ave has many a noble Catholic mother steeled her soul for the deep sacrifices she paid to have us become faithful members of the true Church. But strong men too have not been unaware of the strength that comes from the recitation of the rosary. We read of Catholic statesmen saying their beads as the best preparation for a parliamentary speech on which the fate of a nation depends. In our own country but recently we had that noble layman, Joyce Kilmer, soldier and poet, telling us of the beauties of the Marian song. He was a convert to the faith, and never did he cease to thank God for the precious pearl he had found. When the United States entered the World War, though a married man and the father of four small children, he entered the army as a volunteer. Going over to France, he was not content to remain in a secure place, but sought out the dangerous task of making observations in No Man's Land. While thus engaged, his young and brilliant life was taken. Yet it was he who could in his Catholicity write from France to a friend: "Pray that I may love God more." And it was this virile soldier, patriot and child of Mary who sang of the rosary: There is one harp that any hand can play, And from its strings what harmonies arise! There is one song that any mouth can say— A song that lingers when all singing dies. When on their beads our Mother's children pray, Immortal music charms the grateful skies.

We need, then, but to say the beads devoutly to experience to the truth attested to by all Catholics that there is a sweetness and consolation in the rosary that is more than natural; that it is Our Lady herself with her divine Son who is present with us in the telling of the oft repeated Hail Mary. It is regrettable, I think, that the old Catholic practice of reciting the family rosary in common each evening has largely passed away. Still each of us may in private every day place with childlike simplicity this mystical crown of roses on the brow of Mary Immaculate. During the month of October the Church urges us most strongly to begin such a salutary custom. After all, it will consume but some twelve or fifteen minutes of our time. We do not find it difficult to allot a similar part of our twenty-four hours for less profitable tasks. And may we not rest assured that the petition, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death," so often directed to the Mother of Mercy herself, will not fall on closed ears? Surely we shall have the blessings of Jesus and His Mother on us now in life and especially in the hour of death. —Daniel J. O'Connell, S. J., in the Queen's Work.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

MONTH OF THE ROSARY

Say, dearest Mother Mary, can it be That, having May, thou claim'st October, too? The flowers of spring we plucked And gave to thee, And these sad leaves of autumn wilt thou sue? When evenings first were lengthening, calm and warm, We lit thy altars gay with lily bloom; Now falls the night full swift, with lowering storm, And still thy tapers stay the advancing gloom.

'Tis thine, and ten times welcome, Mother, dear! This ripe and crisp October month is thine, What though our flowers and leaves be scant and sere? The Calendar of Love knows no decline.

Accept these autumn wreaths—our chaplets bright With crimson—yellow-stained, like sunset skies. O Star of Morn; be still our star at night, And bless our fading years, as thou didst bless their rise. —FATHER RYAN

OCTOBER Though devotion to the Guardian Angels holds so prominent a place in God's scheme for our salvation, not a few practicing Catholics are wont to say: "I sometimes pray to my patron saint, but not to my Guardian Angel, yet the Church has dedicated to them the month of October, just as May to Our Lady and March to St. Joseph, lest we should forget them."

The fact that Leo XIII. decreed that the Rosary should be said publicly every day of October for the wants of the Church brought no change to the old regulation. We were never told that the comparatively new devotion was meant to supersede the old one. They do not clash. Moreover, to give us, as it were, an opportunity of making up for past deficiency and forgetfulness, the Church has set apart the second of October for the feast of the Guardian Angels.

As September draws towards its close we begin to think and to say: "How quickly the days are shortening, it will soon be dark very early, the long bright days are over!" Human nature, created for light as well as for happiness, has an instinctive dislike and fear of darkness. So, as a good mother tells the little one just tucked up in bed: "Do not mind being left in the dark, child, you know your own Angel is with you." Our Holy Mother the Church chooses this time of the year to remind us that we are surrounded by heavenly spirits who, if they cannot literally lighten our path (we must live by faith), stand by to defend us against hidden dangers, and shed their light over our soul, to dispel the darkness there.

Once a mite was heard asking: "On which side of my bed stands my Angel Mother?" And a nun related that a little girl, a newcomer to the convent school, being told at night to fold up her clothes neatly and put them on a chair beside her bed, stammered, blushing: "Would they not do as well at the foot of the bed? I always leave a chair for my Guardian Angel."

Blessed little ones who start on the road towards heaven in so sweet a companionship! who cling to it by faith as they grow older. They will be led safely to the end of their journey, though, maybe, through many perils and many sorrows. As to the souls who carelessly ignore or at least neglect their Holy Guardian, they will never know what graces they lose in this world and what happiness hereafter, until it is too late.

In most convent schools there is a sodality of the Guardian Angels. But why is not this devotion mentioned more frequently by Catholic mothers and school teachers? It would soon make an impression on the children's heart and in time might strike deep roots there. At least during the month let us remember the teaching of the Church on this subject.

Out of the numberless multitude of heavenly spirits God appoints to each soul the one most suited by his own characteristics and individuality to understand it and help it. At the same time giving them special light concerning their charge and a love tender and enduring beyond all we may conceive. So much so that whatever may be our ingratitude and indifference towards them, nothing can tire or diminish their watchful care over us, not only because it is God's will, but because of the prompting of their own inclination. The angels are generally represented with wings to give us, it has been said, some idea of the promptitude with which they start hither and thither to do God's bidding. But probably their wings have also another meaning deeper and more intimately connected with us.

In the Old Testament the metaphor of wings spread out is often used as a symbol of safe shelter, loving protection. "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings," says the Psalmist. Again: "Under the shadow of Thy wings I shall hope." And: "He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shall thou trust."

Our Lord condescends to liken Himself in such tender words to the hen spreading her wings over her brood: "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings and ye would not."

The very name: guardian, sums up all our Angel is to us, but to help us, as it were, to fathom the meaning of the word, the Church shows us pictures of the winged Angels: If anything frightens the little chicks they rush to hide under their mother's wings. If she sees any danger threatening them from afar she calls to them and they run to their shelter. So we should turn to our Guardian Angel in every fear and trouble. We should take heed of his calls and warnings. Are we not often deaf to both?

Ingratitude is a base thing indeed, we strongly resent it in our fellow creatures. Yet how ungrateful we are to the heaven-sent protectors who should be our very best friends. Let us ask our Angel to forgive us, and during this month let us endeavor to be more mindful of his presence, to form a habit of having recourse to him in our daily troubles and difficulties. What a difference would not such a practice soon make in our life! Now may the Holy Angels in whose behalf these pages have been

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written, lay them at the feet of their Queen—the *Domina Angelorum* of the liturgy—and ask her to endow them with some mysterious power, some hidden charm which will work on the mind and heart of their readers, that henceforth every one of them may love his or her own Guardian Angel. —M. H. in The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.



Answers for last week: Top picture, Gospel END of Mass Sunday before; one under it, Gospel IN last Sunday's Mass. Sta. MATHEW (man), MARK (lion), LUKE (ox), JOHN (eagle).



These ten drawings make five pairs, three from the Old Testament and two from the New. One of these figures has a prominent place in the Church's calendar this week.

Answers next week.

Plant in your heart Jesus Christ crucified and all the crosses of this world will seem to you like roses.—St. Francis de Sales. Prayer is one of the oldest adjuncts to health that we have found, and one of the most efficient. Instead of being out of date it is quite as powerful for good now as it ever has been in times of trial, a source of consolation and strength that makes good health ever so much easier to attain and maintain than without it.



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