

# The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname.)—St. Pacian, 4th Century.

LONDON, ONTARIO, SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1896.

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VOLUME XVIII.

## The Message.

I had a message to send her,  
To her whom my soul loves best;  
But I had my task to finish,  
And she had gone to rest.  
To rest in the far bright heaven—  
Oh! so far away from here!  
It was vain to speak to my darling,  
For I knew she could not hear.

I had a message to send her,  
So tender, and true, and sweet,  
I longed for an angel to bear it,  
And lay it down at her feet.  
I placed it one summer evening  
On a little white cloud of mist;  
But it faded in golden splendor,  
And died in the crimson west.

I gave it the lark next morning,  
And it watched it soar and soar;  
But its pinions grew faint and weary,  
And it fluttered to earth once more.  
I cried, in my passionate longing,  
Has the earth no angel friend  
Who will carry my love's message  
My heart desires to send.

Then I heard a strain of music,  
So mighty, so pure, so dear,  
That my very sorrow was silent,  
And my heart began to cheer.  
I rose in harmonious raptures,  
Of mingled voices and strings,  
And I tenderly laid my message  
On music's outspread wings.

And I heard it float farther and farther,  
In sound more perfect than speech,  
Farther than sight can follow,  
Farther than soul can reach.  
I knew that at last my message  
Had passed through the golden gate;  
So my heart is no longer restless,  
And I am content to wait.

—Adele Anne Proctor.

## THE VIRGIN-QUEEN OF MAY.

Beauty of the Devotion of this Month  
In Honor of the Mother of God.

Our Lady's month! Is there a Catholic community in Christendom that is not quickened by its devotional spirit? writes the Rev. Arthur Barry O'Neill, C. S. C., in the *Ave Maria*. Is there a Catholic home in the wide world over whose spiritual atmosphere is not clarified and warmed by its beneficent sunshine? Nay, is there a Catholic heart among all the millions beating in sympathy with mother Church that does not, by unwonted thrills of religious joy, acknowledge its suave and gracious influence? Luxuriant efflorescence of a devotion planted when the Almighty's promise of a Redeemer to come lightened the burden of our first parents' woe, taking deep and vigorous root when the apostolic twelve paid loving tribute of sincerest homage to the Virgin Mother in the flushing dawn of the Christian era, and developing a lusty growth through all the centuries that have intervened between the "Son, behold Thy Mother of Calvary" and "I am the Immaculate Conception" of Lourdes—the month of Mary is the loveliest manifestation of religious sentiment that has yet appeared in the Church's history to beautify the world redeemed by Mary's Son.

Little or nothing would it avail us to inquire when and where these holy devotions to the Queen of Heaven took their special rise, or to whose inspiration they are indebted for a practice so thoroughly congenial to the affections and needs of Catholic hearts and souls. Whether or not the practice was the over-flowering love-bloom of childish hearts beneath the sunny glory of Italian skies, and found its first expression in the tuneful chant of Loreto's Litany by madonnate devotees gathered around the Madonna's statue in some tranquil by-street of the Eternal City, it was so clearly in harmony with Catholic faith and traditions, its desirability was so manifestly apparent, that no sooner was it suggested than the Catholic universe hastened to adopt it. And so it has come to pass that, in whatsoever quarter of the world the sweet old story of Bethlehem and Nazareth has evoked the veneration and love of human hearts. May, the fairest and most gracious month of all the joyous springtime—the poetic season of nature's rejuvenescence; of vivifying sunlight, balmy zephyrs, and fragrant odors; of purring streamlets, blithe-sounding meadows,—has been dedicated to her whose advent in this singular world was the veritable spring-time of humanity's hopes; whose incomparable grace and beauty the Holy Spirit has suggested in the oft-repeated titles: "Flower of the Field," "Lily of the Valley," "Rose of the Garden of Jericho."

One of the most striking facts in connection with the development of Catholic devotion to Our Lady that is constantly going on from decade to decade and century to century—a development of which the special exercises of the present month furnish a salient instance—is a notable diminution in the insistence with which the old-time charge of Mariolatry is preferred against us by those outside the fold. Whether it be that the gross ignorance formerly displayed concerning the Blessed Virgin is becoming dispelled in an appreciable measure, or that many of our prescribes have come to entertain sounder and more rational views as to Mary's place in the scheme of the world's redemption and sanctification. Certain it is that Our Lady's cult, as the years go by, evokes fewer tirades of abuse from those who boast of their freedom from the "superstitions of Rome."

Probably the change is due in part to both these causes. No fairly educated Protestant, however inimical he may be to the Church and her tenets, will stultify himself to-day by maintaining that we consider a Blessed Virgin equal or in any way comparable to God, or that we believe her other than entirely dependent on God for her existence, her privileges,

her grace and her glory. It is evident also that, in at least one of the multitudinous heretical sects, the true Catholic idea of Our Lady is rapidly gaining ground; and that the adherents of that sect not only appreciate but imitate the strong and loving expressions with which, in the impassioned ardor of genuine love, we sometimes address the Immaculate Queen of Heaven.

Not that, even among the educated or in the ranks of the Anglicans, dissent has altogether died away or criticism been silenced. We are still accused of paying too lavish homage to the Virgin Mary, of dwelling too long on her privileges, and of enhancing them beyond just bounds; of invoking her too assiduously, and of according to her, in our public services and liturgical prayers, titles befitting rather the Son than the Mother. We are told, in a word, that the prominence which is enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin in the Liturgy of the Church and in the spiritual life of the Church's children is a prominence for which neither Scripture nor apostolical tradition furnishes a sufficient warrant. Those who advance such arguments can neither have studied Holy Writ to its proper purpose, or traced with anything approaching scientific accuracy the mighty river of Marian devotion back to its origin and source. We are told, in a word, that the prominence which is enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin in the Liturgy of the Church and in the spiritual life of the Church's children is a prominence for which neither Scripture nor apostolical tradition furnishes a sufficient warrant.

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Of closer and more practical interest to us, however, than points of controversy as to the justice of Our Lady's cult, is the consideration of the means by which we may best turn this beautiful month to her glory and our own good. How may we best acquit ourselves, during the month of Mary, of the obligations incumbent on Our Lady's genuine and special religious privilege of prayer? Clearly, by combining in our special religious exercises the praise and the privilege of prayer. Following the example of Holy Church, the multitudinous canticles of loving laudation whose varied melodies, co-verging during this joyous Maytime from a hundred thousand shrines, roll upward in a mighty volume to the throne of our heavenly Queen; and in addition should, with unwavering confidence and an affectionate persistence that suffers no denial, proffer such petitions for our own, our family's, and our country's welfare as will tend to advance our personal sanctification and God's greater glory in the immediate world round about us.

The first of these objects—the addition of our humble tribute to the chorus of homage and praise offered to Our Lady—most of us can attain by attending the special exercises which during this whole month are daily held in the most magnificent cathedrals, and in the most splendid city churches, and in the most beautiful village chapels, throughout the land; and by putting our spirits in unison with that which animates the Church in prescribing such devotions. We have only to echo in our hearts the joyous hymns and canticles sung in her honor, to proffer as a veritable heart-offering the fragrance of the purple clouds of incense that circle round her statue, or the more delicate perfume of the beautiful flowers whose dewy clusters decorate her altar. We need but listen attentively and accord our soul's assent to the panegyrics pronounced on her incomparable grandeur, her unequalled privileges, her unassuming love, and her consequent unassuming mercy. Should circumstances prevent our attending these exercises proper to the Month of Mary, we may acquit ourselves of the duty of praise by the devout and frequent recitation of the prayers set apart to do her honor—the Litany of Loreto and the Rosary.

Such recitation will, moreover, prove as appropriate a medium as we can choose for the prayers, the petitions, which, it has been said, we should not fail to formulate during this favored season. The Litany is a magnificent circle of translucent pearls thrown about Our Lady's neck; and the "Pray for us" with which we mark the stringing of each separate pearl is a plea more potent than we ourselves oftentimes realize. As for the Rosary, recited as it should be with genuine meditation on each special mystery in the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious decades, it is safe to say that no other formula of praise or prayer is so agreeable to our Blessed Mother, or so likely to obtain for us the fullest granting of the requests we venture to lay at her feet.

It need not be said that during Our Lady's especially consecrated month, more if possible than at any other period of the ecclesiastical year, our prayers should be marked by the most undoubting confidence. Now, if ever, we may count with the fullest certitude on her benign indulgence and ready acquiescence in such of our wishes as are compatible with our best interests. Now, if ever, we may plead—with the assurance of winning our Mother's infallible aid in rendering our pleading efficacious—for perseverance in grace; for strength and courage to shake off the pernicious lethargy of lukewarmness; for God's service, or for the heroic effort to break against the ecclesiastical habits—sin and the occasions of sin,—in the single, earnest effort of deserting for

ever the standard of Satan, and ranging ourselves for good and all beneath the white and golden banner of the Virgin Mother and her omnipotent Son. Slumbering somewhere in the consciousness of every Catholic who deprecates the name, and underlying the manifold reasons for our Marian devotion, lies the firm belief in the dictum of St. Bernard: that a person in whose interior life a tender love of the Mother of God is conspicuous is practically predestined; while the love is an affair of the utmost difficulty. Be it ours throughout the thrice-blessed decades of this festival month to kindle the spark of this saving love in our sin-dimmed hearts, or to fan its fading embers into a bright and vivid and beneficent flame. So shall our spiritual life resemble that of physical nature in taking on additional beauty and graciousness; so shall we perform our part in promoting the honor and glory of the Virgin Queen of May.

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From the time of Pope Gregory VII.,—1073-1085,—indeed, the tide had turned and the furious storm which the downpouring of the barbarians into the quiet waters of Roman civilization had raised was rapidly quelling. The twelfth century in its vigor and its virtues can never be understood unless we are prepared to look upon it as still in a semi-barbarous condition. Side by side with the most exalted sanctity reigned the most cruel and revolting brutality. In fact, from a human point of view, the sanctity of the age was but a recoil from its vice. The brothers of the men who fasted till they were worn to a shadow, who kept ceaseless vigils, and who lacerated their flesh till they were covered with wounds, were often fierce, lawless knights and barons, lustful, brutal, unjust, violating the sanctity of the marriage tie, gouging out the eyes of their prisoners and heaving their peasantry to pieces.

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