

with her mother, resolved to seek with heavenly aid the cure which human means could not effect. For this end both pronounced a vow that if Margaret Mary was cured she should be dedicated to the service of the Blessed Virgin. No sooner had the vow been made than the young girl's strength returned, to the great joy of her family, and what was a more precious gift than health, she felt, from that moment, that our Lady had bestowed a very special mark of her protection on her. She felt her love growing for the Mother of God. But the devotion which she had always experienced towards her heavenly queen now grew into something more than devotion. It became a real personal intercourse in which the Holy Mother trained and guided the soul of the young girl in a most marvellous manner. Margaret Mary tells us, "she took upon herself the absolute government of me, reproving me for my faults and teaching me to do the will of God."

From this time forward she added to her former practices of devotion many and continual austerities, such as fasting three days in the week ; eating only the coarsest food : wearing an iron chain and other instruments of penance : rising in the night to spend the silent hours in prayer ; and other exercises of mortification and devotion in which her fervor found vent.

This method of life gradually undermined her health, and brought on a violent and continued pain in the side which she endeavored to conceal at first. When her sufferings became so evident that she could conceal them no longer, her mother and brothers prevented her from continuing her mortifications.

However, no sooner had this change been made than a new source of anxiety manifested itself, very painful ulcers broke out on her body which no medical skill could relieve. They caused her very acute pain, and, indeed, seemed to have been sent in answer to her prayers. In her thirst after sufferings she was at first unwilling to take remedies.