

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (3/13)

[*\(continuation from previous article\)*](#)

Chapter III. Mary manifests her zeal and power with her son Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana.

In the Gospel of St John we find a fact that clearly demonstrates Mary's power and zeal in coming to our aid. We report the fact as told to us by the evangelist St. John in chap. II.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Here St John Chrysostom asks: Why did Mary wait

until this occasion of the wedding in Cana to invite Jesus to perform miracles and did not beg him to perform them before? And he answers, that this Mary did out of a spirit of submission to divine providence. For thirty years Jesus had led a hidden life. And Mary, who treasured all the acts of Jesus, *conservabat haec omnia conferens in corde suo*, as St Luke says (chapter II, v. 19), venerated with respectful silence that humiliation of Jesus. When he then realised that Jesus had begun his public life, that St. John in the desert had already begun to speak of him in his sermons, and that Jesus already had disciples, then he followed the initiation of grace with that same spirit of union with Jesus with which he had for thirty years respected his concealment and interposed his prayer to urge him to perform a miracle and manifest himself to men.

St Bernard, in the words *Vinum non habent*, they have no wine, sees a great delicacy on Mary's part. She does not make a long-winded prayer to Jesus as Lord, nor does she command him as a son; she only announces to him the need, the lack of wine. With beneficent hearts and inclined to liberality, there is no need to wrest grace from them with industry and violence, it is enough to propose the occasion. (St Bernard serm. 4 in cant.)

The angelic doctor St Thomas admires Mary's tenderness and mercy in this short prayer. For it is characteristic of mercy to consider the needs of others as our own, since the word merciful almost means a heart made for the miserable, to lift up the miserable, and here he quotes St Paul's text to the Corinthians: *Quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor?* Who is weak, and I am not weak? Now since Mary was full of mercy, she wanted to provide for the needs of these guests and therefore the Gospel says: Lacking wine, the Mother of Jesus said to him. Hence St Bernard animates us to turn to Mary, because if she had such compassion on the shame of those poor people and provided for them, even if she did not pray, how much more will she have mercy on us if we invoke her with confidence? (St Bernard *serm. 2 domini* II *Èpif.*)

St Thomas again praises Mary's solicitude and diligence in not waiting until the wine was completely lacking and the guests came to realise this to the dishonour of the invitees. As soon as the need was imminent, she drew help according to the saying in Psalm 9: *Adiutor in opportunitatibus, in tribulatione*.

Mary's kindness towards us demonstrated in this event shines out even more in her behaviour after her divine son's reply. At Jesus' words, a less confident, less courageous soul than Mary would have desisted from hoping further. Instead, Mary, not at all disturbed, turned to the servants at the table and said to them: Do whatever he tells you. *Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite* (ch. II, v. 4). As if saying: Although he seems to deny doing, nevertheless he will do (Bede).

The learned Fr Silbeira lists a great range of virtues that shine in these words of Mary. The Virgin gave (says this author) a shining example of faith, for although she heard from her son the harsh reply: What have I to do with thee, yet she did not hesitate. When faith is perfect, it does not hesitate in the face of any adversity.

She taught trust: for although she heard from her son words that seemed to express a negative, indeed, as the above-mentioned Bede says, she could well believe that Christ would reject her prayers, nevertheless she acted against hope, trusting greatly in her son's mercy.

She taught love of God, while she procured that by a miracle his glory might be manifested. He taught obedience as he persuaded the servants to obey God not in this nor in that but in everything without distinction; *quodcumque dixerit*, whatever he tells you. She also gave an example of modesty when she did not take advantage of this occasion to boast of being the mother of such a son, for she did not say, 'Whatever my son will tell you;' but spoke in the third person. She still inspired reverence towards God by not pronouncing the holy name of Jesus. I have never yet found, says this author, in Scripture that the blessed Virgin

pronounced this most holy name because of the great reverence she professed for it. She gave an example of readiness, for she did not exhort them to hear what she would say, but to do it. Finally, he taught prudence with mercy, for he told the servants to do whatever he told them, so that when they heard Jesus' command to fill the jars with water, they would not consider it ridiculous: it was a supreme and prudent mercy to prevent others from falling into evil (P. Silveira, *tom. 2, lib. 4, quest. 21*).

Chapter IV. Mary chosen as the help of Christians on Mount Calvary by the dying Jesus.

The most splendid proof that Mary is the help of Christians we find on Mount Calvary. As Jesus hung agonisingly on the cross, Mary overcoming natural weakness assisted him with unprecedented strength. It seemed that nothing more remained for Jesus to do to show how much he loved us. His affection, however, still made him find a gift that was to seal the whole series of his blessings.

From the top of the cross he turned his dying gaze upon his mother, the only treasure he had left on earth. Woman, said Jesus to Mary, behold thy son; thence he said to his disciple John: behold thy mother. And from that point, the evangelist concludes, the disciple took her among his possessions.

The holy Fathers in these words recognise three great truths:

1. That St John succeeded Jesus in all things as the son of Mary;
2. That therefore all the offices of motherhood which Mary exercised over Jesus passed over to the new son John;
3. That in the person of John Jesus intended to include the whole human race.

Mary, says St Bernardine of Siena, by her loving co-operation in the ministry of Redemption has truly begotten us on Calvary to the life of grace; in the order of health we

are all born from Mary's sorrows as from the love of the Eternal Father and the afflictions of his Son. In those precious moments Mary became strictly our Mother.

The circumstances that accompanied this solemn act of Jesus on Calvary confirm what we assert. The words chosen by Jesus are generic and appellative, observes the aforementioned Father Silveira, but they are sufficient to make us know that we are dealing here with a universal mystery, which includes not just one man, but all those men to whom this title of beloved disciple of Jesus befits. Thus the words of the Lord are a most ample and solemn declaration that the Mother of Jesus has become the mother of all Christians: *Ioannes est nomen particulare, discipulus commune ut denotetur quod Maria omnibus detur in Matrem.*

Jesus on the cross was not a mere victim of the malignity of the Jews, he was a universal pontiff working as a repairer for the whole human race. So in the same way that by begging forgiveness from the crucifiers he obtained it for all sinners; by opening Paradise to the good thief he opened it to all penitents. And just as the crucifiers on Calvary according to St Paul's energetic expression represented all sinners, and the good thief all true penitents, so St John represented all the true disciples of Jesus, the Christians, the Catholic Church. And Mary became, as St. Augustine says, the true Eve, the mother of all those who spiritually live, *Mater viventium*; or as St. Ambrose says, the mother of all those who believe; *Mater omnium credentium*. Mary therefore becoming our mother on Mount Calvary not only had the title of helping Christians, but she acquired the office, the magisterium, the duty. We therefore have a sacred right to have recourse to Mary's help. This right is consecrated by Jesus' word and guaranteed by Mary's maternal tenderness. Now that Mary interpreted Jesus Christ's intention on the cross in this sense and that He made her the mother and helper of all Christians is proven by her subsequent conduct. We know from the writers of her life how much zeal she showed at all times for the health of the world and for the increase and glory of holy Church. She directed

and advised the Apostles and disciples, exhorted and animated all to keep the faith, to preserve grace and to make it active. We know from the Acts of the Apostles how regular she was at all the religious gatherings that those first faithful of Jerusalem held, because never were the divine mysteries celebrated without her taking part in them. When Jesus ascended to heaven she followed him with the disciples to Mount Olivet, to the place of the Ascension. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, she was in the Upper Room with them. So says s. Luke who, after naming one by one the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room, says: "ll these persevered in prayer together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus."

The Apostles, moreover, and the disciples and as many Christians as lived in and around Jerusalem at that time, all flocked to Mary for advice and direction.

[\(continued\)](#)

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (2/13)

[\(continuation from previous article\)](#)

Chapter II. Mary shown to be the help of Christians by the Archangel Gabriel in the act of proclaiming her the Mother of God.

The things thus far set forth were gathered from

the Old Testament and applied by the Church to the Blessed Virgin Mary; now let us turn to the literal meaning according to what is written in the Holy Gospel.

The Evangelist St Luke in Chapter I of his Gospel relates that the Archangel Gabriel having been sent by God to announce to Mary Most Holy the dignity of Mother of Jesus, said to her: *Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus*. Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.

The Archangel Gabriel greeting Mary calls her full of grace. Therefore Mary possesses the fullness of it.

St Augustine expounding the words of the Archangel thus greets Mary: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you; You in your heart, You in your womb, You in the depths of your being, You in your help. *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, tecum in corde, tecum in ventre, tecum in utero, tecum in auxilio*. (August. in Serm. de nat. B. M.).

The angelic doctor St. Thomas says of the words *Gratia plena* that Mary must truly have had the fullness of graces and reasons thus: The closer one is to God, the more one participates in God's grace. Those Angels in heaven who are closest to the divine throne are more favoured and richer than the others. Now Mary, closest of all to Jesus because she gave him human nature, was to be enriched with grace. (D. Thomas 3, p., qu. 27, act. 5).

The Angel Gabriel said it very well, proclaiming Mary, full of grace, St Jerome observes, because that grace, which is communicated only in part to other saints, was lavished in Mary in all its fullness.

Dominus tecum. The Archangel to confirm this fullness of grace in Mary explains and amplifies the first words *gratia plena* by adding *Dominus tecum*, the Lord is with you. Here all doubt of exaggeration of the previous words

falls away. It is no longer only God's grace that comes in all its abundance in Mary, but it is God Himself who comes to fill her with Himself and establish His dwelling in her chaste womb, making it His temple, thus sanctifying the Most High His tabernacle: *Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus*.

So too, according to the sense of the Church, comment st. Thomas Aquinas and St Laurence Justinian and St Bernard.

And since Mary, in her profound humility, was disturbed and asked for an explanation of such an extraordinary annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel confirmed what he had said and developed its meaning. *Ne timeas, Maria*, said Gabriel, *invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum: Ecce concipies in utero et paries filium et vocabis nomen eius Jesum*. Fear not, O Mary, for you have found favour with God: Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son, whose name you shall call Jesus. And wanting to explain how the mystery would take place, he added: *Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi, ideoque et quod nascetur ex te Sanctum vocabitur Filius Dei*. The Holy Spirit will descend upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for this reason also that which will be born of you is Holy and will be called the Son of God.

Let us now listen to St Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, to explain these words of the Gospel.

"From these words (*invenisti gratiam*) the excellence of Mary is made manifest. The Angel in saying that Mary found grace does not mean that she found it only then, whereas Mary already had grace before the Angel's Annunciation; she had it from birth; therefore she never lost it, she found it rather on behalf of the whole human race that had lost it with original sin. Adam by his sin lost grace for himself and for all, and with the penance he did afterwards he only recovered grace for himself. Mary then found it for all,

because through Mary all had grace virtually, inasmuch as through Mary we had Jesus who brought grace to us." (*D. Antoninus part. tit. 15, § 2*).

Therefore, what the holy Fathers teach is unquestionable, namely that Mary, finding this grace, restored to mankind as much good as the evil that Eve had brought us by losing grace.

So Cardinal Ugone, taking the floor on behalf of the men, humbly presents himself to Mary and says to her: "You must not hide this grace, which you have found, because it is not yours, but you must put it in common so that those who lost it may regain it as is right. Therefore let those who sinned and lost grace run to the Virgin, and finding it with Mary, let them say humbly and confidently: 'Give us back, O Mother, our property, which you have found. And they will not be able to deny having found it, for the Angel bears witness to this, saying: *Invenisti*, you have found it, not bought it, for that would not be grace, but freely received it, therefore *invenisti*, you have found it."

The same truth is gathered from the words that St. Elizabeth spoke to Mary. When the Blessed Virgin went to visit St Elizabeth, the latter, as soon as she saw her, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and so full that she began to prophesy in an inspired manner: *Benedicta tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui*.

Are we not to confess that Mary had received the mission to sanctify? And yes, it was precisely Mary who brought about this sanctification of Elizabeth, since St Luke says precisely: *Et factum est ut audivit salutationem Mariae Elisabeth exultavit infans in utero eius et repleta est Spiritu Sancto Elisabeth*. And it came to pass that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Precisely when Mary came into her house she greeted her and Elizabeth heard

the greeting. Origen says that St John could not feel the influence of grace before she who bore the authority of grace was present to him. And Cardinal Ugone, observing that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and sanctified John on hearing Mary's greeting, concludes: 'Let us greet her therefore often, so that in her greeting we too may find ourselves filled with grace, since it is written of her especially: Grace is poured out on your lips, so that grace flows from Mary's lips. *Repleta est Spiritu Sancto Elisabeth ad vocem salutationis Mariae: ideo salutanda est frequenter ut in eius salutatione gratia repleamur; de ipsa enim specialiter dictum est: Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis (Ps. 14) Unde gratia ex labiis eius fluit.*'

Saint Elizabeth, following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with which she had been filled, returned Mary's greeting by saying to her: *Benedicta tu inter mulieres*: Blessed art thou among women. With these words, the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of Elizabeth, exalted Mary above every other fortunate woman, wanting to teach that Mary had been blessed and favoured by God by electing her to bring to men that blessing, which had been lost in Eve and had been hoped for for forty centuries, that blessing which, by removing the curse, was to confound death and give us eternal life. To her kinswoman's congratulations Mary also responded with divine inspiration: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum, quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae, ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes*. My soul exalts the greatness of the Lord.... For he has looked upon the lowliness of his handmaid, for behold, from this moment blessed shall all generations call me. (Lk 1, v. 46 et seqq.).

Why would they call her blessed of all generations? This word embraces not only all men who lived at that time, but those still to come afterwards until the end of the world. Now in order that Mary's glory might extend to all generations, and that they might call her blessed, it was

necessary that some extraordinary and everlasting good should come from Mary to all these generations; so that being perpetual in them the reason for their gratitude would be reasonable the perpetuity of praise. Now this continual and admirable benefit can be none other than the help that Mary lends to men. Help that must embrace all times, extend to all places, to all kinds of people. St Albert the Great says that Mary is called blessed par excellence, just as by saying the Apostle we mean St Paul.

Antonio Gistandis, a Dominican writer, asks the question how Mary can be said to be blessed by all generations while she was never blessed by the Jews and Mohammedans? And he answers, that this was said in a figurative sense to indicate that of each generation some would bless her. For, as Liranus says, in all generations there were converts to the faith of Christ who blessed the Virgin; and in the Alcoranus [Koran] itself, which is the book written by Muhammad, we find many praises to Mary (Ant. Gistandis Fer. 6, 4 Temp. adv.). For this very reason Mary is proclaimed blessed among all generations: *Beatam me dicent omnes generationes*.

Here is how anointed and abundantly sentimental Cardinal Ugone comments on this passage: "They shall call me blessed all generations, that is, of the Jews, of the Gentiles; or of men and women, of rich and poor, of angels and men, for through her all received the blessing of health. Men were reconciled, and angels repaired; for Christ the Son of God wrought health in the midst of the earth, that is to say, in the womb of Mary, who may be called the centre of the earth. For unto her turn their eyes those who enjoy heaven, and those who dwell in hell, that is, in limbo, and those who labour in the world. The first to be redeemed, the second to be atoned, the third to be reconciled. Therefore blessed shall Mary say all generations." And here he exclaims in a rhapsody of veneration: "O blessed Virgin, because to all generations you gave life, grace and glory: life to the dead,

grace to sinners, glory to the unfortunate.” And applying to Mary the words with which Judith was praised, he says to her: *Tu gloria Ierusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri quia fecisti viriliter*. First of all, the voice of the angels comes to praise her, whose ruin is repaired by her; secondly, the voice of men, whose sadness is gladdened by her; then the voice of women, whose infamy is wiped out by her work; finally, the voice of the dead in limbo, who through Mary are redeemed from slavery and gloriously introduced into their homeland.

[\(continued\)](#)

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (1/13)

In 1868 St John Bosco printed a publication entitled ‘Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians’. It was his contribution to making the Virgin Mary known not only under the most important title, that of “Mother of God”, but also as “Help of Christians”. It was She who had asked: “Our Lady wants us to honour her under the title of Mary Help of Christians”. We begin today to present this work of hers.

Aedificavit sibi domum. (Prov. IX,1).

Mary built herself a house.

To the reader

The title of *Auxilium Christianorum* attributed to the august Mother of the Saviour is not a new thing in the Church of Jesus Christ. In the holy books of the Old Testament Mary is called the Queen who stands at the right hand of her Divine Son clothed in gold and surrounded by variety. *Adstitit Regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate*: Psalm 44. This mantle gilded and encircled with various gems and diamonds are like the many gems and diamonds, or titles by which Mary is usually called. Therefore, when we call the Blessed Virgin the Help of Christians, it is but to name a special title which befits Mary like a diamond above her gilded garments. In this sense Mary was hailed as the Help of Christians from the earliest days of Christianity.

A very special reason why the Church in recent times wants to mention the title of *Auxilium Christianorum* is given by Archbishop Parisis in the following words: "Almost always, when the human race has found itself in extraordinary crises, it has been made worthy, in order to come out of them, to recognise and bless a new perfection in this admirable creature, Mary Most Holy, who is the most magnificent reflection of the Creator's perfections here below." (Nicolas, page 121).

Today's universally felt need to invoke Mary is not particular, but general; no longer are the lukewarm to be inflamed, sinners to be converted, innocents to be preserved. These things are always useful anywhere, with any person. But it is the Catholic Church itself that is assailed. It is assailed in its functions, in its sacred institutions, in its Head, in its doctrine, in its discipline; it is assailed as the Catholic Church, as the centre of truth, as the teacher of all the faithful.

And it is precisely in order to merit special protection from Heaven that Mary is invoked, as the common Mother, as the special Helper of Kings, and of Catholic peoples, as Catholics throughout the world!

Thus the true God was called the God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, and such an appellation was

directed to invoke divine mercy on behalf of all Israel, and God enjoyed being prayed to in this way, and brought ready succour to his people in their afflictions.

In the course of this booklet we shall see how Mary has truly been established by God as the help of Christians; and how at all times she has shown herself to be such in public calamities, especially in favour of those peoples, sovereigns and armies that suffered or fought for the Faith.

The Church therefore, after having honoured Mary several centuries with the title of *Auxilium Christianorum*, finally instituted a special solemnity in which all Catholics unite with one voice to repeat the beautiful words with which this august Mother of the Saviour is greeted: *Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata, tu cunctas haereses sola interemisti in universo mundo.*

May the Blessed Virgin help us all to live attached to the doctrine and faith of which the Roman Pontiff, Vicar of Jesus Christ, is the head, and obtain for us the grace to persevere in holy divine service on earth so that we may one day join her in the kingdom of glory in heaven.

Chapter I. Mary recognised with symbols as help of the human race.

Among the means God employs to prepare human beings to receive some great good, it is chiefly that of announcing it long beforehand. For this reason the coming of the Messiah was announced four thousand years beforehand and preceded by many symbols and prophecies.

Now Mary, the august Mother of the Saviour, the true helper of Christians, was too great a blessing not to be pronounced equally with figures representing to human beings the various favours she would do to the world.

Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, Mary sister of Moses, Deborah, Susanna, Esther, Judith represent in special ways the glories of Mary as the distinguished benefactress of the chosen people, or as a rare model of all virtues.

The tree of life, Noah's ark, Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, the ark of the covenant, David's tower, the fortress of Jerusalem, Solomon's well-guarded garden and sealed fountain, the rose of Jericho, the star of Jacob, the morning sunrise, the aqueduct of clear waters, are some of the many symbols that the Catholic Church applies to Mary and with which it is customary to explain some of her heavenly privileges or heroic virtues. We will choose only some of these symbols with the application that the Church or the most accredited writers of Mary's glories usually give to them.

We therefore read in the book of Ecclesiasticus that the Holy Spirit puts these words into Mary's mouth: "*Sicut aquaeductus exivi de Paradiso*" like an aqueduct I came out of Paradise. (Eccl. 24:41).

An aqueduct is a channel that serves to receive the waters of the spring and lead them according to the distribution of the rivulets and the need of the flowers to irrigate the land. And in order for the aqueduct to serve its purpose, St Bernard says, it must be long to receive the waters on one side and convey them to the flowers; and Mary is a very long and abundant aqueduct because above all other creatures she was able to ascend to the throne of the Most High and draw from the fountain of heavenly graces and spread them abundantly among men. That is why, St Bernard continues, people lacked the torrents of graces for so long. It is because they lacked an aqueduct capable of communicating with God as the true source of graces and spreading them over the earth. But Mary was precisely this channel that was unblemished by inviolate trust, most humble by virginity, hidden by love of solitude, admirable by true humility, diffusive by piety, abundant in waters by fullness of grace, defended by the custody of the senses, not of lead, but rather of gold by royal nobility and sublime charity.

Through this aqueduct, says Cardinal Ugo, the waters of grace are transmitted to the Church; hence it is that the devil, the enemy of all our good, seeks to impede the course of these salutary waters by making war on the devotion

of Mary; in the same way that Holofernes, not being able to conquer the city of Bethulia otherwise, ordered the course of the river that introduced the waters into the city to be cut off and diverted.

The most blessed Virgin Mary is also figured under the type of a great queen, saying King David in his psalms: *Adstitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate* (Ps. 44). And why is Mary queen? Why stand at the right hand of Jesus in a golden robe, surrounded by variety? She is queen because of the great power she has in heaven as Mother of God; she sits at the right hand of Jesus to appease his indignation, to help us in our miseries, to be our helper, our sovereign advocate.

A good lawyer must have diligence, power with the judge, authority with the royal court, and knowledge in handling cases. And David in that text encloses precisely these four gifts in Mary in the most eminent degree. She stands at the right hand of the judge, *adstitit a dextris* almost to check that divine justice does not overcome mercy, this is supreme diligence. *Adstitit regina*, now everyone knows that the queen undoubtedly has great power over the judge's soul, interceding before the sentence is passed, and obtaining pardon if the sentence is already pronounced. *In vestitu deaurato*, the golden robe is an image of Mary's wisdom, because gold represents wisdom. *Circumdata varietate*, surrounded by variety, that is, endowed with the multiplicity of the merits and glories of the saints. For in Mary is found the gold colour of the Apostles, the red of the martyrs, the blue of the confessors and the white of the virgins. All these saints surround Mary and proclaim her their queen because she possessed in the highest degree the various virtues that these saints in particular possessed.

That if we consider Mary already seated in heaven upon a throne of glory, we find her raised to the highest dignity to which any creature can rise. For we do not find Mary in the class of virgins, in the order of confessors, in the ranks of the martyrs, in the sacred college of the

Apostles, in the choir of the Patriarchs and Prophets as a mere member almost one of them. She surpasses in excellence all the heavenly hierarchies and sits upon a throne of most precious workmanship at the right hand of the King of heaven Jesus Christ her Son as true Queen and Lady of all Paradise.

Daniel Agricola in the work known as *De corona duodecim stellarum*, explaining this text of David, says that Mary stands at the right hand of Christians to help them, because the Latin word *adstare* means to stand by one to assist him. The same author also continues to unfold the text and observes that the Latin word *adstare* in this place also means to stand in defence, and Mary stands at our right hand to defend us from the constant assaults of the demons.

St Jerome, when the word *varietate* is found in the Latin text, explains that while the other princesses and queens go dressed in sumptuous garments, Mary is girded and covered with shields with which she defends her children. This sense seems to agree with the other in scripture: *Mille clypei pendent ex ea, omnis armatura fortium*.

The prophet David, narrating the exit of the Hebrew people from Egypt says that they had a cloud that guided their steps by day, and a pillar of fire that lightened their path by night. St Bernard applying the properties of that cloud and pillar to Mary, says that as the clouds defend us from the excessive ardour of the sun, so Mary protects us from the fire of heavenly vengeance and the flames of concupiscence. Now as the pillar of fire shed light upon the steps of the people of Israel, so does Mary illumine the world with the rays of her mercy and the multiplicity of her graces. What would we blinded wretches do in the darkness of this century if we did not have this beneficent light, this luminous pillar? (D. Ber. Serm. de Nativ. B. M.).

But for all other miseries does not the sweetest Queen of Heaven give us help? Blessed James of Varazze applying to her the words of the Ecclesiasticus: *In Jerusalem potestas mea*, says that Mary offers us her help in life, in death and after death. Such is Mary's power that she can

extend it to these three times. If we have a friend (this writer argues) who benefits us in life, it is certainly a good thing for us; but if he is such as to benefit us even at the point of death, it is a greater good; if then his power comes to help us even after death, then it is a greater good. Now Mary bestows on us precisely this threefold good. In fact, the holy Church, in the praises that she has the faithful sing in honour of Mary, includes these three aids and exclaims: *Maria mater gratiae, dulcis parens clementiae; Tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe*. First, she helps us in life; for in this life others are righteous and others sinners; now Mary helps the righteous because she preserves God's grace in them, hence she is called *Mater gratiae* mother of grace; she helps sinners because she imparts divine mercy to them, hence she is called *dulcis parens clementiae*.

Secondly, she helps us in death, because she defends us there from the wiles of the devil; for this enemy is so audacious that he not only comes to the bed of dying sinners, but to that of the saints, even using all malice to make them fall. But when one of her devotees dies, the Blessed Virgin hastens with motherly solicitude, protects and defends him, so she prays to the Church: *Tu nos ab hoste protege*, protect us from the enemy.

Thirdly, she does not abandon us even after death. It sometimes happens that at the death of some saints the Angels come and lead their souls to heaven, but when the true devotees of Mary die she comes in person and receives their souls and introduces them into the beautiful paradise. Then he adds *Et mortis hora suscipe*.

We read in Book III of Kings that Bathsheba mother of Solomon was begged by her son Adonijah to intercede with the king for a grace. Bathsheba was moved by that prayer and presented herself to the king. As soon as Solomon saw her appear, he descended from the throne, went to receive her, and even made her ascend to the royal seat and sit at his right hand, saying to her: *Pete, mater mea, neque enim fas est ut avertam faciem tuam*. Now who would dare to think that Jesus on

the throne of glory, at the prayers that Mary presents to him, should be any less generous towards her than Solomon was towards his mother?

Indeed, the learned Mendoza observes here that Mary's grace and authority is so great that not only for Jesus' brothers does she intercede, but also for his enemies, and all that she asks she certainly obtains.

Moses recounts in the book of Numbers that when Mary his sister died, the waters failed. Moses tells Moses in the book of Numbers that when Mary, his sister, died, the waters ceased to abound in the desert for forty years, because of the merits of that holy woman; and applying this to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he says that if the graces of the Church will never again fail to come to men, it is due to Mary, who first on earth and then in heaven interposed her merits before the Most High.

[\(continued\)](#)