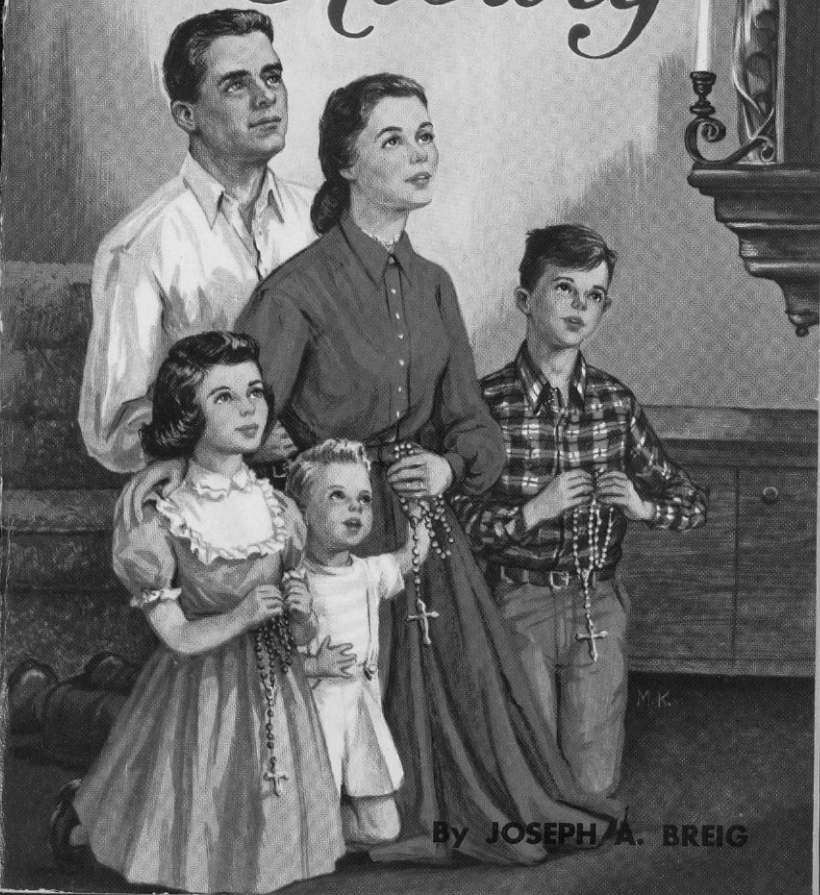


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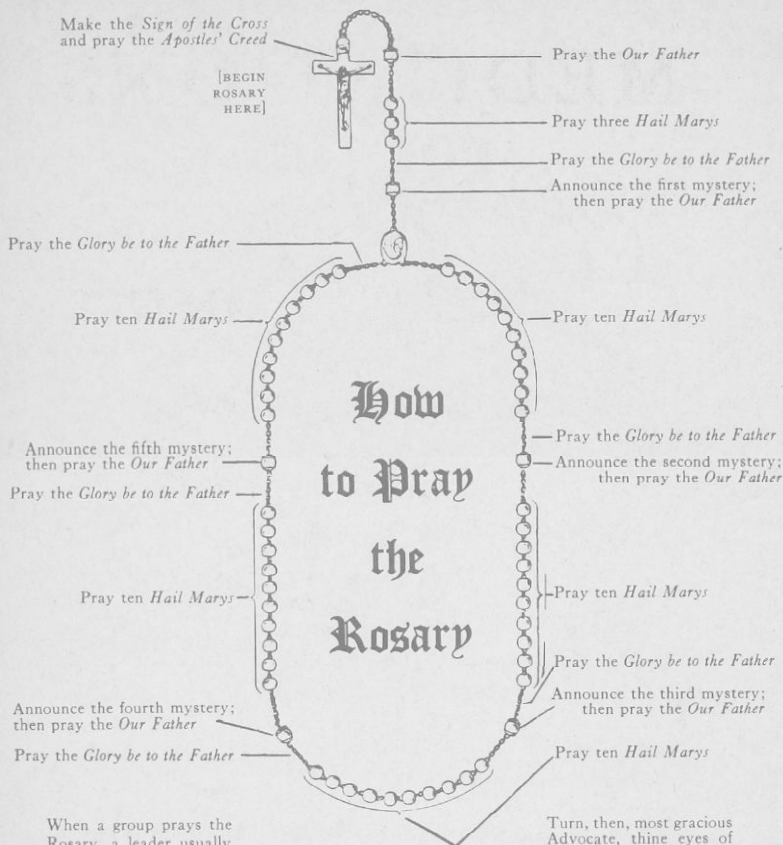
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MEDITATIONS FOR

# The Family Rosary



By JOSEPH A. BREIG



When a group prays the Rosary, a leader usually says the first *Apostles' Creed*, the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the *Glory be to the Father*. The group answers with the second part.

With the *Glory be to the Father* after the last decade, the Rosary is ended. However, Catholics customarily add the *Hail, Holy Queen*.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.

Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and, after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary! V. Queen of the most Holy Rosary, pray for us:

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

#### LET US PRAY

O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that, meditating upon these mysteries of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATIONS  
FOR THE  
*Family Rosary*

BY JOSEPH A. BREIG

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## To All Families

PEACE IS WHAT WE WANT. We can get it—and keep it—by saying the Rosary. Our Lady has given us her word on that. But even if she hadn't, common sense should tell us the same thing.

Peace demands harmony and unity and strength in civilization. Those things depend on the unity of families. For that unity, an excellent cement is the Family Rosary.

What a family does together is done easily. For that reason, the easiest of all prayers is the Family Rosary. It is also among the most effective of prayers.

Christ said that, where two or three are gathered in His Name, He will be in the midst of them.

My wife and I know, and our children know, that the Family Rosary has made our home one of the happiest on earth. It has filled our house with blessings, not the least of which is a truly amazing family harmony.

How do you go about saying the Family Rosary?

Perhaps the best answer I can give is to tell how we do it.

For one thing, we let the smaller children grow into the Rosary. We do not begin by demanding that they kneel, or even that they join in the whole Rosary.

The little ones go about their play in the living room while the rest of us march from bead to bead, from prayer to prayer, from meditation to meditation.

Do the youngsters interfere with our meditations? No; not since we learned to make them part of the meditations. It is easy to meditate upon the stable at Bethlehem, or the Holy Home at Nazareth, while watching your own innocent children at their innocent prayer. It is easy to understand the agony of Mary at the Cross if you ask yourself how you would feel watching one of your little ones being crucified.

As the small ones grow older, gradually they learn the prayers, and gradually they begin saying them with us—at first, perhaps, only two or three Hail Marys. We should not expect much of small children. But little by little they grow into the prayers and at last into the entire Rosary.

Is it necessary to kneel? No; if it is not irreverent to sit in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, it is not irreverent to sit while praying the Rosary. With

children, we think, sitting is better. The small ones quickly grow tired while kneeling. It is the purpose of the Family Rosary not to tire children but to teach them to pray; to make prayer as normal a part of their lives as play.

Through the Family Rosary, children—and adults, too—become as naturally a part of the family of God as of their own family. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—did not Chesterton say that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity makes even God Himself a Holy Family? Into that Holy Family the Family Rosary draws us. We become at home with the Holy Trinity, at home with Jesus, at home with the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

The Family Rosary is at the heart of world peace, because the Family is at the heart of world peace. Convert and harmonize families, and you convert and harmonize nations.

The Rosary begins its work in the furthest depths of each of us. It puts us at peace with ourselves, with God, with our families and with our neighbors. You can't pray with others and continue to quarrel with them. Neither can you pray sincerely without bringing down from God, through Christ and Mary, the graces that will heal our world.

Are you weak? Who isn't? If you can't start with the Family Rosary, start with one decade a day. You



will find that the march of prayer will carry you along, give you strength, transform you, make you and your family new, bring you closer to God. And you will graduate soon enough from a decade to five decades.

Do not concentrate exclusively on any five mysteries. What you want is the full Catholic balance. On Mondays and Thursdays, meditate on the Joyful Mysteries; on Tuesdays and Fridays, on the Sorrowful Mysteries; on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, on the Glorious Mysteries.

For the children, announce the meditations in a way they can understand. Thus, for the Joyful Mysteries, say something like this:

1. The Annunciation: The Angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that God wants her to be the Mother of the Saviour.

2. The Visitation: The Blessed Mother goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, mother of St. John the Baptist.

3. The Nativity: The Baby Jesus is born in the stable at Bethlehem.

4. The Presentation: Our Lady and St. Joseph take the Baby Jesus to the Temple, to offer Him to God.

5. The Finding: Mary and Joseph find the Boy Jesus in the temple after searching for Him for three days.

And so with the other mysteries. Fathers and mothers can make up their own words, because they know their own children best, and they have a special grace to help them.

Let me close with this thought: We fathers and mothers have as much duty to provide for the souls of our children as for their bodies. God demands of us that we rear the little ones as good Christians.

That is a big responsibility—but the Family Rosary makes it comparatively easy. The Family Rosary points the family straight toward heaven—which is what God makes families for.

J. A. B.

## *The Annunciation*

TO EACH MOTHER comes in some way an annunciation. We do not detract in any way from the unique dignity of the Virgin Mary when we say this. In many cases the mother, prompted by grace, has consented in advance, as Mary consented, to receive and to cherish the child whom God wills to send. More of us than most of us imagine came into the world because we were greatly desired. More of us than most of us realize were answers to fervent prayer. Our mothers keep in their own hearts their own counsels; and in those hearts there are depths not often revealed.

What is true of mothers is true of fathers, too. To Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, came an angel saying, "Do not be afraid, for thy petition has been heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son."

To the virgin Joseph, as to his virgin wife, came an annunciation, also. To him in a dream appeared an angel, telling him not to be afraid, for the infant



begotten in Mary was begotten of the Holy Spirit. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

From Mary and Joseph to my wife and me, who were named for them, is a very far cry; and yet we, too, like other men and women united in the sacrament of matrimony, have had our annunciations. More often than not, the messenger who has brought the tidings has been one of our own children; and I cannot think of anything more divinely appropriate. The little ones, like the angels, are innocent; the little ones, like the angels, have come from God to earth; the little ones, like the angels, put their trust in God.

I remember our then only child, Mary, whom we called Bussie to distinguish her from her mother, coming to me asking for a baby brother. But we had been wanting a baby brother—or a baby sister—for some time; and Bussie was now past four years of age.

"I can't give you a baby brother," I told her.

"Then I'll ask the doctor, Daddy."

"He can't give you a baby brother, either."

"Can the hospital give me one?"

"Nobody but God can."

"Then I'll ask God. Come on, Daddy."

And she seized my hand and tugged.

"Where do you want to go?" I asked her.

"To church, to ask God for a brother."

"Wait until after dinner."

"No. Now!"

My wife smiled. "Go on. I'll keep dinner warm."

Bussie and I knelt at the Communion railing and asked for a baby brother. On the way home I cautioned her: "You may have to wait. Maybe God won't send a baby right away."

She stopped in the street and stared at me. "I *asked* Him, didn't I?"

I was silent.

Each evening thereafter we went to church and prayed for a baby brother. But one day she leaned closer to me in church and whispered, "Daddy, I changed my mind. I'm asking God for a baby sister."

My face must have fallen a bit, for she added comfortingly, "That's all right. You can go on asking for a brother."

When I came home from the hospital one early morning and woke her to tell her that the baby sister had arrived, she sobbed for joy.

The baby sister was Betty; and it was Betty's childish prayers which in due time brought the first baby brother, Joe.

Joe, it seems to me, is much as I imagine his patron saint to have been. He is quiet, reflective, gentle,

obedient, protective. Joe's prayers, I am sure, brought Jimmy into our family.

"Dad," said Joe one day, "I want a baby brother."

"You'll have to ask God, Joe."

"Okay. Let's ask Him."

We walked to our parish church under a sky glorified by a magnificent sunset. I knelt at the middle of the Communion railing, but six-year-old Joe marched on to the St. Joseph altar. I heard him whispering rapidly. He made the Sign of the Cross, rose from his knees, came to me, and said, "Done."

I do not expect ever to see more business-like and trustful praying. Not only did it bring Jimmy into our family and into the family of the Church, but it brought him on Father's Day, which that year fell on the feast of the Holy Trinity.

As for our fifth child, Regina, what can we make of the circumstances of her arrival but a special courtesy from God? Long before she was born, we agreed that if she were a girl she would be named for my two sisters, Regina and Sister Regina. And she put in her appearance on the feast of St. Regina. Was not that sufficient annunciation?

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And when the angel had come to her, he said, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women'."

I know of no word in the English language which can carry the weight of the full name of the Virgin. The angel did not call her Mary. He addressed her as "Full of Grace." Her name should be Mary Graceful, if the term graceful were as rich in spiritual as in physical meaning. But there is food for profound meditation in the fact that she was spiritually most graceful, most beautiful in the eyes of God and His angels, at the time when she consented to give her body to ungainliness in order to form a living temple for the Son of God to dwell in.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

Before and since that time, millions of mothers have consented to cooperate with God in the work of creating immortal beings, destined to live with God forever. In prayer and in union of their wills with God's, they have found their own small annunciations. If sometimes we wonder that God has never ceased to love us in spite of our sins, we may remember that each of us has had a mother; and perhaps it is for our mothers that He loves us most. For He, too, has a mother. And to every good mother He will some day say, as the angel said to His Mother,

“Blessed art thou among women . . . Thou has found grace with God.” How can it be otherwise with those who are the mothers of His little ones, the mothers of the brothers and sisters of His Only Begotten Son?

## 2

## *The Visitation*

YOU MIGHT SAY that the first thing Christ did on this earth was to visit His relatives. He visited them before He was born. He willed that He be carried, in the womb of His Mother, to the home of their cousin Elizabeth, who bore under her heart another cousin, John the Baptist.

It was as if Christ could not wait to begin to give presents to His folks out of His store of infinite riches. It was as if He loved His family so much that He was impatient to start being good to them. To Elizabeth and John He must at once give Himself, give His Mother, and give the Holy Spirit.

Upon the approach of Mary, Elizabeth was inspired. Suddenly she knew that this girl who em-



braced her was the woman God had chosen to be Mother of Himself Incarnate. She knew that she stood in the presence of the new and living Temple, the new and living Tabernacle, the beautiful, breathing, speaking House of God.

And John the Baptist, not yet born, somehow knew, too. In his mother's womb he leapt for joy because suddenly he was made holy. Suddenly he was delivered from the influence of Satan, from the sad inheritance of the sin of Adam. Suddenly he was free with the rollicking freedom of the sons of God. Without water, Christ had baptized him, because he was Christ's relative, and because he was to be the messenger who would announce Christ's mission to mankind. From his cousin Christ, John had received, before birth, the greatest of all birthday gifts—the gift of supernatural life.

In all history there is hardly a more touching or a more natural family scene than this which we call the Visitation. What is more natural or more heart-touching than that a younger woman should visit an older woman, a relative, when each is with child? At such a time, women need each other.

From the younger, the elder draws optimism, strength, joy. From the older, the younger receives courage and wise counsel. There are a thousand questions to be asked and answered; there are ten thou-

sand dreams to be shared. This is a moment when the gulf between youth and age is bridged; and the first act of Christ the Pontiff, Christ the builder of bridges between God and man, was to bridge the years between Mary and Elizabeth.

Even in the merely human aspect, Elizabeth and Mary needed each other then. Elizabeth, so aged that only by a miracle had she conceived, needed rest and care. She needed the bubbling energy of Mary's youth, not only for her daily tasks, but also for her spirits. The arrival of this young relative was, even on the natural level, aside from the supernatural, a godsend.

But the giving went both ways. For Mary, Elizabeth provided what age and experience had taught. Here was a girl, not only tenderly young and immaculately pure, but also pledged to virginity. Mary had sacrificed to God the dearest right of a Jewish woman, the right to bear children. In her humility she had given up (as she thought) the possibility of being the mother of the Redeemer. Now, having sacrificed all that, having put motherhood out of her mind, she was a mother. She was The Mother. She needed Elizabeth's guidance.

In the Visitation, then, we have a mystery small and intimate, and yet immense, as all divine mysteries are. And it is a family mystery. It is a mystery

of God's entrance into the human family; of His having, not only a mother, but also cousins and cousins-in-law, and of not only having them, but also wanting to visit them and to bring gifts to them. It is a mystery, too, that brings angels, as well as God, into the familiarity of the human home and the human race.

The holy oneness of the Holy Trinity expanded and embraced all. In the Holy of Holies, the priest Zachary beseeched God that he might have a son to complete his family. From the company of angels came a messenger to assure him that his prayer was granted. From Nazareth, also at the bidding of an angel, came Mary and Mary's Son to be with Zachary and Elizabeth in the great months of waiting.

Thus were God and angels and men and women and children brought together in happy home life, under a humble roof, before a glowing hearth, around a family table; united in prayer, united in work, united in recreation, united in joy and laughter. Thus did God listen, and angels listen, and a silent man, soon to be a father, listen, while two women exchanged the sacred confidences of approaching motherhood and dreamed together the dreams that mothers alone know. In the Visitation, the community of all that exists is placed before us for contemplation. All life is family life, even the life

of God; and heaven and earth are two rooms in the same home.

## 3

## *The Birth of Our Lord*

EVERY CHILD who comes into the world is free to accept or not to accept, sooner or later, membership in the family into which he is born. He can ratify that membership by loving his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, his uncles, aunts and cousins; or he can repudiate it by refusing to love them. In each human being there is this wonderful and awful, this frightening and yet consoling, freedom of choice.

God made men and women for God, first to serve Him, then to be His sons and daughters and to live with Him, sharing His infinite goods. But man, by an imperious act of his free will, decreed otherwise. Man chose to go his own way. He selected for himself the role of Prodigal Son. He imagined that men would be like gods, although in fact they became like swine. And God, were He not God, might have

said, "So be it. Have your way. The catastrophe is of your making; live with it."

But God *is* God, and out of evil He is able to bring good. The fall of man, wicked though it was, opened the way for God to become, in the eyes of mankind, what Chesterton has called, in a marvelous poem, "God beyond God." The missal, with a similar holy daring, tries to express the same stunning mystery in the statement about the fortunate fall that brought so great a Redeemer. Francis Thompson, too, felt the shattering impact of God's goodness: He wrote of Christ as a hound pursuing him down the labyrinthine ways of his own mind and bringing him at last to bay.

"Blessed is he," said Jesus Christ, "who shall not be scandalized in Me." The goodness of God, as shown forth in the Incarnation, is a scandal, a stumbling-block, to the intellect of fallen and sinful man. Chesterton has been criticized for saying that faith is believing the incredible. But the mysteries of the Faith, and above all the Incarnation, are frankly incredible. To the eyes of our natural minds, they are too good to be true. Only by a supernatural gift of God do we believe them as they demand to be believed—firmly and constantly, without the shadow of a passing doubt, without questioning. Only by the gift of God do we become as little children who, be-

cause they are innocent, can stand wide-eyed in the stable under the Star and not be crushed under the measureless weight of the goodness of God.

The story is as simple as a child's tale, and yet too profound for anyone but God Himself completely to understand. It goes like this: The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity would not abandon man to his self-chosen and unspeakably dreadful fate. In justice to the Divine Nature that is Theirs, They insisted upon a divine reparation for man's sin against God. But the sin was man's, and there had to be a human reparation, too. To man, human reparation was possible; divine reparation impossible. Very well; the Second Person of the Trinity, God Himself, would become man, would take a human nature. In that nature He, the Divine Person, would make the divine and human reparation. He would reunite man with God, and He would do so by doing for man something that is impossible even to God in His own nature and is infinitely abhorrent to Him. He would die for man—even the unspeakable death of the Cross.

Now to say that the very thought of this makes the mind reel is still to fail to come within an infinity of expressing the awful reality. Yet such is the grace which was poured forth from the Cross that mere men and women, millions of them, have died dread-

ful deaths as martyrs in Christ and for Christ. We have almost become accustomed to such Christian heroism. We can even see ourselves, if necessary, rising to such heights through God's grace. We can go through life with a constant determination to die any death rather than deny Christ.

Thus it is that somehow we feel at home in the company—in the very family—of Him whose awful holiness would otherwise crush us. He is our Infant, our Child, our Brother, our Father. True, He is our Creator and will be our Judge; but we think of Him chiefly as our Beloved. He is our God, but nevertheless He is the noblest and most loved member of our human family. He died for us, but now He lives for us, and with us, and in us; and we live by His life flowing through us.

It is, then, when we are most like children clustering around a Maiden and her Baby in a hidden cave among the animals, that we perhaps come closest to knowing God in this life. At Christmas time, on the feast of the Nativity, we feel something of the joy that is to be ours, and something of the eternal security and at-homeness for which we wait. For God is Good, families are good, a home is good, and humility and love and laughter are good. Christmas is the festival of the Holy Family, and, of that family, all are members who know God, love God, and serve

God. Heaven is where God is, angels are, and good people are; and a stable could serve for heaven, as it did the night the Eternal was born into our family in order that we might be reborn into His.

## 4

## *The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple*

THE PRESENTATION seems to me to be especially a "St. Joseph mystery"; that is, a mystery especially pointing to the mysterious holiness and the immense importance of fatherhood.

In my meditations on the Presentation I always feel a hope that this occasion, if no other, brought Joseph forward for a little while out of the obscurity which he invariably chose for himself. I like to think that he may have carried the Christ Child to the Temple. I see him heading a little procession of relatives and friends. I imagine them taking his hand and congratulating him.

Possibly, this once, he stood in the forefront, rather than in the background, as the Little One was offered



for the first time, formally and publicly, as the one Sacrifice worthy of God. That would be fitting. We do not sufficiently realize that St. Joseph stood in the place of God with respect to God's incarnate Son. This is a dignity overwhelming to contemplate.

It is an overwhelming thought, but it is a plain fact. God Incarnate bound himself to obey St. Joseph. He bound Himself to honor Joseph as His father. The authority of God over the human Christ was exercised through St. Joseph, just as God's authority over other children is exercised through their fathers.

To put it quite simply, Joseph was the head of the Holy Family. He was the perfect father. Through him, God's providence operated with respect to Jesus and Mary.

It was through Joseph, then, that God presented His only begotten Son in the Temple, to be offered by the high priest for the service of God and the service of mankind. The Presentation was a Holy Sacrifice before the Mass. It was a pledge of the Sacrifice of Calvary and a pledge of the Sacrifice of the Mass. The decision for that sacrifice came through St. Joseph.

Not until we have understood St. Joseph's great fatherhood can we have a proper philosophy of fatherhood and familyhood—of ourselves as fathers or mothers or sons or daughters.

St. Joseph's fatherhood was spiritual, not physical. Yet, precisely because of that, it was the truest fatherhood on earth. Exactly because of his virginity and chastity, Joseph was father of the Christ Child in the noblest, highest, and most real sense.

For fatherhood—true fatherhood—is enormously more spiritual than it is physical. Mere physical fatherhood is relatively as unimportant as mere physical sonship. What would we think of a son who said that his duty toward his father was done the moment he was born? What kind of father would hold that he owed nothing to his children beyond their conception?

No; it is in loving his children, caring for them, educating them, rearing them for eternal life, that the father earns title to his fatherhood—to his association with God, not only in creating, but also in all that the fatherhood of God implies, including redemption and salvation. *That* is what makes a father truly a father; and in that St. Joseph was pre-eminent. In that, he was more truly and more perfectly the father of the Christ Child than we are fathers of our children. That is why, more than any other man who ever lived or will live, he owns the title of father.

Where we are imperfect fathers, he was the perfect father. His was, in the highest degree, the fatherhood of the will, the fatherhood of self-sacrifice, the

fatherhood of purest and most unselfish love. If we are proud of our children on their baptismal day, was he not vastly prouder of the Christ Child on the day of the Presentation? If we are happy when there is placed in our arms a new Christian, was he not incomparably happier to receive from the high priest the Christian of Christians, the Child who at that moment had pledged Himself to the Supreme Sacrifice for the redemption and salvation of souls? The Presentation, to me, is a "St. Joseph mystery." I see it as moving us, who likewise are fathers, to consecrate our children, in union with him, to the service of God, as he consecrated the Christ Child.

## 5

*The Finding of Our Lord  
in the Temple*

NO LOVE IS RIGHT LOVE that does not put God first. Unless God be foremost, even the love of a mother for her son has something profoundly wrong with it. Such is the lesson set forth for us in the mystery of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

It is a mystery with depths beyond depths. Why did this divine Boy let Mary and Joseph depart from Jerusalem without Him, each supposing that He was with the other in the caravan? Why did He not tell them that He was staying behind?

"Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," said Mary to Jesus when they found Him in the temple amid the doctors of the Jewish law. Not lightly did this bravest and most patient of women use the term "sorrow."

Why did the young Christ, when he could have prevented it with a word, allow these two whom He most loved to search for Him, sorrowing, three days in the ways and byways of the Holy City?

He did so, I think, because the salvation of souls was involved. Whatever the cost in sorrow to Himself and the others—for we may be sure that He sorrowed far more than they—a great example had to be set before all the Christian families of future ages.

The lesson had to be driven home that we are made to know God, to love God, to serve God; that that is the reason for our existence, and that everything else must yield. Nothing, not even the love of mother and son, must be permitted to stand in the way.

A great story is told of St. Francis Xavier. When he set forth, after a long absence from his family, to

convert the Orient, he came to a crossroad not far from where his parents lived. He reined-in his horse for a moment and sat staring along the road that led to home. Then he urged his horse the other way, toward the port where he would set sail. His holy prudence told him that he loved his parents so very much that, if he paused for a visit with them, he might give up his great calling. St. Francis Xavier knew the lesson that is set forth for us in the mystery of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

"Did you not know," the young Christ asked His Mother, "that I must be about My Father's business?"

Of course she knew. It was not for herself alone that she sorrowed, nor was it for himself alone that Joseph sorrowed. They sorrowed for our benefit. They sorrowed in order that we might have it impressed upon us that God comes first, that no love is a good love unless it includes God, puts God foremost, and is directed ultimately to God's service and His glory.

Not many are called upon for sacrifices as heroic as that of St. Francis Xavier. But of each of us some sacrifice is asked. Of each of us it is demanded that love—even the most natural and good love—be ultimately unselfish and ultimately divine if it is to be true love and right love. For unless love is unselfish, it is not really love at all; or at least it is a misdirected and a self-destroying love.

Every father and mother, every child, every family wishing to be true to God must learn sooner or later the lesson of this mystery of the Finding. Everyone who would save his soul must come to the decision that is expressed in the words, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

Every boy and girl called to a vocation—whether it be the religious vocation, or the vocation of marriage and the founding of a new Christian family, or the vocation of single life in the world—every boy and girl ought to be prepared to address that question, if necessary, to his father and mother: "Must I not be about My Father's business?"

But no parent should ever make it necessary for any child to ask that question. On the contrary, every father and mother should address it, on proper occasions, to their children: "Do you not know, son (or daughter), that you must in due time be about your Father's business—God's business? Do you not know what you were made for? Don't you understand that you exist to serve God? Do you not see that you cannot be false to Him without being false to your very being? It is your business to be about His business. It is not for you to decide whether you should serve Him. It is for you only to determine in what way of life you can best serve Him. Now—off with you and be at it."

That is the attitude that parents should take toward the futures of their children. Any other attitude is a fool's attitude. Love that does not want children to serve God is false love and wicked love. And it was to teach us this that Joseph and Mary walked sorrowing about Jerusalem, and that the Boy Christ, secretly sorrowing also, allowed them to search for Him through the anxious hours.

## 6

## *The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden*

IN THE GARDEN of family life, there are bound to be some agonies. Even if they are agonies only of the imagination, nevertheless they hurt. Sometimes they are all the more dreadful for the fact that they grow out of unreal and unreasonable fears.

What child, lying awake at night, has not known at some time the terrible fear that his parents might die, or might leave him? Or that he might become lost from them? Or that the house might burn, or Father lose his job? Who has never been afraid of the dark,

or afraid of animals, or afraid of illness? Who has grown up without enduring a thousand little transitory agonies—and some that were neither small nor quickly passing? Which of us has never suffered pain, either of the mind or of the body? The earaches, the toothaches, the headaches, the stomachaches, the growing pains, the misunderstandings, the quarrels with brothers or sisters or playmates, the disappointments, the troubles over school work—has anybody ever lived through childhood without supporting one or more of these agonies?

And no sooner have we grown into adulthood, and married, and begun to have our own children than we begin to suffer these things all over again, now not in ourselves but in our little ones; not in our bodies but in our minds, in our love—and they seem now more insupportable than ever. But we support them. We endure.

All these things are spiritually precious beyond price, if only we will unite ourselves in our troubles with Christ in His Passion, Christ in His agony in the garden. That is why it is tremendously important that we say, each day, the Morning Offering—even if we say it in the evening. That is why it is surpassingly vital that we keep ourselves in the state of grace and in the state of a union of our wills with God's will. It would not do to suffer these things to no purpose. To



do so would be foolish, wasteful, neglectful of one of our greatest sources of riches.

Not for no purpose, but for a very great purpose do we suffer. Not for nothing does a mother sacrifice sleep for an ailing child, or a husband pace a hospital corridor, accompanied by spectres of fear, while his wife is bringing forth a new life. For very high, sacred and divine reasons is life a struggle, a combat, a challenge, a practice of small and large heroisms, a thing calling for courage, but a thing leading to rewards and happiness far beyond the most wonderful hopes and dreams. There is nothing but sin that has not its splendid purpose for our eternal success.

For God is our Great Spiritual Director. With infinitely more wisdom than that of the greatest theologian He leads us surely heavenward, or sees that we are led—if only we are willing to go, if only we do not refuse Him. Not easily will He allow us to escape from His love—not He who had the agony in the garden for us, He who died for us and rose for us and ascended for us, He who sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and sanctify us.

No; He will hardly take no for an answer. Accurately did Francis Thompson, with his poetic mysticism, see Christ as a relentless Hound of love, pursuing us down the labyrinthine ways of our own selves, taking us at last captives of everlasting joys.

I once heard it expressed in a far less poetic way, perhaps even in what may seem a crude and almost shocking way, but in a most forceful way that is almost impossible to forget. "God," said a diamond-in-the-rough friend to me, "will pull a gun on you, if necessary, to make you behave and save your soul." Well, that sounds jolting, but did not my friend have the same right to say it in his way as Francis Thompson had to say it in his? And were there not those who, when Thompson first said it, thought that he was being irreverent in calling Our Lord the Hound of Heaven?

My friend had told me how he had been brought by family misfortunes, family troubles, and family sufferings to his senses—to the adoration and the thanksgiving he owed God. The God of Hosts, the God of Battles, the God of Abraham's sacrificial knife and of Moses' wrath, the God of the punishing angels in the desert—yes, He will, rather than let us go down the road to perdition, "pull a gun on us," hold us up, hold us back, turn us away from the way of destruction. It may be by the illness or death of a child; it may be by some disaster, financial or physical or other; it may be by some agony hidden deep within our souls where God alone can see. But God will not have us damned; He will have us saved. And the greatest family wisdom is to put the hand of

the father, the mother, and all the children in His, and let Him lead the way gently, rather than violently. For violent He will be if that is the only way to rescue us from eternal death. He loves us, remember, infinitely.

## 7

## *The Scourging at the Pillar*

IN MANY A HOME, Christ is rescourged again and again by the very people who meditate sorrowfully on His first scourging in Jerusalem. It should not be so. But it is.

Christ is scourged in the person of the wife who is shouted down, or struck, by an angry husband. He is scourged in the husband who is nagged almost beyond endurance by a complaining wife. He is scourged in bewildered children who are slapped or screamed at by impatient, irritated fathers and mothers.

There should be no place in the home for these scourgings of Christ in His brethren. The home is no place for sharp words. It is no place for recrimina-

tions. It is no place for quarrelings, for name-callings, for jealousies, for angers, for slappings and whippings, for selfishnesses, for greeds and grabbings, for envies and hatreds.

The home is a place for love. It is a place for charity. It is a center for kindness. It is, or should be, the very heart and symbol of unity.

A family should look upon its home much as it looks upon a church. For is not the home the first church? Do not the roots of the Church run back to the holy home at Nazareth? No family would dream of carrying on a family quarrel in the parish church, before the Blessed Sacrament. Neither should any family dream of carrying on a family quarrel at home, under the eye of God Who sent each member of that family to all the others.

There is no husband, no wife, who will not say that world peace is wanted and needed. The place for husbands and wives to establish world peace is in their own homes. We must recapture, if we are to rebuild the world, the strong sense that the home is sacred, like the church. We must come to see in our family a holy institution, directly created by the Creator, redeemed by the Saviour, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

We must throw out the scourges. We must stop lashing Christ in one another. His heart is hurt by

every bitter, cutting word spoken in any home; by every denial or violation of the love that ought to unite fathers and mothers and children. If it were not so, He would not have appeared to St. Margaret Mary. If it were not so, He would not have asked that the image of His Sacred Heart be exposed in every household. He did ask that. But He asked more. He asked not only that His image be placed in the home but also that It be honored. And He gave His promise—the promise of God Incarnate—that in homes where His Sacred Heart is honored He will establish a reign of peace and love. That He does precisely that, I can testify from experience. The home where the Sacred Heart of Jesus is honored becomes a happy little anteroom to heaven, filled with holiness and rollicking joys.

But honoring means honoring. Honoring Christ does not mean hiding His image where only members of the family can see it. That means being ashamed of Christ. Honoring Him means giving Him the place of honor in the most conspicuous spot in the living room. And it means praying to Him, and living as He would have us live.

The best way to honor Him—the best way to earn His promises—is to enthrone the Sacred Heart formally, according to the method urged by the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart movement. Do that

if possible. Otherwise, enthrone the Sacred Heart with your own ceremony. Then there will come upon the family the graces that will stop the scourgings of Christ in the persons of His children.

It is well to meditate upon the mystery of the Scourging. It is even better to carry that meditation into practice, in the bosom of the family, upon which depends all civilization.

## 8

## *The Crowning with Thorns*

FOR EVERY HUSBAND and wife there are thorns at some time. But the thorns, worn patiently, bring forth roses of grace and of great happiness.

Of every joy, the greatest part is knowing that the joy was earned. And in marriage, men and women earn their joys. A wife must often wear the thorns of worry over her husband's health, his success, or his safety. She must wear the thorns of fear for her children. And there is no husband and father who is ever entirely free of the thorns of providing for the future; of meeting the expenses of his growing fam-

ily; of seeing to their feeding, their clothing, their education, their setting forth to found their own families or to devote themselves to God's service in the religious vocation.

There are thorns by the hundreds—thorns of illness, of injury, of youthful disobedience, of the problem of trying to get young people to see the wisdom of the laws of God and the directions of parents. You might almost say that the good father and mother are never without their crowns of anxiety or at least of responsibility, planning, contriving, making ends meet, deciding what is best for this child or that child, selecting a doctor, selecting a dentist, meeting the thousand and one problems of the home and the family. But the strange fact is that out of these painful crowns grow the finest flowers of joy.

"Mary," I said to my wife one day, "I would go through everything we have gone through for the past twenty-two years, merely for the privilege of doing what I did this morning—taking our son Joe to church to serve the 8:15 Mass."

That was true. But only other fathers who have seen their boys at the altar will understand how profoundly true it was. Only such fathers have known the encompassing happiness that comes to man from seeing his own son serving Mass. Only such fathers can realize that at such moments their joy is so im-

mense that it more than repays them for every thought, every labor, every anxiety, every word and gesture and deed which they have invested in rearing a son. It does repay. Repayment is something that we must not lose sight of. The reward we must not forget, lest we falter.

Christ, we must remember, the human Christ, is repaid and will be repaid for eternity for His sufferings, for the crown of thorns He wore on His heart throughout His life and on His head at the time of His passion. Mary His Mother is repaid, and will be everlastingly repaid. There are no words to express the repayments of God.

There is no way in which we can realize the colossal happiness of Christ and of His Mother and of their saints. Neither can we know now what joys are reserved for us if we will but be good husbands and wives, good fathers and mothers.

But we can at least guess. We can understand that the rejoicing which lifts the hearts of a father and mother almost out of their bodies when they look upon their children is but a faint foretaste of what is laid up for them in heaven.

A man or a woman can almost go into an ecstasy over a baby's first toddling steps, over the first word spoken by the little one, or over a daughter or a son going forward to receive a diploma or a degree. If



you are a father or a mother, you have known such joys—or will soon know them. And you know that they repay you a thousand fold for every labor, for every sorrow, for every worry, for every thorn that pierced your mind or your heart during your marriage.

Wear a crown of thorns? All good husbands and wives do that. That is one of the reasons they are so happy.

## 9

*The Carrying of the Cross*

THE CROSS THAT CHRIST carried was a family cross. Not until that fact is better understood will the world's peoples have the peace for which they long.

The people of the world must come to see that they are a family. The human race is not a race; it is a brotherhood and sisterhood under the fatherhood of God.

No one has the right to be merely an individual. Every last one of us is responsible to some extent for the happiness, prosperity and salvation of all the rest of us.

And each and every one of us is utterly dependent upon God. Physically and spiritually, we all are linked upon the chain of His providence.

No one can be successful alone. Success means sanctity; without sanctity there is no success. And there is no such thing as holiness in a vacuum.

No one even exists except by the will of God. And in God's plan we owe our existence not only to Him; we owe it also to our parents and to a succession of ancestors back to Adam. There is not one of us who is not the product of the travail of hundreds of thousands of mothers. We live and breathe because they carried for us the multitudinous crosses of child-bearing and childbirth through uncounted centuries.

The Orientals are perfectly right to venerate their ancestors. We should learn from them to venerate our own ancestors more than we do. Somewhere along the line, our ancestors and their ancestors are the same men and women. Every last one of us is related and interrelated. We are all members of the family. We lose track of the genealogy in the mists of time, but the relationship remains.

Now this is true not only physically but spiritually, too. Everyone who goes to heaven will be able to spend a great deal of eternity—if one can so speak of time in timelessness—thanking those to whom we owe our salvation.

The cross which Christ carried was a family cross because it was the cross of the sins of all of us. He carried it for us because He was sinless, and He was God. We could not carry it for ourselves. Not that cross. Not the cross of redemption—of the reunion of mankind with God after Adam's disastrous breach. Christ, our elder brother, the new Adam who fathered our souls in the supernatural life—Christ carried for us the Crucial Cross.

But He did not take from us the opportunity to do our bit. "Follow Me," He said. He left for each of us some important work to do, some smaller cross or crosses to carry, some harmony to contribute to the everlasting symphony of those who will live forever with God.

Thus Christ bound us together with Him and with one another in a spiritual unity closer and more intimate by far than our physical relationship.

We cannot save our souls, for instance, without the help of His Mother. For He ordained that all His graces would be distributed through her.

And what of the part that Joseph plays in our salvation? What of the part played by the angels and saints—and even by the Holy Souls in Purgatory?

No; we cannot make the journey alone. We are helped by innumerable other souls, all carrying their crosses with Christ.

This truth extends through all things on earth. We would have better government if all realized that the ultimate purpose of government is to serve God and to make it easier for human beings to go to God. We would have better schools if all realized that the right purpose of schools is to save souls. The right ultimate purpose of every person and of everything is to glorify God. For this we are made; for this we ought to exist. For each of us there is some small Cross of the Human Family which we are ordained to carry in union with Christ's Crucial Family Cross. And when enough of us carry them—the crosses of good parenthood, the crosses of good government, or whatever crosses they may be—then we will have the kind of world we need.

## 10

*The Crucifixion and Death  
of Our Lord*

UNLESS WE BE CRUCIFIED with Christ, we shall not rise with Him. What does that mean? Well, it does not mean anything too dreadful for endurance. For the vast majority of us, in fact, it does not mean anything dreadful at all.

For most of us, being crucified with Christ means simply doing our duty. Few are called upon for the heroic charity that endures intolerable things with joy and leads on to the highest sanctity. In any case, God asks nothing of anybody without providing abundant graces which make the doing of the thing, I would not say easy, but joyful. Joyful with the joy of the athlete who, seeing his goal, forces his muscles to difficult exertions.

But, for most of us, to carry the cross with Christ means to keep the Commandments. It means to be good sons and daughters, good sisters and brothers, good fathers and mothers. It means being good Christians in whatever we do.

Seldom does it mean suffering terribly, either in body or in soul. For the most part it means patient and happy discharge of the jobs that we have to do on this earth.

It may mean a thing as small as weeding a garden, or a thing as large as being President of the United States. In either case, it is not the task that is important in the eyes of Christ; it is the doing of the job in a Christ-like way that matters.

Getting up in the morning when the alarm rings . . . going to work if you are a father . . . getting the children off to school if you are a mother . . . paying attention to your studies if you are a school boy or

girl . . . keeping the house reasonably neat, but not so neat that nobody can be comfortable in it . . . doing a good job in the office or the factory or field, but not such a good job that you forget to be human . . . balancing work and play so that both your employer and your children are happy with you—these are some of the ways in which we are crucified with Christ in order that we may rise with Him.

For the crucifixion that is necessary is not a literal crucifixion. Our crucifixion is not a hanging upon a brutal wooden cross. The thing that we must crucify is our selfishness. That is all.

*That* we must kill. But we kill it only in order that we may be what we were made to be; in order that we may have the happiness, both here and hereafter, that God wants us to have. The only thing that ever stands between anybody and happiness is selfishness.

Christ is on the Cross not only for our redemption but also for our attention. He would draw us away from contemplation of ourselves and into contemplation of God and the things of God. And that means crucifying our self-centeredness. It means looking out of the prison of self and seeing ourselves for what we are—beings made, precisely made, specifically made, expressly designed, for certain purposes.

Let us set down those purposes:

To know God.

To love God.

To serve God.

To be happy with God forever.

That's what life is all about. That's where happiness can be found. It cannot be found anywhere else.

And that's what is meant by the saying that unless we are crucified with Christ we shall not rise with Him. He was crucified because that was the thing He was sent to do in the service of God. The rest of us are sent to do other things—likewise in the service of God.

If we do them we shall rise with Christ. It is as simple as that. And with God's grace, it is not difficult. Only our selfishness tries to delude us into believing that it is not only difficult but impossible. That's why selfishness must be crucified.

## 11

### *The Resurrection of Our Lord*

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN family reunion was the reunion of Christ and His Mother after His resurrection. Across this, perhaps the most touching episode in history, the Scriptures have drawn the veil of silence. Nowhere is the story told of that first meeting

of eyes, that first touching of hands, that first utterance of words after the separation of death.

If all true love is, as it is, too deep to be described, what of this love? On Calvary Jesus and Mary had shared an agony beyond our comprehension. Through the period of the tomb, she had waited and suffered as mothers alone wait and suffer. Now they had their reunion and their triumph; and they had it alone. The inspired word of God is silent.

We all know that great love and great joy and great good pride are beyond expression. There are only exclamations and gestures and delighted sounds. The father who would attempt to put into words his love for his son would pass beyond melodrama into something like farce. The mother meeting her son after a separation can only pat his cheek aimlessly and then busy herself preparing some delicacy for him. Love is a thing so gigantic as to embarrass us and to strike us dumb.

It will not be so, I think, after we, like Christ, shall have risen from the grave; after we, like Mary, shall have earned our heaven. For heaven is a state where love finds full expression. Heaven is a place where all barriers to love are down. Heaven is an endless life where total love is the prevailing climate; where no love, however ecstatic, can seem extravagant or overdramatic. Heaven is love, and love is heaven.



There will be a rollicking joy that no one can now imagine in the great Christian family reunion which we call the general resurrection. It will be a reunion of many families and a reunion of one family. For the human race is one family. It is bone of bone and flesh of flesh from Adam. It is spirit of spirit and one in God through Christ and Mary for those who embrace the redemption that leads on to resurrection.

There will be deeper things in that resurrection than the reunions of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters. No one saves his soul alone. And on that last day there will be revealed, in a great glow of light, the interplay of love and prayer and sacrifice which makes of all the redeemed one spiritual family. We shall find ourselves directly related in salvation, not alone with Jesus and His Mother, but with one another. Each of us will be either the debtor or the creditor, spiritually, of each of us. Under God, we will owe our happiness to one another.

Surely this will be true of those who were related on earth. Within the family, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, there is a lifelong interflow of graces. Does one member seem to be falling into spiritual troubles? The others hasten to his rescue with prayer and sacrifice, with Masses and Communions. Does one rise high in sanctity and God's friendship? Then

the others begin to lean spiritually upon that one, as an aged mother leans on the strong arm of her son.

But even outside the immediate family, there is this unity in the spiritual life. Not one of us can ever estimate here how much of his hoped-for salvation he owes to nameless and forgotten ancestors who held to the Faith through whatever difficulties. None of us can guess to what extent he is indebted to millions praying, millions suffering, millions assisting at Mass, millions receiving Communion, millions offering everything to God through the Morning Offering.

The risen shall be one great family. I know that if I am among those rising to eternal life I shall owe it in great part to my wife and my children; and I trust that in some small part they shall owe their presence to me. But I think that I shall find there also other sons and daughters, and unknown brothers and sisters, whose merits lifted me up when otherwise I should have fallen. I think that I shall need an eternity in which not only to thank God but to thank God's children, too.

Among the joys for which I shall look will be the joy of seeing boys and girls, stricken in this life with polio, rising from their wheelchairs, tall and young and exhaustlessly vigorous in their risen bodies. I shall wish to see lepers cleansed, the blind seeing, the

deaf hearing, and limbs restored to amputees. But among my greatest joys, I am sure, will be the joy of the gigantic gratitude I shall feel—and shall be able then to express—when I discover that it was the patient suffering of these that lifted me over many an obstacle, and drew me out of many a pit, and warded off from me devils without number. For the risen shall be one family because the Church Militant on earth is one family, living together and guarding and helping one another in this great family mansion which moves from season to season and from generation to generation in its journey around the sun and toward eternity.

## 12

*The Ascension of Our Lord  
Into Heaven*

SOMETIMES THE BURDEN is laid on the woman. Sometimes the family future is placed in the hands of the mother. A strong husband and father may fall ill, may die. A tall elder son may be called away to war. A mother or a daughter—a woman or a girl

normally entitled to protection—may find herself suddenly, not only the Lady of the House, but also the Head of the House.

I have often wondered what Jesus said to Mary when He told her that He must ascend into heaven, but that He wished her to remain on earth for a time to mother and to nurse His infant Church even as she had nursed and mothered His own infancy. Did He say, "Mother, I must leave you for awhile; can you bear it?" And did she answer as she had answered the angel of the Annunciation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

I have occasionally encountered in women the feeling that in the eyes of the Church they are the inferior sex because it is not given to them to stand before the altar, to offer the Holy Sacrifice, to administer the Sacraments, to govern the Kingdom of God on earth. They forget, I think, the divine paradox that the first shall be last and the last first. They forget the mighty inversion by which God has balanced all things. And of that paradox and that inversion the Virgin Mary is the very type.

To her, and not to any other creature—not even to the greatest of the angels—was it given to work hand in hand and heart in heart with the Son of God in the work of redeeming mankind. Upon her, and upon no other creature, was conferred the glory of

co-operating with God in the Incarnation, of giving entrance into the world to Christ our Saviour, of being Mother of the Son Whose Father is God. Alone among created beings, she mothered and still mothers the Church as she mothered its Head. She only is Queen forever of heaven and earth, ruling with her God-man Son over angels and saints.

As she had walked with Christ to Calvary, so now she walked with Him to the place of the Ascension. As she had seen Him lifted in shame on the Cross, she now saw Him rising in glory heavenward. And, when the cloud hid Him from their eyes, the apostles and disciples turned to her. Upon her they must lean in this moment. Her gigantic spiritual strength, the graces and guidance flowing through her from Christ, upheld the Church, upheld all the future of Christianity. Through her the Holy Spirit would come. She was the Lady of the House of God. Although Jesus had named St. Peter as His Vicar and the Head of that House, we know to whom Peter must have turned in every perplexity and in all discouragements. For Peter, compared with Mary, was spiritually a boy.

The mother or the wife today upon whom falls the burden of home and family is not really left alone. What troubles us, truly, in all our disappointments, in all our sorrows, is time. That trickster tells us that

we are lonely, that we are unprotected. But we know that the beloved who has gone before us is but a breath distant. We know that we, no less than he, are in God's hands. We know that God is our Father. We know that He proved on the Cross that His love and His care for us are beyond imagination, beyond thought. Time is a hidden corridor along which we must move toward our timeless home, where forever we shall be with all who love us, where we shall be with God. We shall feel the clasp of Christ's hand; we shall know the warmth of Mary's smile.

Mary's temporary separation from Jesus after the Ascension was a corridor that led on to the Assumption. Our temporary separations lead on to resurrection and reunion. Those who have gone before us are waiting for us. Faith and courage—these carry us forward, these lift us upward, these lighten our burdens and teach us to go smiling through. There is no heart more crushed than that of a wife deprived of her husband, or mother deprived of her son. Still, Mary our mother has our hand in hers. Still, Christ in His Church guards us, comforts us, strengthens us. Every soul that ascends into heaven means a separation and a sorrow on earth; but it means also a reunion at last, a rollicking together forever, and an eternal reward for burdens bravely borne.

## *The Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles*

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, according to Chesterton, reveals even God Himself as a Holy Family. There is a family relationship that runs through all of God's dealings with mankind and through all the operations of the Church. This same oneness runs also through all the mysteries of the Rosary—through the mystery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, along with all the others.

God alone made Adam, but even in this first human creation there was a family aspect. "Let Us make man to Our image and likeness." The creature was to resemble the Creator as a son his father. And God, with the tongue of Christ, was to teach us in due time to pray to Him as Our Father. Speaking to us through Moses from the burning bush, He was to call Himself "I Am Who Am." But speaking in the person of the Word, and in the human nature of His only-begotten Son, our Brother, He was to reveal to us that we are His children; that the Name by which

He wished to be addressed was the beloved, the intimate, the family name—"Father."

God alone made Adam; but thereafter He made no one, not even His Own Son, without the co-operation of one of us; without a family relationship between Him and the human family.

Concerning the exact meaning of the statement that God took Adam's rib and made Eve, there can be question. But there can be no doubt that it was given to Adam to co-operate in some sense in Eve's creation. And from that day to the end of time, human beings were to share in God's creative act. Men were to be God's Associate Fathers; women were to be Associate Mothers. Children were to appear on earth through the interaction of God and their parents.

Not even when the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became incarnate was this relationship between God and mankind to be destroyed. Christ came into the human family by taking His human nature from a human mother. He came related to us in flesh and blood and bone; and, since He was both true God and true man, the unity of God and the human race was made incomparably perfect and intimate.

This oneness is complete. It is spiritual, as well as physical. Christ is our Redeemer. To Him we owe



our hope of salvation, and Mary is the mother of our redeemed souls. We are her spiritual sons. Through her, we are members of the Holy Family at Bethlehem. We are Christ's flesh-and-blood brothers and Christ's spiritual brothers. The Church is Bethlehem expanded. The Church is the family of God, Christ, and Mary, a family of which we are members.

As in Creation, so in Salvation, the unity persists. God does not adopt us directly into His family, which is called the Church. He acts in Baptism through human agents, so that, not alone to Him, but to His associates in Christianity also, we owe our hope of eternal life. Through all the Sacraments, through all the sacramentals, through all the means of sanctification, this family unity runs. It was so manifested on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Mary, the mother of Christian souls, descended upon the Apostles.

Thereafter, the descent was to be through the Apostles to us. Peter and James and John and the others were to be Associate Fathers with God of the souls of the saved, as fathers and mothers are associates with God in physical parenthood. Henceforth, we were to have a double parentage: the parentage of our own fathers and mothers, and the spiritual parentage of the Church. The integration between God and mankind was complete.

Pentecost was our adoption into a new family—the universal family of the Church, which transcends individual families and transcends even the great human family descended from Adam. With the Descent of the Holy Ghost there was manifested among Christian men and women a new and higher relationship, new and higher brotherhood and sisterhood, a new and higher family loyalty. To this new familyhood all other familyhoods must henceforward either conform or yield. We remain sons and daughters of our fathers and mothers; we remain brothers and sisters of all men; but, above and beyond all that, we now are children of God, children of the Church, heirs to the eternal family life in heaven.

## 14

*The Assumption  
of Our Blessed Mother  
into Heaven*

THERE IS HUMAN FAMILY LIFE in eternity as a consequence of the Assumption of Mary. One might say that a home was translated from earth to heaven.

But of this family God is a member; in this home God is entirely at home. The divine and the human are intimately intermingled. Through Jesus and Mary, God has become one of us, and we have become God's. And we are to dwell together forever as one family in one home. God and we are the closest of kin.

The Son wanted His Mother and called her to Him. The Son, shall we say, wanted His home. Heaven is Christ's home, and yet His home was not complete without His Mother. For Christ is human, as well as divine. He was an infant, He was a boy, He was a young man, He was a mature man. Like any other man—more than any other man—He wanted His Mother. More than any other man, He remembered her love, the hundred thousand beautiful associations of His life with her, and her care for Him.

In the Jesus and Mary home in heaven, the mother is a woman. She is all that a woman can possibly be; she is all that any creature could possibly be. She is the Daughter of the Eternal Father. She is the Mother of the Eternal Son. She is the Bride of the Eternal Spirit. She is as intimately related to the Blessed Trinity as it is possible for a creature to be. With God, who is God, and with Christ, who is both God and man, she forms a family that is both per-

flectly divine and perfectly human. There is family life in heaven.

But before Mary was taken to heaven, she had formed another family on earth, another family both human and divine. It is sometimes called a society; it is sometimes called the Church; it is sometimes called the Kingdom of God. But perhaps the most perfect description of it is to call it a family. God is its Father; Christ is its Head; Mary is its Mother; we are the children—the brothers and sisters. It is by an exactly right instinct that we have called the Pope Father, called our priests Father, and called our Brothers and Sisters Brothers and Sisters. Well might we all call one another Brother and Sister, as the writers of the Epistles called us Brethren.

This divine and human family which the Virgin mothered in its infancy before being assumed into heaven is related in the most intimate and family way with the Holy Family and, through the Holy Family, with God. Of the family life in heaven of God and Jesus and Mary, we are already partakers. Of that home we already are members, even though for our little time we are physically separated from it. Through grace, through the Mass, through the Sacraments and all the activities of the Church, that family life lives in us. We are being prepared for the great family reunion of God with all His children,

of Mary our mother with all her spiritual sons and daughters.

The gentle sleep that came to Mary after her work on earth was done was a family death. Clustered about her, united in prayer, were those of whose souls she was mother, those co-redeemed by her, the children of her spiritual maternity. They laid her gently to rest, sorrowing because of their separation from her, rejoicing because her time had come to receive the reward that "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man." The moment of her Assumption was at hand. The work that she had come to do was done. Her spiritual family, the Church, was now strong enough, now tall enough, to stand on its own feet, to move forward across the world, secure in the assurances of Christ's promises and of her maternal protection.

Death in the Christian family should be like that. Sorrow should not be the deadly and despairing thing that it is among those who know not God. Sorrow should be mixed with, and mitigated by, joy. For, if a mother or a father or a child dies holding to the hand of the Church, which is the nail-pierced hand of Christ, then that is not defeat but victory. That is not the end but the beginning. The Christian soul in death finds the corridor that leads upward, the opening into eternity, the way to its

own assumption into heaven. And even these assumptions, small as they are in comparison with Mary's, are glorious mysteries, too. In each of them the Christian family, here and in eternity, glories.

## 15

*The Coronation  
of Our Blessed Mother  
in Heaven*

EVERY GOOD MOTHER, it seems to me, shares in the coronation of the Virgin Mary. Mary is queen of the family of all angels and saints, both in heaven and on earth, because she first proved herself as queen of the Holy Family's home at Nazareth, and as queen even amid the horror and the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary. She was queenly in the Annunciation, queenly at Bethlehem, queenly amid the apostles and disciples, queenly in death, and queenly in the victory over death which was given to her in the Assumption. Above all was she queenly in her preservation from original sin and in the mastery of Satan thus given to her. She was a queen on earth; she is

Queen forever. She is the Queen of the Eternal King. Her royalty is everlasting and universal.

About every mother who bears and rears children for God there is something of this queenliness and this royalty. Even more of it clings to those who are virgins for Christ. But mothers there must be, and families there must be; and the mother of each good family, the lady of each good house, is queen over a little kingdom of God on earth. Rightly did St. Augustine call the home a little church, for without homes there would be no Church; without fathers and mothers and families there would have been no human family to be spiritually nurtured and mothered by Mary.

I like to think that among the joys which God has reserved for those who love Him there may be included a coronation in heaven for each good mother. I think of her children and her children's children rising up to call her blessed, clustering around her to place on her head her own eternal crown while they hail her as queen. As they owe to Mary their spiritual life, so they owe to their mother their physical life and their opportunity to earn life without end. It is perhaps difficult for us sometimes, in the hot and heedless days of childhood and youth, to honor our fathers and mothers as we ought. It is not difficult in later years, when time and experience and thought

have opened our eyes to our colossal debt to them, when we have realized that without them we would not have existed. It is then that we know them for what they were—king and queen of a kingdom small but inexpressibly important, the kingdom we call our home.

All royalty on earth is, after all, but a reflection of the original royalty of parenthood. The king is king, the president is president, the premier is premier, only because many little family kingdoms came together to form one nation. Even the spiritual paternity of the priest, the paternity that makes him father of souls, is an image of the first paternity and the primal authority of fathers and mothers. For the family is the original reflection of the creative paternity and the divine authority of God. It is from Him that families come, and His first sharing of authority is with parents.

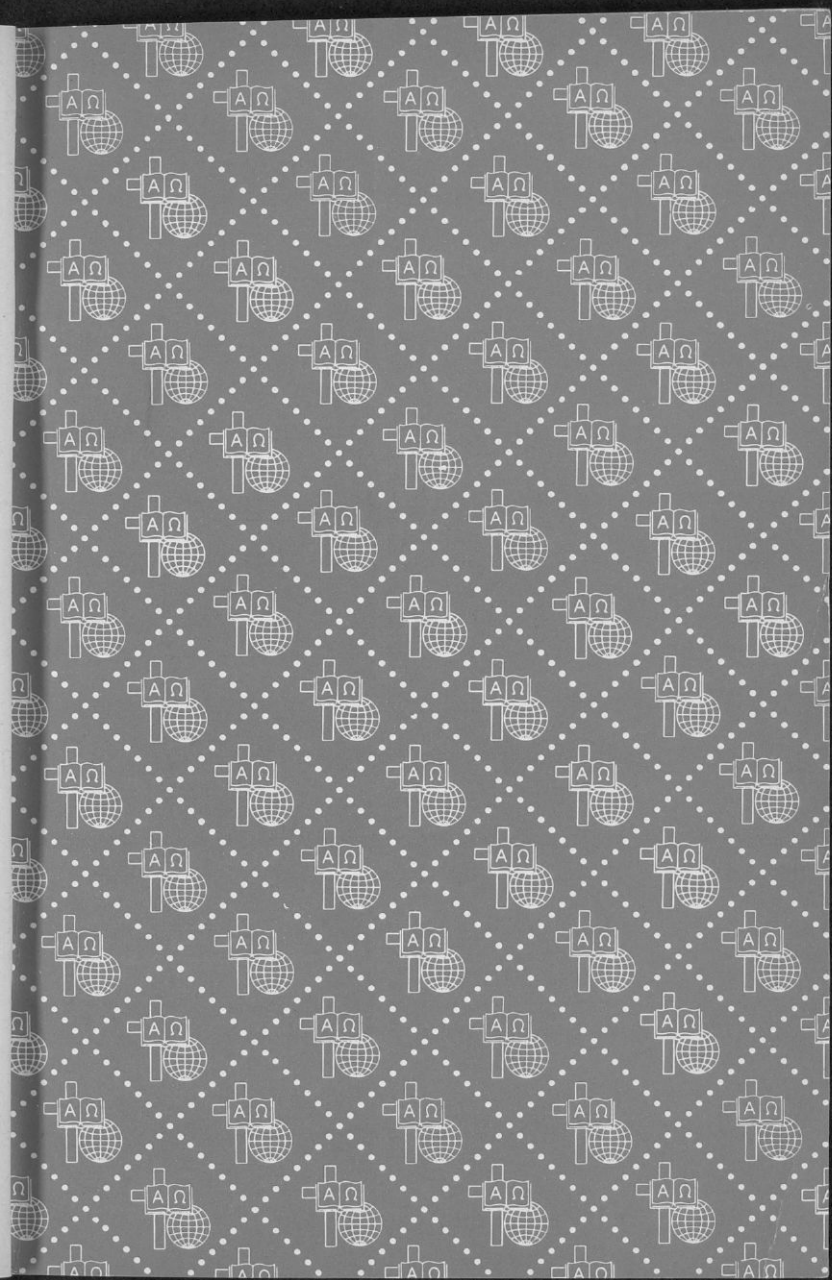
But in another and even wider sense, the coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a family affair. For if she is queen she is mother also. It is from the womb of her heart that we are spiritually born; it is at the breasts of her mediation of all grace that our souls are nourished. God has willed that through her we are reborn; and through her, reared to be saints. It is our mother, then, who is crowned queen not only by her divine Son, but by each of us clustering around



her in gratitude. We are not made her children without our consent. She was appointed queen by God; she was elected queen by us. Individually and in family council, we have selected her and pledged our fealty. She is our queen-mother because we wish her to be; and, as the crown is placed on her head, each of us touches it symbolically, uniting with Christ in love for her.

We do love Mary. We love her as our sister, our princess, our queen, Our Lady, our mother. It was from our own mothers that we learned to love like that. About each of our mothers there was something of the beautiful romance of the princess, something of the royalty of the queen, something of the nobility of the great lady, something of the motherliness of the mother. Never again, as we grow from childhood into adulthood, do we know a love quite the same—not until we find Mary. Then we recover that pure and selfless love, embellished and enhanced more than words can say. The coronation of Our Lady is a glorious mystery, but of all mysteries it is perhaps the easiest to understand.





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