Preface to "Meditations on the Life of the Blessed Virgin."

Who founded the Devotion to the Blessed Virgin?

The Author and Finisher of the Western

which the Church perpetuated to the

Blessed Mother of God, was Her

Himself. He founded it by His own

Example, and taught it to His

Disciples by His own words and

Deeds. They who reproach us for

that, however the case may be, let them

admit, for we have never honoured

her so much as He did. The

Devotion, or worship, of the day, is

our old English speech, which
The Catholic Church teaches to her children, may be best defined in these words, it is the love and reverence which was paid to her by her Divine Son and His disciples, and such as we should have borne to her if we had been on Earth with them; and it is also the love and reverence we shall bear to her next after her Divine Son, whom through grace the Holy Spirit in His Kingdom, the disciples, from the moment of their call to follow Jesus, learned to know, reverence, and love His Mother. She was the Mother of
Their Master, of Whom they had spoken to them, as never had any human spoken before. His words fascinated and fascinated their hearts with a thrill of love and love such as no human voice had ever caused to tell them. He had wrought miracles to their sight. He had healed the sick, opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers, walked upon the sea, raised the dead. And He had manifested in their presence above, in honour to His Mother, such as He showed.
is no other. The perfection of his character was the measure of the perfection of his folkish bearing towards her. his manner towards her was the measure also of her dignity, both personally and in relation to himself. it cast a light upon her by which they saw that she had about her some mystery of blessedness, as she also had some mystery of more than human greatness. They did not
indeed knew as yet neither His
incarnation, nor her home,
motherly. But they knew, felt,
saw, that never yet on earth
was there such a Son or such a
brother. Their course and instruc-
tion continually unfolded as
the events of the life, the passion,
the resurrection, the ascension,
came upon them. They were
being gradually led upward
and upward, from truth to truth,
and from light to light, till
The perfect illumination to know His power, wisdom, love, royalty, and Godhead came down upon them on the day of Resurrection. It is certain, that in proportion as they learned to know the Godhead of the Son, they learned also to know the divinity of the Mother. These two truths unfolded themselves side by side. They (who can believe) that the light of Resurrection did not reveal the full mystery of the Holy Trinity, and of the Incarnation.
May also believe that the divine
maternity and the personal sanctity
of the Mother of God were also not
fully known. And to those who
believe that the revelations of Patmos
contained the full illumination of
faith, must believe that the
Apostles knew with perfect precision
the relative divinity and the personal
perfections of the Incarnate God, and
of His Blessed Mother. The circle
of the faith, at this day, is coincident
with the circle of the revelation
of the Holy Spirit, and the
perfections of God,
This Mother, though more explicitly traced out in the Theological Science of the Church, are identical and of the same precise nature as they were then. This faith and its objects became a consciousness of the soul. What before was received by sense, reason, experience, was elevated to an intuition and a spiritual habit of the heart and mind. After the Ascension the disciples felt a two-fold force: On one hand, drawing them upward by divine worship and obedience to their
Adieu, Master, sitting at the right
hand of God; our "Anchor of the
Soul, sure, and firm", and which
intereth in them within the veil;
On the other side, closest, nearest,
and felicest party, leading them to
the containing of their Divine Redeemer.
Now this is neither more nor less
but precisely, and in all its thoughts,
And affections, the action or
worship which we bear to the
Blessed Mother of God. In no point
do we go beyond the action of the
Disciples, in no point does the ac-
tion of the Disciples fall short of
ours. Nay, I will be bold to say,
Feb. 11. 19.
That in us, lest even the Saints of the Church, not even St. Bernard, St. Norbert, St. Alphonsus, lose
or generat the B. Virgin with
a love so tender, a generation
so profound, as St. Peter, St. James
and St. John. They had seen the
Incarnate Lord, and His hearing
to His Blessed Mother; they were
replenished with light and with
love in a fulness surpassing
sun. They had tasted by faith
experienced what we only believe
by faith, and assuredly the
serenity and depth of their love
to Jesus was the measure of their
love and devotion to His Mother.
and as they surpase us in the former, they surpase us in the latter. They lead the way far on before us, both in the devotion of the Sacred Heart and in the devotion of the Blessed Mother of God. To do but follow them, and afar off.

Now it is evident without proof in words, that this devotion which sprung up in the fountain of the Sacred Heart, and flowed over into the hearts of the disciples from them was spread throughout the world. The fountain became a stream, the stream parted into many rivers and became a sea.
The universal Church was inundated with the light and love of Jesus, and therefore, in proportion, of His Blessed Mother. Wherefore, His name was heard, her name was heard likewise. If it was true of the poor woman who anointed His head, "Wherefore the Gospel shall be preached that which this woman hath done shall be told for a memorial of her," how much more of her who ministered to Him the slob of His humanity? If the name Mary Magdalene was to be inscribed in the Gospel, lo! such was the first propagation of the love and generation of the Blessed Virgin throughout the Apostolic Mission.
Much more the name of Our Blessed Mother? In learning the Incarnation of God, His childhood, childhood, passion, resurrection, they learned the mysteries of Nazareth, Bethlehem, Calvary, the dignity of the Sorrow the joys of Our Blessed Mother. But in learning to know the Blessed Mother and the dignity of the Mother of Jesus, the world learned also to love her. The love of her Divine Son followed in faith in His person and His redemption. The love of Our Blessed Mother followed after the love of Himself. The Apostles taught those who believed to regard her with the same love.
and decoration they bore to her themselves. For it is this Godhead of Jesus which blessed His Blessed Mother with a glory which no woman ever yet received. She was blessed among women because she was favoured above women. The more the world was illuminated with the knowledge and the glory of God in favour the higherAscended above all creatures the Blessedness and the dignity of His Mother. But next, this devotion though fixed in its kind and its limits, has continually unfolded itself.
into greater explicitness. As the
stories of the Incarnation have
unfolded, the glory put upon her
role Ministered of her Substans to
the Incarnate Son of God has
unfolded likewise. In condemning
the Quatrains, the Doctor, and the
Briccio, the Church declared that
Mary was the mother of the Co-Equal
Son, because she ministered to
Join the Substance of her humanity.

The Declaration of his true and
Substantial Manhood, and his
Co-Equal Co-Eternal Godhead invest
ed her with new explicit glory.
So, again, the Declaration of his
Sole and Divided Personality.
invested her with the dignity of
Mother of God. In glorifying God,
the Church glorified her. It is
impossible to unfold the glories
of the Son, without adding new
splendours to the glory of the
Mother. The Council of Nice and
the Council of Ephesus, placed
upon her head the first and
the second of the three crowns
of her glory. The last has
been laid upon her brow in our
days. From the truth of her
Divine maternity follows her
singular and preeminent glory;
premeiunent because lessor upon
Any creature was laid to dignity
so great as that of bearing the
Incarnate God, and Mortifying
Him as her infant; and Singular
because the Angels, Cherubim, and
Seraphim, are many, and many
are the patriarchs, prophets,
Apostles and Saints; but there
is only one Mother of God, hence
only one Incarnate Son. Her
Dignity and glory, therefore,
have no second, they are
Singular and alone in the
heavenly court. Her Throne
is infinitely below God, because
She is a Creature, but Humbly
above all Creatures, because

She is the Mother of God.

Once more. While the declarations of the faith added more and more in the intelligence of the Church to the explicit glory of our Blessed Mother, the gift of purity continually enlarged the heart of the Church in the love and devotion they bear to her. The Church has four great acts of worship: two in the Holy Mass, and two in the hearts and mouths of her children; and all alike have been learned from her soul. So the Holy Mass are the "Glory..."
be to God in the highest, and on
Earth peace to men of good will.
And also the "Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts," both learned
of the Angel and of the Prophet.
In the hearts and mouths of its
Children are the "Our Father," taught
to us by Jesus, and the "Hail
Mary," taught by Gabriel and
by St. Elizabeth. And these two
must keep alive in the hearts
of the faithful the Spirit of Adoption,
the consciousness of a filial relation
to God as our Father by Adoption,
to Mary as to our Mother in grace.
Now the Hail Mary has been the
Prayer and Meditation of Saints.
All devotion to the Mother of God
springs from it, as all harmony
springs from the octave. A few
notes are the elements of all song,
as the few words, 'Ave, full
of grace! Are the elements of
all the love and veneration, the
devotion and worship of the Church
for our Blessed Mother. St.
Dominic made them the measure
and the melody of the Rosary of
the Incarnation: St. Francis the
congratulations of her seven earthly
joys, St. Thomas of her seven
heavenly joys, St. Philip the
Conferences in her seven Sorrows
All through the eighteen hundred years of the Church, the hail Mary
has been pouring forth its sweet
ness and its variety like a long
strain of endless harmony.
But it is not only in the intelligence
and in the heart of the Church
that the devotion to our Blessed
Mother has been expanding. It
has been found and felt also
by experience of her power with
God. She answers to prayers through
her intercessions, in every age of
the Church, and in every state of
life, and in all manner of trials,
public and private, have taught
the faithful that she bears an
office of power and patronage.
Pres us. This experience is
incommunicable to those who have
not tasted it. They who are out
of the unity of the Church do not
believe it, because they have
ever made trial of it. But the
whole Church is pervaded by a
consciousness of her power and
power now, as it was in the
beginning. We commend ourselves
to her prayers now as the disciples
did, after her visions. She had
ascended; and we have the same
inspired testimony and experience.
of the Church as witness of what her prayers accomplish. But those who do not believe, cannot understand, and our experience cannot give them faith.

The third and last Crown placed upon the head of the Mother of God, came from the hand of Riau therub. The title 'Mother of God' completed the dignity of her office. The Immaculate Conception completes the dignity of her person. The Virgin's Maternity is the highest glory ever laid upon a creature; the Immaculate Conception is the grace proportioned to that glory. Both
in grace and in glory she is the
first of creatures, for her Son is
not a creature, but the Creator.

The veneration of the Immaculate
Conception is no more than the
final analysis, both in conception
and in perpetuation, of the pre-
eminent and singular sanctifica
tion of the Mother of God. It
adds nothing but explicitness to
thought and word to the illumi-
nation which shone to the
Apostles and their disciples, the
saints, sanctity of the Mother
of their Lord. They believed
her to be without sin, but
If she was conceived in sin, she was not without sin. Therefore, if she was without sin, she was conceived without sin; that is, in her conception, she was sinless. And what is this but the dogma of the Immaculate Conception? No language can be conceived more ardent or absolute than that in which the Earliest Words of Christianity, the Liturgies and the Early Fathers speak of the Blessed Virgin of our Lord. Spotless, sinless, three holy, holy than the Seraphim, holiest of all. After God, these are the familiar descriptions of her sanctity.
My object, then, in what I have said, is to affirm three things; (1) first, that the Author and Founder of this devotion to the Mother of God is Jesus Himself. (2) Secondly, that the chief profilers of it were the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord. (3) Thirdly, that in nothing do we go beyond them. They believed of her Divinity, Maternity and of her Immaculate Conception. All that we believe (and they loved her and venered her with more sensible and heartfelt affection than we do in these colder and twilighter days. They
And yet further, that no one can be a true disciple of Jesus unless he love and reverence the Mother of Jesus, if not in the same degree, which is impossible, at least with the same affection in kind, after His divine example. The devotion one bear to the Blessed Mother, is a sign of the true Church of Jesus Christ. The absence of it is a sign fatal to those who have it not. To speak still of the love and reverence which the Church bears to the Mother of God, must be a sign of a heart both true and pure. It may be even a sign of reprobation; for
it is certain that if we love God as we ought, if we learn to our Divine Redeemer tender and grateful hearts, if we realize the communion of Saints and the living and loving relations which bind them to us and us to them, if we be conscious of their love to us and their prayers for us, if we have childlike hearts, lovely, loving, and filial towards our heavenly Father, then it is certain that, next after Jesus, Our Lord and His love will be given to her whom He loves with all the filial reverence and all the tender love of His Sacred Heart.