

THE SYMBOLS ON MARY'S MEDAL

by **Father John Robinson C.M.**

ISBN 85826-216-9

A.C.T.S. No. 1752 (1981)

O Mary, Conceived Without Sin, Pray For Us Who Have Recourse To You

This is the second of two pamphlets that Vincentian Father John Robinson has written on the Miraculous Medal.

"The Medal Mary Designed" (A.C.T.S. Publications No. 1738) [which you can access or down-load at www.pamphlets.org.au/cts] tells the story of the origin of the Miraculous Medal while this text *"The Symbols on Mary's Medal"* explains the detail of the Medal and its message to the world.

Imprimi Potest: K. Turnbull C.M. Provincial

Nihil Obstat: Peter J. Kenny S.T.D. Diocesan Censor

Imprimatur: Peter J. Connors D.C.L. Vicar General, Melbourne

25th September, 1981.

* * *

THE MEDAL MARY DESIGNED

When a Congress is to take place, a medal is struck as a symbolical summing up of the whole Congress in all its phases. The best artist available is employed to design it.

Christianity has a Medal, and the best possible Designer has designed it, namely Mary Immaculate herself, who has at her disposal all the divine wisdom and understanding, knowledge and counsel. This Medal which we call the "Miraculous Medal" was designed in heaven and must be the best possible of all medals. Earth had no share in its designing but it came entirely from the mind and Heart of Mary Immaculate.

Every medal is designed to sum up its proper Congress, and every symbol on it is heavily loaded with meaning. For example, the five rings on the Olympic Medal, it is said, are to show that the five Continents are contesting for the palm of victory. What therefore is Mary's Medal designed to sum up? It is surely the Medal of Christianity, for it sums up our whole life in Christ Jesus through Mary. Nowhere in the world shall you find so much summed up in such a small space, as is seen on Mary's Medal. Here is a book in symbolical form, a panoramic view from the fall of Adam to the Coronation of Mary, carrying in its universal sweep every phase of human Redemption. There you see the ancient serpent that deceived Eve being crushed by Mary. There you see the source of all Mary's power, the Cross of Christ, and its redeeming grace flowing from the hands of Mary. There you see the essence of Christianity depicted in the thorn-crowned Heart of Jesus, together with all the Mother-love of God in the Heart of Mary. There you see the world at Our Lady's feet, from which she garners souls as depicted in the smaller globe at her breast.

All these things St. Catherine Laboure saw on that 27th day of November, 1830. Hearing the rustling as of a silk dress, Catherine looked up and beheld Our Blessed Lady standing on a globe that represented the world, just above and to one side of the High Altar. Mary was of "medium height; she was wearing a flowing gown of white silk tinged with the colour of the dawn . . . with long plain sleeves. Her head was covered with a white veil which, without hiding her features, fell on either side to her feet. Her hair was

confined in a sort of fillet trimmed with narrow lace". The Blessed Virgin was holding in her hands at the height of her breast a smaller globe that represented each "individual Soul in particular" whom Our Lady was offering to her Son. Rings richly studded with diamonds appeared on her fingers. Rays of dazzling light darted forth from the diamonds, so that Catherine could no longer see Mary's feet, nor the globe upon which she stood. These rays represented all the graces that come from heaven to earth passing through the hands of Mary. Eventually the hands were drawn down by her sides. Then there appeared in letters of gold, a prayer that was never heard on earth before, but composed in heaven and taught to us by our heavenly Mother: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you".

The vision changed, and St. Catherine saw two Hearts, one surrounded by a crown of thorns, and the other pierced by a sword. On top of the two Hearts, and about in the middle of the oval frame, was the letter "M" surmounted by a cross bar, upon which a cross was resting; and all this was within the oval Frame of Twelve Stars. Then again the vision changed, and again St. Catherine saw Our Blessed Lady standing on the globe with her hands down by her sides, and the golden lettered prayer: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you", going over her head in an oval frame from the right to the left hand. Mary spoke: "Have a Medal made like this, all who wear it, when indulgenced, will receive great graces; graces will be given in abundance to all who wear this Medal with confidence, especially if they wear it around the neck".

Behold Our Lady's Medal, designed by her, brought down to earth by her, modelled by her, loved by her and given to us by her as a mark of motherly love and care. It is heaven's own Medal. You must love it because of her, you must accept it from her and wear it "especially around the neck" for her. Let us make a searching study of this Medal. Look at it and explore its hidden depths. Feed your memory, mind and imagination on the designs that have come from the Immaculate mind of Mary. Let that mind be in you which was first in Mary, your Immaculate Mother.

THE TWO GLOBES

When Mary appeared first to St. Catherine on November 27th, 1830, she was standing on a globe, which represented this material world, and she was holding in her hands at the height of her breast another and smaller globe, which represented the spiritual world of souls, and as Catherine said: "each individual person in particular".

In these two globes, there lies a deep lesson awaiting our search. First we see Mary herself, as depicted on the Medal, rising up from the earth in such splendour, earth's choicest flower and gem, amazing even the angels, who cry out: "Who is she who comes from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her Beloved" (Cant. 8:5). She is a child of Adam, born of Joachim and Anna, yet rising higher, not in nature but in grace, than the angels, "touching even the confines of the Divinity", having no creature above her. "All lovely by nature, and entirely unconscious of any stain, she came into this world as the Morning Star all splendid and sparkling in her Immaculate Conception" (Pius IX).

Secondly, you will note that Our Lady stands above the world and remains aloof from all its own affairs. How could it be otherwise, since Jesus himself always stepped aside from "the multitude", and said: "The prince of this world is already cast out . . . and in me he has not anything". To the ordinary Christian, St. Paul addresses this series of questions: "What participation has justice with injustice? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15). Little wonder, therefore, that you see the Mother of God standing above this material world, and keeping absolutely aloof from all its wickedness and folly.

But, thirdly, you will notice that she does not, and even cannot, segregate herself entirely from the world. She stands upon it, and looks into it because souls are there to be gathered from out of it. Eve wrecked the human race by sin, Mary gathers souls from the wreckage. Every soul she takes into her hands, and, as a child-hungry mother, she hugs it to her breast with "the same mother's love and ardent care with which

she clasped the Infant Jesus to her warm and nourishing Breast" (Pope Pius XII). By the grace of Redemption every soul becomes "Marified", as Christ himself was also "Marified", the very first to be so, being conceived, born, nourished and trained by His Mother Mary. His relationship to her according to the "flesh", is the measure of our relationship to her according to the "spirit". All Christianity is also "Marian". Mary is the "Gate of Heaven" through which God came to us, and it is the same Immaculate Gate through which we must pass, transformed by her Motherhood, into "heavenly citizens".

The Society of the "Propagation of the Faith" seeking for an appropriate Statue of Mary "Queen of the Missions", could find none better than this Apparition of Our Lady as shown to St. Catherine, the first phase of the Miraculous Medal Apparitions. Today you see the image of Mary, "Queen of the Missions" standing on a globe which represents this material world, and holding in her hands a smaller globe which represents the world of souls, and "each individual in particular". How appropriate this is! For her subjects, the missionaries, go throughout the whole world, preaching to, and baptizing each individual soul in particular.

By this vision and symbol, Mary shows herself as Mother and inspirer of all missionary zeal, which is of the essence of the Church. And we who wear this medal must also capture the same Missionary zeal, first for our own sanctification, and then for the spread of the faith to others who are still in the "darkness" of ignorance and still in the "death" of sin.

By standing above the world, Mary calls us all to rise above worldly pleasures and love of riches which become for so many "infernal ropes" dragging them towards hell. Do not have these things on your head, around your neck, or in your heart, for they will become for you a weight pressing you down, body and soul, towards hell. Keep them, as Mary your Mother always kept them, beneath her feet. And they will become for you as stepping stones to better pleasures, and to lasting riches in Heaven.

THE RAYS FROM MARY'S HANDS

Our Lady, standing on one globe, was holding another smaller globe in her hands at the height of her breast. "Her eyes were raised to Heaven", St. Catherine said, "and her face was beaming with light whilst she offered this globe to Our Lord". Suddenly her fingers were covered with rings inset with precious stones; rays of dazzling light darted from them on all sides and enveloped her figure in such brilliancy that I could no longer see either her feet or her robe . . .". Then the Blessed Virgin said: "Behold the Symbol of the graces which I will shower down on all who ask me for them".

This is the only Symbol on the Medal that Mary has interpreted for us. We may conjecture at the rest of the symbols, but there must be no mistake about the rays of light. "Behold", Our Lady said "the symbol of the graces that I will shower down on all who ask me for them". Let it be known far and wide that Mary is the Mediatrix of all Graces to mankind.

We have seen the rays of light coming from the Blessed Virgin's hands on other occasions: In May 1917, at Fatima, Mary cast a ray of light from her hands into the three children, through which they saw themselves in God. Again, in June of that year, she sent a ray of light at the children, and it darted into heaven from two of them, and from the other, Lucia, it spread itself over the world. Again in October of that year there was another light which caused the sun to dance in the heavens. How powerful are those beautiful hands of Mary! One of her glances makes all hell tremble, one desire of her Heart obtains all things from God. "She can do by her prayer all that God can do". By the rays of light Mary wishes it to be known that she intercedes with God for His gifts to mankind. By the rays of light Mary is telling us that this is also the Medal of the Mediatrix of all Graces as well as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception.

Many indeed, are the reasons why all graces should come to mankind from Mary's hands. First, is she not the Mother of Jesus Christ; and as St. Paul said of the Eternal Father: "How has he not with him, (Christ), given us all things"? (Rom. 8:32). So we can say of Mary: "How has she not with him, (her Son), given us all things", for all grace and life is in Christ.

Secondly, Is she not the Associate of Jesus in winning the Fruits of Redemption? She merits in equity all that Jesus merits for us in Justice, as Pope St. Pius X teaches in his Encyclical "*Ad Diem Illum*". And completing that teaching Pope Pius XII added: "The application of the merits of Christ, and their acquisition make one complete work. It is fitting that Mary should co-operate equally in both phases of the same work of Salvation. Unity of the Divine Plan demands this".

A Parable

Let us say a poor peasant girl wins the heart of a Prince, and becomes the Queen. She returns fabulously wealthy to her poor people and makes them wealthy too. Who would deny her the right to distribute all that wealth she had won for them. And especially if the King had decreed it so.

Well, did not Mary, who found grace with God, become the Queen of all things? Who can, or who would, deny her the right and the title to distribute all this wealth among us? It seems the will of God that she distribute to us all that her Child-bearing has won for us. "It is the will of God", says Pope Leo XIII, and St. Bernard before him, "that we receive all things from the hands of Mary".

Jesus Christ has made clear from the beginning his Mind on this title of Mary, Mediatrix. His first miracle of Grace, the sanctification of John Baptist in the womb of his mother Elizabeth was wrought through the voice of Mary. "As soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ear", Elizabeth said, "the infant in my womb leapt for joy" (Luke 1:44). The death of sin in which John was conceived was taken away at the sound of Mary's voice; hope and joy and grace were given.

Again, about to work his first miracle of nature, Jesus awaited the request of His Mother; and for her Jesus changed water into wine, and His disciples believed in Him. And again, at the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost there was the intercession of Mary. "She it was" said Pope Pius XII in the *Encyclical on the Mystical Body*, "who by her powerful prayers obtained the grace that the Spirit of our Divine Redeemer, already given to the Church on the Cross, should be bestowed through miraculous gifts on the newly founded hierarchy at Pentecost". God began by giving all graces through Mary; and it shall stay that way always.

In the Redemption, God, in keeping with His way of placing all things in one for the benefit of all, as all light and heat are in the sun for all, and all grace was in Adam to be handed on to all had sin not intervened, made a creature so perfect that He may place all his graces in her whom He can trust never to cast those graces back at Him as Adam and Eve did. Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, is this chosen one of God. "God gathered all the waters together" St. Louis de Montfort said, "and called it *Maria*. He also gathered all his graces together, and called it *Maria*. (*True Devotion*). Pius IX called Mary "the abode of all the Divine Graces" and St. Peter Damian said: "In your hands, O Mary, are all the Treasures of the mercies of the Lord".

There is now no fear of the repetition of Adam's fall. Mary cannot betray the trust of all God's Graces. Never shall God be offered the indignity again of having all his Graces rejected, as in Adam, because Mary acts on behalf of the whole human race as she did at the Incarnation. Mary spoke on our behalf at the Annunciation, when God, in His mercy, offered us Redemption. It was she who said: "Be it done". Yes O God, we accept your proposal, for we need and desire infinitely a Divine Redeemer. In reply, God gave all the grace of Redemption, plus the Redeemer himself to Mary for us. All grace is in her, as Mother of the Redeemer, more than sufficient for the salvation of all. If any man rejects God's grace now by choosing mortal sin, the grace is not cast back entirely, because Mary has received it already from God and has it still awaiting the repentance of the sinner. For example: the father gives money to the mother to feed and clothe his children. If a child refuses to eat a meal, he does not throw it back at the father; it is the mother who receives the rebuff. By the rays from her hands, Our Lady wishes it to be known that she has all graces for us, and we must recognize her as our Mediatrix with the Mediator.

>From the rays coming from Mary's hands, another lesson remains to be learnt: from some of the diamonds in those rings on Our Lady's hands there came no ray of light at all. What did that represent? The Blessed Virgin told Catherine that that represented those who do not ask her for graces. They do not

ask, and they do not receive. This is simply the teaching of Jesus Christ on Prayer: "Ask" He said, "And you shall receive". Prayer is the turning on of the tap of God's graces. A person who refuses to turn on the tap will die of thirst, even though alongside a reservoir full of water. Prayer is a necessary condition of grace. How easy! St. Catherine cried out: "How generous she is to those who pray to her. And how many precious graces she grants to those who ask her for them!"

THE SERPENT BENEATH MARY'S FEET

During the Miraculous Medal Apparitions, St. Catherine saw a serpent beneath the feet of Mary Immaculate. There is much scriptural basis for this, in the first and in the last chapters of the Bible. In the first book (Genesis) we see the devil boastful and victorious, but in the Last Book (Apocalypse) he is desolate and defeated.

Satan presents himself to the human race in the form of a serpent beneath the tree of forbidden fruit. He is speaking to the first woman, Eve "Why does God command you, that you should not eat of every tree in Paradise?" Eve replied "Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we may eat and do: but of the fruit of the Tree which is in the midst of Paradise, God has commanded us that we should not touch it, lest we die"; (and now comes the big lie, containing in it all evil); "No you shall not die the death. For God knows that in what day so-ever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1-5). Faithless Eve you believed the devil rather than believe God! Wretched Adam and Eve, in order to dethrone God, by making yourselves equal to him, you ate that forbidden fruit! You see God's plan checked by the devil through a Woman; but wait, and you shall see God check-mating the devil through another woman! You see Eve crushed by the serpent; but wait, and you shall see that same serpent being crushed by Mary. After the devil had deceived Eve, God, in his infinite Mercy, said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between you and the Woman . . . And you shall lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15). In that momentous incident in the Garden you will have noticed our three main enemies: Satan, Sin, and Death. These three are of hell and were let loose on the earth by the will of our first Parents. You shall now see how Mary conquers this "Big Three" in herself, and for us.

In Herself: Mary overthrew "satan" by her Child-bearing. For it was her Son who crushed the head of the serpent. And She, who was to be the Redeemer's Mother and Associate, could at no time, be the victim of his Enemy.

Mary conquered "Sin" absolutely in herself, by the grace of the Immaculate Conception, being preserved from every stain of any "Sin". Our Lady overcame "Death" by her glorious Assumption, being translated from this world to the next, trampling death underfoot. These three enemies had no part in her, nor she in them. Her victory over them must be absolute, not even for a moment did she submit to "Satan", "Sin" or "Death".

And For Us: In us it is different. These three enemies, so powerful, take an immense toll of the human race every minute, and this "Through the envy of the devil". "And the devil, being angry with the Woman, (who, for herself, had gained such a decisive victory, coming through his lines unblemished), turned to make war on the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Apoc. 12:17).

Satan attacks us by a double death: Spiritual, that is of the soul, and Physical, that is, of the body. His aim is to have these two deaths coincide in us, that is, to make us fall into mortal sin, and hold us in that spiritual death until physical death confirms us eternally in the "Second Death", as St. John calls Hell (Apoc. 20:14). Death lives in hell. In fact it is satan's Empire: "Jesus tasted death for all . . . that through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil" (Heb. 2:9 and 14). By mortal sin satan recaptures us from Christ, brands us with the "mark of the beast", and holds us in that compound, awaiting physical death.

The instruments satan uses to bring about spiritual death are also of hell, and are implanted in our nature

by Original sin, and which St Paul calls: "The body of death", "the body of sin", by which we are "sold under sin". These are: "concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Our fallen nature is poisoned by these diabolical instruments. What brilliant strategy! He implanted this ammunition in human nature at the first sinful blow. How easily ever since for him to lead the children of Adam into the spiritual death of mortal sin! This is "The spirit of iniquity already at work" (2 Thess. 2:7).

The Devil's Attack

The devil is always busy. When God asked where he had been, the devil replied: "I have gone round about the earth, and have walked through it" (Job 1:7). St. Peter warns us: "Your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He is never idle. He will wait a whole lifetime for an unguarded moment, and when it comes, he is there to ensnare a soul and bring it down. In that soul, hell has already begun. So we call on St. Michael to "Thrust down to hell satan, and all other wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls"!

The devil is a most brilliant, cunning, and powerful creature. There is no one, apart from the Immaculate Mother of God, found to match him in open conflict; Even the mighty Michael Archangel, when disputing with the devil over the body of Moses, did not dare to "bring against him the judgement of railing speech, but said, 'the Lord commands you'," thus calling on God's power (cf. Jude 1:9).

Mary, The Tower of David

The Blessed Virgin, however, is more than a match for him, and none knows it better than he, for she has free use of all the Divine Wisdom to outwit him, and all the Divine power to overthrow him. Being the Universal Queen she exercises dominative power over the devil; she commands and he trembles. She approaches and he recedes from her light, taking shelter in the darkness, where alone he is safe from her. To the devils, Mary is not the gentle Virgin whom we know, but, "Terrible as an army set in battle array" (Cant. 6:3). It is always found in diabolical possessions, how the devils fear, and fly from the very mention of her name. God has decreed that through her Son she would "crush the serpent's head". Our Lady has promised that her Immaculate Heart would "finally triumph", and Pope Pius XII tells us that "Mary is the Conqueror in all the great battles of God" (Address to Fatima, October 1942). And the Church in her liturgy rejoices at having such a powerful Mother: "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, for you alone have crushed every heresy in the whole world".

By revealing herself to us dominating our infernal enemy, Our Blessed Lady wishes to stir in us great confidence in her, and to attract us to her feet to learn how to crush the serpent beneath our feet also, for we too, in our way, must crush his head, if we are to reign with Jesus and Mary. Mary crushed his head in her own direct way. The devil was unable to attack her from within by concupiscence and pride, for she had neither original sin nor any of satan's instruments of sin, so he was forced to make an open attack on her, as St. John records in the Apocalypse chapter 12. However, he attacks us differently because of original sin and its allies, concupiscence and pride. The devil finds it easy to allure us, ensnare us, then hold us "captive at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). Mary teaches us to be resolute in our determination to have no part in his ways, to break the habits of sin by which he holds us and to crucify our evil inclinations by which he allures us into his trap, praying always with St. Paul: "The God of peace crush satan speedily beneath your feet" (Rom. 16:20).

THE TWELVE STARS

Now we shall turn the Medal over and see what marvellous arrangement of Symbols Mary has on the other side. St. Catherine saw "Two Hearts, the letter 'M', and a Cross" all surrounded by "Twelve Stars". When Catherine asked Mary what was to be written on this side, she was given to understand that "The 'M' with the Two Hearts say enough". Indeed, nothing could be truer. But what do the twelve Stars say to us'?

There is a Scriptural basis for these Stars. In the heavenly vision given to St. John, these stars appeared as Mary's Crown. "A great Sign appeared in the heavens, a Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a Crown of twelve Stars" (Apoc. 12:1). Catherine saw the letter "M", that is, Mary herself, surrounded by twelve most brilliant Stars, each focusing its light on Mary; as the Psalmist said: "You are clothed with light as With a garment" (Psalm 103:2).

The questions now arise: Why stars and why twelve of them? Both have significance in Sacred Scripture. God has left many things in Scripture which are hard to understand, that we might exercise our minds on Divine Mysteries. The mystery of the twelve stars is to exercise our mind trying to solve something that has come from the mind of our Immaculate Mother. It is also a custom in Sacred Learning to find out difficult things in the light of obvious things; to come to a knowledge of the unknown through the known. This we shall follow in the Mystery of the "Twelve Stars".

1. "Stars"; Stars in Scripture very often refer to the saints. Even Jesus himself, the cause of all sanctity, says: "I am the root and stock of David, the bright and Morning Star" (Apoc. 22:16). Jesus also is the "Day Star" which St. Peter says, shall arise in the hearts of the Blessed, (cf. 2 Peter 1). In order to describe the varying degrees of glory among the saints, St. Paul said: "Star differs from star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). And the Wise man says: "The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven" (Ecclesiasticus 43:10). Also: "They who instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Daniel 12:3).

Therefore, Mary surrounded by stars, means that she is the Queen of Saints, that is Queen of Heaven. "And the Queen stood at your right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety" (Psalm 44:10).

2. "Twelve": In Sacred Scripture, the number "twelve" always denotes completeness and perfection, and always refers to Heaven. For instance, there were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve Apostles, twelve seats for the twelve apostles to judge the twelve tribes. Our Lord could have asked the Father who would have sent twelve Legions of angels to defend him. There are twelve gates into Heaven, and a tree inside bearing twelve-fold fruit. Heaven is measured on the twelve Square, and twelve thousand of each tribe are assigned.

By the "Twelve Stars" on the Medal, Mary teaches us that her abode, even in this life, is with the saints. She is not, nor can she be, in a heart that is subject to sins. "For Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wis. 1:4). Nor will Mary remain in a home that is not godly. St. Louis de Montfort speaks of being conscious of the abiding presence of Jesus and Mary in the depths of his soul. So, with all holy people and good homes. To Mary is applied the words of Scripture: "The Creator of all things commanded and gave an order to me: And he who made me, rested in my tabernacle, and said to me: Let your dwelling be in Jacob, and your inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect" (Ecclesiasticus 24: 12-13).

Therefore we must work out our salvation, and sanctification: "denying ungodliness and worldly desires, let us live soberly and justly in this world" (Titus 2:12), so that one day, through Mary's Grace and in Mary's Mothering, being moulded by her into a likeness to Christ who was moulded in her, we may deserve to stand around her as "Stars" in her Crown. With greater right than St. Paul, Our Lady says to us: "My dearly Beloved, my joy and my Crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly Beloved" (Phil. 4:1).

THE CROSS

St. Catherine saw "Two Hearts", the letter "M", and a "Cross". These three Symbols spoke as with one voice. Let us listen carefully now, to what the symbol of the "Cross" says.

We have three arch-enemies: The world, the flesh, and the devil. With two of these we have dealt already while considering the other side of the Medal: "The devil", as a serpent beneath Mary's feet: "The world", as the globe also beneath her feet. Now, on this side we see being dealt with, the third enemy. the "domestic" enemy we carry about with us in our own "flesh". This treatment is in the "Cross of Christ".

The origin of this "Cross" is the Supreme Sacrifice of Calvary. There you see God-made-Man nailed to the Cross, writhing in agony unto death, and Mary his Mother standing beneath it, and in spirit nailed with Christ to it. This was the Will of the Father, who "so loved the world of souls as to give his Only Begotten Son", "who loved us and delivered himself for us" (Eph. 5:2). And this was the will of Mary too, who prepared him as a Victim, and sacrificed him. "She offered the Sacrifice of Calvary in order to expiate the sins of the world" (Pope Pius XII). This first Cross, the Calvary Cross, was needed to make the necessary Infinite Atonement to the Divine Majesty, outraged by our sins; and by the same token, to procure the Salvation of mankind.

Our Cross

On Calvary there were three Crosses. In the world ever since there have been these same three Crosses. There is no man or woman whom Adam did not nail to a cross, except the Immaculate Conception. Some run from it, but in vain. An ancient Philosopher told the pagan Polemus to give his son, (St. Chrysanthus, Martyr), "Pleasure, pleasure which will make him forget he is a Christian". Pleasure may make a man forget he is a Christian, but its toll on his mind and body and nerves will not allow him to forget the cross to which Adam has nailed him.

Jesus Christ places us with himself on his Cross which denies us all unlawful and unnecessary pleasure, but which relieves us of the aftermath, the remorse and the shame and the ill-health of sin. That is, the Cross of Christ takes us down from the cross of Adam. It takes us from death and conducts us into the true life. "The wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, Life Everlasting" (Rom. 6:23). We must all suffer. Those of Christ, "who have crucified the flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5:24), suffer by penance and self-denial, lest they sin, whereas those of Adam, "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame" (Phil. 3:19), suffer the remorse and degradation and death of sin committed. "What fruit had you in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death" (Rom. 6:21). The Cross of Christ gives victory over vices; the cross of Adam makes men victims of bestial passions. The Cross of Christ makes men a "little lower than the angels"; the cross of Adam is the penalty for having descended much lower than the animals.

All penance, all self-denial, all suffering in accord with the Will of God, is to bear the Cross of Christ. As we needed the Cross of Christ on Calvary to obtain Salvation, so now we need the same Cross of Christ in ourselves to retain Salvation. "Christ therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you armed with the same thought. For he who suffers in the flesh has ceased from sins" (1 Peter 4:1). Our sufferings and self-denial are the real relics of the True Cross, far better and infinitely more beneficial than precious pieces of the Divine Wood in a golden Reliquary.

The work of the Cross of Christ shall last in us till the end of time. Jesus Christ started "this going at cross purposes" to the "world", and to the "flesh", and the "Devil"; and in return these three enemies brought him to death on the Cross. This same way of Divine Life is being carried on in the Church, the Body of Christ, and in each of his faithful members. "I rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his Body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). The Cross having begun in Christ, and carried on by the Church, shall end only with the crucifixion of the Church at the end of the world in the persecution of Anti-Christ, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the Spirit of his mouth; and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). "The World, the flesh and the devil" must say eternally: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

We must take up the cross. Jesus Christ has laid down his terms: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). To deny one's evil inclinations is to take up the Cross of Christ. "For they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5:24). But if we follow Christ, where shall we end, except nailed to the Cross with Christ? "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross" (Gal. 2:19). "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31). This is the work of Christ's Cross, a continual "crossing out" and keeping under, every evil inclination as it rises. "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10). Here is wisdom, for "heaven lies over the hill of Calvary", there is no other way for

fallen mankind.

We must stay on the cross: we must develop an honest desire to deny the unlawful demands of the flesh. Whilst Christ was hanging on the Cross in untold agony and with infinite patience, his enemies provoked him to come down: "Save yourself: if you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross" (Matt. 27:40). He did not come down; he was taken down, dead. Our enemies, the "world" and the "flesh" gibe us continually: "Come down from that cross, let go that resolution to be faithful to grace". Do not yield, but, "Be faithful to death: and I will give you the crown of life" (Apoc. 2: 10). Stay on the cross with patient enduring.

How does one come down from the cross? Only by committing a mortal sin: and then the sinner joins the scoffers. If you wish to be with Christ, stay nailed with him. He does not come down to be with you, you must stay on the cross to be with him. Paul said: "He remains faithful, he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Indeed, Mary, your Mother, is standing at the foot of your cross too, as is indicated by the "M" upholding the Cross on the Medal. If you have the misfortune to come down, may she, with motherly pity, send you back onto the cross, having repented and confessed your infidelity, and resolved to begin again.

By the "Cross" Mary is teaching us that we must keep alive the enmities God has placed between us and the "seed of the serpent". We also, the children of Mary Immaculate, by remaining faithful to Christ on the cross, shall crush the "seed" of the serpent, which is sin, concupiscence, pride, and all vice. It is unthinkable that Mary should ever cease hostilities with the devil, enter into an alliance with him, and do his will for even an instant. So must it be unthinkable for her children to cease opposition to the unlawful demands of our flesh and the "world" and to obey the devil. Mary's mind on suffering must be ours: to St. Bernadette she said: "I will make you happy, but not in this world". Mary, with Paul says: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8: 17-18).

THE LETTER "M" ON THE MEDAL

Our main concern in these reflections is to try to discover: what Mary had in mind when she placed each Symbol in its place on her Medal. What now does Our Lady wish to teach us by that letter "M"? The position is significant, and throws some light on what she wishes to convey. The "M" is central on this side, having the "Cross" above, and the two Hearts below. All three are connected, and say "Enough". The Cross rests on the "M"; and the Cross and the "M" rest on the two wounded Hearts. Does not this tell us that Mary is Our Mother? And it is Mary's Motherhood of men that shall now hold our attention. You see the "M" at the foot of the Cross. This recalls a similar scene: Another woman standing at the foot of a tree in Eden, the first Eve. And because she stood at the foot of that tree to be deceived by the devil, this second Eve, Mary, must stand at the foot of the tree on Calvary to repair the damage done by the first Eve. "Death through Eve, Life through Mary" (*The Church* n. 56, 2nd Vat. Council). The first Eve handed us over to the devil to serve him, the second Eve to God to serve him.

Co-Redemptrix

The "M" being above the 2 wounded Hearts uniting both to the Cross recalls Our Lady's title of Co-Redemptrix. St. Bernard said: "Much harm has been done to us by one man and one woman. Nevertheless, thanks be to God by one Man and one Woman all is set right again". It is by this co-redemptive work that Mary becomes our Mother. She is more than an adopted Mother, for she gives us life. Mary is our spiritual Mother, our real Mother, more so than our earthly mother. For all we have received from our earthly parents shall perish in the grave, and must be destroyed by penance or Purgatory, except our soul immediately created by God at conception. But all and only that which we have received from our heavenly Mother shall come with our soul into heaven. Indeed if one does not have this second Mother, "it were better for him if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). Mary is the Mother of Jesus, and Jesus is our Life. Therefore, Mary, being Mother of our Life is our Mother. So, when we call Mary our Mother it is no mere title we give to one so exalted as to be the Mother of God, but a

reality we state. She is, more than Eve "the Mother of all the living".

Conceived Spiritually

Our Lady conceived us in her conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. St. Pius X teaches us, "in the same holy bosom of his chaste Mother, Christ took to himself flesh and united to himself the spiritual Body formed by those who believe in him. Hence Mary, carrying the Saviour in her, may be said to have carried also all those whose life was contained in the Life of the Saviour". St. Ambrose compares Jesus in Mary to a grain of wheat that has in it many other grains of wheat . . . we were all most certainly contained in Adam when he sinned. As we were in Adam according to the flesh, so are we in Christ according to the Spirit, after being born again at baptism.

We were born of the Blessed Virgin on Calvary. This is signified by the position of the "M" on the Medal. Our life is in the death of Jesus, for by his atoning death we find justification in the eyes of God. He teaches us that his Mother is the Mother of the Life he gives us: "Behold your Mother" (John 19:27). By the death of Jesus Mary's Motherhood spread to John with the Life of Jesus. Mary is always Mother of Jesus, hanging on the Cross, or in John at the foot of the Cross, or in the first three thousand to be baptized, or in every child baptized and "clothed" in Christ ever since. As the Body of Christ, the Church spreads to souls, Mary's Motherhood embraces them all "with the same Mother's love and care with which she clasped the Infant Jesus to her warm and Nourishing Breast" (Pope Pius XII). It is all the same life, the same Jesus. "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). There is only one Jesus who is "all and in all" (Col. 3:11), and Mary is the Mother of that Jesus, and her Motherhood is over "all", and is "in all". By the "M" so placed on the Medal, Our Lady tells us what we must never forget, that she is our real Mother, a truth she cannot forget.

Bear in mind that her Motherhood was most sorrowful, and is still fraught with anxiety. The "M" with the 2 Hearts and the Cross tell you that in order to become your Mother, the Blessed Virgin had first to sacrifice her Beloved Son, as Pope Leo XIII said: "The Most Holy Mother of Jesus Christ is also Mother of all Christians, for she gave birth to us on Calvary in the midst of the Redeemer's excruciating torments". The pangs and anxiety of this Motherhood did not cease with the Resurrection, but go on till the end of time, as long as the fruits of Redemption are to be applied to souls. Souls become alive in this Motherhood when the fruits of Redemption are applied, and they remain alive as long as those fruits of grace are not destroyed by mortal sin. "The devil was angry with the Woman, and turned to make war on the rest of her children" (Apoc. 12:17). Through envy of her, who, by her first born (that is her Bethlehem-Born) crushed his head, he is determined to destroy as many as possible of her second born (that is her Calvary-born) by leading them into mortal sin, with the mind to bury them eternally in hell. Death is our birth into eternity. In this world we are still in the womb of the Church. The time before birth is always one of anxiety for a mother. St. John saw the Woman of the Apocalypse: "Being with child, she cried, travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered" (Apoc. 12:12).

Pope St. Pius X teaches that this Woman "is the Most Holy Mother of God, already in heavenly happiness, yet travailing in a mysterious child-birth. What was that child-birth?" he asks, and answers: "Surely the birth of us, who still in exile, are yet to be generated to the perfect charity of God, and to eternal happiness. And the birth pains show the love and desire with which the Virgin from heaven watches over us". Mary does not wish to see any "still" borns, to see any soul being buried in hell. Nor does she want to see any "premature births", to see souls detained for Purgatorial treatment before entry into heaven. With Paul how truly can Mary say to us: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

TWO WOUNDED HEARTS

The Symbol of the two Hearts united and wounded tells us of the Redemption by Jesus, and Mary's Co-redemption. Pope Pius XII quotes St. John Damascene: "There is an infinite difference between God's servants, and his Mother". "I am your servant", says St. Ildefonsus to Mary, "because you are made the

Mother of my Maker". She is unique in every way, including her co-operation in the Work of the Redeemer. All apostolic workers are co-redeemers with Christ, but far differently from the way Mary co-operated with him. All apostolic workers co-redeem with Christ, the one sole sufficient Redeemer, when they distribute the fruits of Redemption Christ won on Calvary. But Mary co-redeems even in the winning of these Redemptive fruits. Pope Benedict XV does not hesitate to say: "With her Son suffering and dying, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother's rights over her Son in order to procure the Salvation of mankind, and to appease the Divine Justice. She, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that one can truly affirm that together with her Son, she redeemed the human race". Pope Pius XI adds: "Mary remained at the foot of the Cross, suffering and co-redeeming with her Son". Unlike Abraham whose hand was stayed by an angel when about to sacrifice his son, when sacrificing her Son, no angel was found to intervene. Mary believed God and it was reputed to her unto justice. (cf. Gen. 15:6; Luke 1:45.)

Redemption

Jesus is the sole Redeemer, he is not a Co-redeemer, but the one absolutely necessary and entirely sufficient Redeemer of a million worlds. "There is no other name under heaven . . . whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). "For there is one Mediator of God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). He overthrew our enemy and rescued us. "He tasted death for all, that by his death he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say the devil" (Heb. 2:14). By Adam's sin we were driven out of the earthly paradise; by the Saviour's grace we are admitted into the heavenly Paradise. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom. 5:20).

The Work of Mary

Mary's co-redemption is necessary because God has willed it so. Jesus could have redeemed us without her, but the fact is, he did not. It was God's will that, as the devil used a woman for our fall, a woman also should be used for our Redemption. He redeemed Mary first by a unique and most perfect Redemption, in saving her from sin by the Immaculate Conception, thus making her worthy to stand beside him in the ineffable work of human redemption.

Our Lady's co-operation with the Redeemer is two-fold. First, she received the Redeemer from his Father for us in order to prepare him for the Sacrifice. The principle is applicable: "The cause of a cause is also the Cause of the thing caused". Secondly, the Mother of Sorrows sacrificed her Son on Calvary. "With a Heart overflowing, she offered her Son to the Divine Justice" (Pope Leo XIII).

"It is not only to the glory of the Blessed Virgin", adds Pope Pius X, "that she furnished the substance of the flesh of God, the Son . . . but what is more, her mission was to guard the Victim, to nourish it, and on the appointed day present it at the altar". Papal texts could be multiplied in support of Mary's co-operation in the "Objective Redemption". "She offered him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, and her Mother's rights and love were included in the holocaust" (Pope Pius XII). Again the same Pope says: "Are not Jesus and Mary the new Adam and the new Eve, whom the tree of the Cross unites in sorrow and love to offer Reparation for the guilt of our First Parents"?

Result of Mary's Work

The result of the Sorrowful Mother's Co-redemption was that it brought Christ's Redemption to the peak of perfection, in that it gave the children of God a real Mother. A mother is necessary for humans, even elevated to Divine Sonship. This Motherhood must not be a "make believe", but a reality. She must earn it. She must pay "the great price". Jesus indicated that Mary's Motherhood put the finishing touch on his Masterpiece, the Redemption; for immediately after saying: "Behold your Mother" to all the redeemed, he added: "It is perfected". The work my Father gave me to do is finished now. Cardinal van Roey said "Mary's Co-redemption gives us the smile of a mother, the heart of a mother, and the Caress of a mother." All the Mother-Love of God was given into the Heart of Mary, standing at the foot of the Cross, to be dispensed henceforth through her.

By the two wounded Hearts, Mary tells us to realize what immense sufferings Jesus endured for our Salvation, and that she herself suffered in her Heart every pain Jesus bore in his Body. Our Blessed Lady reminds us constantly by her Medal around our neck, that we must never allow such sufferings to be in vain, by living in mortal sin and allowing it to grow old in us. More truly than St. Paul, can Mary say to us: "You are not your own, for you are bought with a great Price, glorify, and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

MARY'S BEAUTY

There is yet one more Symbol. Turn the Medal. There in the central place is the Image of Mary Immaculate. We must now consider Mary's Beauty. God has made her so beautiful that no angel or man can comprehend or fully praise her. "How beautiful you are, my love, how beautiful" (Cant. 4:1). Again: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come" (Cant. 2:10). "One is my love, my perfect one is but one" (Cant. 4:8). Mary's beauty attracted the angels who on seeing her exclaimed: "Who is she that comes up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her Beloved" (Cant. 8:5). "Full of Grace" Gabriel named her. Mary's beauty attracts mankind. Catherine Laboure said: "Her Beauty is indescribable". Bernadette of Lourdes said: "My Lady is beautiful, beautiful beyond compare, so beautiful that when one has seen her once, one would wish to die so as to see her again".

To describe her we must go out of this world, and even then we fail. Pope Pius XII, quotes St. Ephrem: "Let Heaven sustain Me in its embrace, because I am honoured above It. For Heaven was not your Mother, but you have made it your throne. How much more honourable and venerable than the throne is the Mother of the King". In defining the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius IX said: "In her alone God took complacency with the most exceeding good-will. Wherefore he enriched her so wonderfully far and away beyond all the angelic spirits and all the saints, with the plenitude of every celestial favour drawn from the treasury of the Divinity, that she, entirely free as she was from every stain of sin, and all beautiful and perfect, presented such a full measure of innocence and sanctity, that a greater than it, under God, is not understood. And no one except God, can ever in thought comprehend . . . All pure and inviolate, nay, the model itself, it may be said, of purity and innocence; more beautiful than beauty itself; holier than sanctity . . . She soared above integrity and virginity, and wholly constituted the abode of all the graces of the Holy Spirit, and with the exception of God alone, she is superior to all created beings, fairer and more beautiful and holier than even the Cherubim and Seraphim . . ."

St. Peter Damian speaks: "O Virgin Mother of God, whose beauty the sun and moon admire". And St. Alphonsus: "All created beauty is a copy of her beauty". St John Damascene: "She is the loveliness of nature". God made her absolutely perfect in every respect. Why so beautiful? This was due to Our Lady. It was necessary for her, a natural consequence of her dignity of Divine Motherhood. The principle of St. Thomas throws light on this: "The nearer anything approaches its source, the more it partakes of the effects of the source". Now the Divine Nature is Infinite Beauty Itself. The one who comes closest to this Infinite Beauty, will partake most copiously of it. That One is undoubtedly Jesus Christ whose Human nature is united to the Divine Nature in the Person of the Word. Jesus Christ is Infinite Beauty Incarnate, and necessarily "Beautiful above the sons of men" (Psalm 44:3). Of all creatures, the Blessed Virgin approaches most closely to Jesus, by the grace of Divine Motherhood, which is of the Hypostatic Order, and so she above all others, partakes most copiously of the effects of the Source of Beauty, namely the Divine Nature.

In his Divine Nature, Jesus is called: "The brightness of his Father's Glory, and the Figure of his Substance" (Heb. 1:3). So, in his Human Nature, he must be the brightness of his Mother's glory, and the figure of her Substance. He had no mother in heaven, and no father on earth. Seeing Jesus and Mary together people would exclaim: "Isn't he like his Mother"! But the angels seeing them together would say in wonderment: "Isn't she like her Son"!

Mary's beauty could never fade, because of her sinlessness. She was just as youthfully beautiful at 61, as she was beautifully youthful at 16. By showing her physical beauty to us on her Medal, the Blessed Virgin

attracts us to herself. She teaches us to seek the true beauty which is in the soul by sanctity. By the overflow of beauty from within, our body also becomes beautiful. Giving way to vice of any kind darkens the mind, weakens the will and robs the countenance of beauty. How true is the saying: "Pleasure coarsens, suffering refines". Let us stay with Mary always, for our eternal beauty will be measured by the degree of virtue we practised in this life. O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to you".

* * *