



Again and again, the Children of Mary are reminded that they must always show forth the spirit of charity which lives in their souls by the ceaseless practice of kindness and gentleness. Often and especially when dealing with the derelict or abandoned classes, this calls for genuine heroism and an outlook that is completely supernatural. It is easy to be kind on occasions; it is difficult to be always kind; it is heroic to be habitually kind towards those who can truthfully be described as vile. Yet, kindness is the only way. Insistence upon discipline repels such people; gentleness and warmth of heart alone attract them and eventually win them over. They often fall again but, with continual kindly help, the falls become ever less frequent. When kindness and gentleness are exercised with supreme patience and perseverance, they always return in the end to the friendship of God.

A kindly attitude outlaws the spirit of criticism. The conduct of many of those encountered during active work seems open to criticism, but he is never the critic. This does not mean that he completely stifles his critical faculty - a procedure which would make him the dupe of every charlatan; but it does mean that he governs that faculty according to the laws of Faith and exercises it only according to the spirit of charity. If he discovers evil, error or defects, he never blames, upbraids, rebukes, censures or condemns; rather, he searches for the good that is always to be found in every character, though it is often half-hidden or ill-expressed. This is itself magnificent training in the practice of charity and is bound to result in rapid progress towards perfection. It demands an attitude of mind that is prepared to love every individual before anything loveable manifests itself and to expect to find beauty before any is visible.

Under no circumstances whatsoever does the Child of Mary depart from the way of gentleness and sweetness, for he knows that to depart from that way will result in harm rather than in good. It is precisely in those cases that seem to call for rebuke that there is greater need for kindness and gentleness. If he is true to his vocation and really trying to reach the most abandoned souls to bring them back to God, he will surely come into close contact with those who seem to be even worse than the ordinary great sinners, superlative in their badness, incarnations or selfishness and personifications of treachery, filled with hatred of God and of a nauseating outlook towards religion. In them, there appears to be not a spark of grace, a trace of softness or a gleam of the spiritual. In them, he knows that Christ is, so to speak, held captive, mocked and crucified again. Therefore, they must be converted; Christ must be freed. There is only one

course open; their hard hearts must be melted by the steady and persistent application of the warm flame of charity, declaring itself as kindness, gentleness, patience and understanding.

The law is absolutely invariable, whether they are approaching those inside or outside the Church, the way is the same. The center of the entire scheme is the appeal of one person towards another; the attraction of one soul to elevate another. Prejudice and ignorance by irreligious education of those outside the Church, always yield before an approach made in the spirit of the Good Shepherd. Humility, affection and sincerity which spring from genuine belief succeed when a controversial, overbearing attitude fails. Certainly, they are never resented; on the contrary, they invariably leave a deep impression which ripens to complete conversion.

The ideal after which each one aims is that he be filled to overflowing with the spirit of Mary. He aspires after Her fathomless humility, complete obedience, seraphic sweetness, ceaseless prayer, all-embracing mortification, immaculate purity, perfect patience, celestial wisdom and dauntless love of God and, more than all, Her faith. Thus animated, the Child of Mary is prepared to attempt any and every task, for he knows that in Mary, he may and can do all things. When he is tempted to think that a certain spiritual work is impossible, he asks himself with Mary, **"How can this be done?"** and, with Her, he repeats that incomparable act of resignation, **"Behold, the slave of the Lord"** and he knows that the task allotted to him can be accomplished by the over-shadowing of the Holy Spirit.

### TRUE DEVOTION

The apostolate is built on devotion to Mary. The first obligation of every member, the duty that ranks before any other, is practicing a devotion

to Mary proportionate to the place She occupies in God's plan for the sanctification of the souls of men.

There are still many who try to make Catholic doctrine more acceptable to those outside the Church by keeping Mary in the background. Such conduct may be justified by merely human reasoning; it certainly does not accord with the dictates of a prudence based on God's revelations concerning His Mother. In the light of these, it would be just as sensible to preach Christianity without Christ as Redemption without Mary. For it has been God's Will that no coming or giving or manifestation of Christ should be without Mary! He is trained to ponder seriously and often the answer to this question: **"What does God think of Mary?"** He takes himself in spirit to the very first days of creation and listens to the voice of God addressing the Serpent in Eden: **"I will put enmities between thee and the Woman, and thy seed and Her seed; She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for Her heel."** That is God's own summary of His plan for redeeming the newly-fallen race of men and, in that divine summary, Mary is set apart alone as the co-worker of Salvation.

That first divine foretelling of the Savior to come is echoed and re-echoed by Prophet after Prophet during all the long years of waiting before the earthly conception of the Messiah. **"THE VIRGIN," "THE VIRGIN AND THE CHILD," "THE WOMAN," "THE WOMAN AND THE CHILD," "THE QUEEN SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE KING"** - so they go on assuring us, again and again, that a Woman is to be closely associated in the work or our saving.

**"Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,"** cries Isaias, **"and He shall be called Emmanuel, God with us."**