

FOURTH DAY.

The Flower of the Promise.

SECOND PART.

"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."—*Isaias*, vii.

INTO the garden which sin had entered came God, at eventide, seeking the sinners. What will He do? When the angels, the princes of creation and of His court fell, there was no mercy. Right beside the throne they had fallen, and swift and sudden on them fell the everlasting malediction. Not the faintest whisper of a far off hope for them was heard in the dark and terrible sentence. The sinners hiding in the garden, conscious of their own guilt, were unconscious of the fact of the other, and first sin, in the higher places, and of the fearful act of justice which had punished it forever.

God called Adam, but, ah! how earth's first sin had changed the very tone of the Creator's voice! It had lost its tenderness. And God called Eve. He questioned both, and each confessed their guilt. Did they then fall down at His feet and weep? Did they plead with piteous prayers for mercy? Who knows? And then God called the serpent to pass his sentence. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lay in wait for her heel." Then

to the woman: "I will multiply thy sorrow and conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children." Then to the head of our race He spoke: "Cursed is the earth for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread until thou returnest unto earth; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Oh, wondrous mercy! God cursed the serpent and He cursed the earth, but He did not curse our first parents, nor did He utter a curse against our race. Why? Because His only Son was to be born in our race.

He looked away from the garden of guilt down the future years. Afar off He saw the "express image" of Himself in the human face of Christ, the second Adam, and in Mary He beheld the second Eve; and with a love surpassing highest thought, because it was infinite, with the very malediction which He pronounced against Satan He mingled mercy's promise.

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head." Great is the mystery! the woman was conquered by the tempter, and the tempter will be crushed by the woman. Through the woman came sin to the man, and by the woman will come the Man who is to conquer sin, and the children of the race, though fallen, will become like unto God, "made conformable by grace to the image of the Son of God." Thus the flower of the promise of the woman who was to crush the serpent's head bloomed fair and sweet in the very shadows that fell around the garden of the first sin. The woman is promised first, because the woman first fell, and the flower of promise is twined around the prophecy of her seed—the Messiah.

The history of our race from its fall, begins with the mighty words, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." What woman? One who will be a mother. Whose mother? The mother of Jesus Christ, who will be her seed, and for all who receive Him the seed of eternal life. And her name? Ask all the generations, they call it blessed, they know, honor and love it—Mary.

Ah! name more beautiful than all names save His, at the sound of which "every knee must bend in heaven and on earth," thou wert a hidden glory in eternity, and thou didst shine like a star in the darkness of the fall of our race, and thy rays, pure and bright, gleamed a halo of mercy and hope on the sorrowful souls of our guilty first parents when they passed out of the gate of Eden by the flaming sword of the cherubim guarded, leaving all their happiness there when all their innocence had been lost.

Oh woman, "blessed among women!" the fallen world lifts up its eyes to thee, and in its weeping hails thee as the harbinger of its redemption!

Oh Mother of the Saviour Christ! make haste and meet those who walk "moaning and weeping in this valley of tears." Tarry not long, for the weary world leans towards the future, and is listening for the sweet sound of thy footsteps; for thou wilt bring to its darkness, Christ, the everlasting light, and to its sorrows, Christ, the everlasting joy, and to its places of death, Christ, the everlasting life, and to its sinfulness, Christ, the infinite salvation.

Oh, Mary of the Promise! Heaven does not need thee, for all is joy and blessedness there! Poor earth sighs for thee! Oh, dove of the new covenant, come

soon, through the gates of the morning, bearing the olive branch of the peace of God to the world.

But she will tarry long before the earth shall see her face. Here below, the Eden of innocence and happiness was closed forever, and no one yet has passed the cherubim who guards its gates, and no one ever shall. There is a brighter Eden above, whose gates are also closed until He comes who holds, by right, the keys. But His mother must come first.

On went the years into the past, on moved the human race, looking towards the future; wickedness grew apace; corruption defiled the whole world, and God was angry. What will He do? He has called on men to repent and to return to Him in the repentance of their hearts. The patriarch Noah is His preacher. The world will not hear. Then came a day, not two thousand years away from man's last day in Eden, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the cataracts of heaven rushed down and whelmed the world in universal deluge. All flesh was destroyed from the face of the earth save Noah and his family, and God made a covenant with him. They carried in the ark with them the memories that came down from the gates of Eden, and when they were dispersed all over the world, wherever they went, they bore with them the tradition of hope. They looked towards the future, and the cry of the world's faith was: "We believe that He will come—the Messiah."

But the woman of Genesis, promised in the garden, must come first. Every cry for Him was a sigh for her. David, the royal poet of the old covenant, sang in loftiest strains inspired, of the glories of the Messiah's reign and the mercies of His redemption. Every song for Christ was a song for Mary, for His mother must come first.

Great prophets arose. They knew the histories of the yesterdays, and with cloudless vision they saw the mysteries of the to-morrows. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel, the four prophet evangelists of the covenant of figures, cried with a strong voice aloud to the people and the world: "He will come—the Messiah. His day is growing nearer," and the people waited in hope and worshipped Him afar off. But His mother must come first.

The last of the prophets, Malachias, gave the "burden of the word of the Lord to Israel." He predicted, in words that sound impassioned, the glorious, universal and everlasting sacrifice of the coming covenant. But the victim must come first, and before the victim, the victim's mother.

Then there fell a strange hush on Israel. The last of the prophets had spoken and prophecy ceased. Why? The Prophet of Prophets was near at hand. Near at hand? Some hundred years will pass before the Messiah shall appear. Some hundred years seem far enough away from a common event, but hundreds of years are near indeed to the greatest event of earth and the grandest day of time—the coming of the expectation of the nations, Jesus Christ. But Mary must come first.

On went the years. The tread of Roman soldiers had been heard in Judea and Jerusalem. The sceptre of Israel had passed into the hands of strangers, and the banners of Rome had flung their shadows against the holy temple. The east looked towards the west, the west looked towards the east in mysterious expectation. The Messiah is coming. But His mother must come first. The flower of promise that bloomed out of God's words, far back in Eden, will soon blossom in Judea.

Oh, Flower of Promise! thou hast brightened nearly forty centuries. Thou hast filled with thy sweet fragrance the faith and hope of the world. What hand will dare to disentwine thee from the prophecies? Who will dare tear thee away from the history of the Messiah in His coming, or cast thee out of the garden of the Scriptures as if thou wert a worthless weed? And if, Oh, Blessed Queen! I wreath the flower of promise with the flower of predestination in thy beautiful May-crown, thou knowest that I have done well; while I, O Virgin Queen! do but only, and in humbleness, know that there are ten thousand hands than mine more worthy far to give thy crown a beauty which, alas, mine cannot give.

How blind to the understanding of the supernatural economy of God's grace in this fallen world, are they who do not see the Christ and His Mother walking side by side, step to step together, down the ways of prophecy, their faces towards Bethlehem and Calvary! Is it in some a judicial blindness? Will you fling the flower of the promise of the woman away? Then reject the Messiah and be consistent. The Messiah takes His mother along with Him wheresoever He goeth, wheresoever He manifests Himself. She must be with Him to give him His human meaning. She must be with Him to prove that He is the man with flesh and blood like ours, which flesh shall be bruised and which blood, derived from her, will be shed for this world's redemption. She must be with Him, mysteriously, back of all the figures of the old covenant. She must stand with Him back of the symbols and shadows of the old law, else He is not in figure, nor will He be in reality what His Father predestined Him to be—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But what He was predestined to be He must and shall be. His Father's eternal honor is pledged to it by eternal decree. His Father's eternal love is pledged to it by divine decree. His own voluntary acceptance to become, through Mary, the Saviour of the world He must faithfully meet. The entire Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, will be false to itself, and if so it is the very death of the Deity if the decree be not fulfilled in time, just as it was framed in the eternal counsels. God changeth never His counsels.

And the mother of the Man of Sorrows and God of glory must have her share in both. Her heart will be pierced by the sword as His side will be pierced by the soldier's lance; but her soul, also, must be clothed with the glory of her divine Son. She must drink the chalice with Him, and while He will wear the crown of the Man-God she will wear the mother's crown.

Sweet flower of promise! we have gathered thee from the garden of Eden. Fill our souls again with the fragrance of the innocence we have lost, that so the gates of the Eden of Heaven may be opened by grace unto us to enter in and reign in glory with our queen forever.

ASPIRATION.

"O LORD, our Lord! how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth!"—*Psalms*, viii.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who didst ordain Thine only begotten Son to be the Saviour of mankind, and didst command that He should be called Jesus, mercifully grant that we may enjoy in heaven the blessed vision of Him, whose holy name we worship on earth. Amen.

FIFTH DAY.

The Flower of the Immaculate Conception.

FIRST PART.

"One is my dove, my perfect one is but one, she is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her."—*Canticles*, vi.

IN the year 1849, Pius the IX was driven from Rome and went an exile to Gaeta. It seems that in our days the vicars of Christ must be victims for truth. Though he had given to the Roman people a liberal constitution, and had made many reforms in the government of the Papal States, the liberals became revolutionists and clamored for what could not in honor and principle be granted. 1848 was a year of revolutions all over Europe. The waves of the revolution at last reached Rome and swept furiously over the States of the Church; and, as in all Italian revolutions, the cruel knife of assassination found many a hand ready enough to grasp it and many a victim to fall beneath it. In disguise, the Pope fled secretly from Rome and found refuge in the kingdom of Naples. Then forgetting his own wrongs and sufferings, and thinking only of the glory of God and the good of the Church, he addressed an Encyclical to each of the high prelates of the Church, in regard to the definition of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary. Questions were proposed to them for answer, as to their own belief and the

faith of their flocks, and the traditions of their churches in regard to the conception of Mary. Meanwhile, the revolution raged and ruined. The world needed some gentle, peaceful truth to calm its agitations. What truth more serene than the sinless conception of the holy Virgin?

On the 12th of April, 1850, Pius the IX returned to Rome. Meanwhile his Encyclical had been read by the Bishops all over the earth, and with a wonderful unanimity they desired the definition of the dogma; but the Church, in the world of dogmas, moves slowly, like unto God in the works of creation. Congregations of theologians, of unquestioned piety and of learning unsurpassed, were appointed to study the subject from every point of view, to examine authorities, to search the Scriptures, to inquire into ancient traditions, and to exhaust every source where reason could find reasons of the truth of the immaculateness of Mary's conception; for in building up the grand temple of Catholic dogmas, only the stones hewn by the hand of God from all eternity, and found where He has placed them in time, can be chosen, stones consecrated with the chrism of His love and power and will; for only such stones have the right to be built up into the temple of faith resting on Jesus Christ, the corner stone; and it is not authority alone, nor is it reason alone, that builds the temple by formulating truths into dogmas; but it is authority infallible, united to highest reason, that does the sacred work. Meantime, while the minds of the learned men were studying, examining and discussing the subject, the hearts of the faithful were praying for the object of their desires.

In our Holy Church, as in each of its members, mind and heart together, not either of them separately, form the principle of every spiritual and catholic act, just as the Father and the Son, are the one principle, whence proceeds the Holy Spirit. Years passed on. The Church did not speak. As at the Council of Ephesus, the faithful were filled with a holy impatience, and all over the world they prayed for the day of the definition of the truth. It came at last. On the eighth of December, in the temple of St. Peter's of the Vatican, the mount which is the Thabor of truth and the Calvary of sorrow, was filled with an immense concourse of the faithful and strangers from many lands. Two hundred Bishops from many nations were there, and priests in thousands. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered with a grandeur of ceremonies unequalled. When the gospel had been sung in Latin and in Greek, a Cardinal, accompanied by Bishop and Archbishop, approached the throne of the Vicar of Christ and thus addressed the Sovereign Pontiff:

"Most Holy Father, the Catholic Church has ardently and long desired that your supreme and infallible judgment will pass upon the Immaculate Conception of the most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, a decision which will bring her an increase of praise, of glory and of veneration. In the name of the Sacred College of Cardinals, in the name of the Bishops of the Catholic world, and in the name of all the faithful, we humbly, and with fervent instance, ask that the universal desires of the Church may be granted in this solemnity of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Even now, while we are offering the august Sacrifice of the Altar in this temple consecrated to the Prince of the Apostles, and in

the midst of this solemn reunion of the Sacred College, of the Bishops and of the people, deign, Holy Father, to lift up your apostolic voice and proclaim the dogmatic decree of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and there will be joy in the heavens and gladness on earth."

Such was the petition of the Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and two hundred millions and more of the faithful. Were they blind? Who will say so? The deepest learning of the world made the petition. Were they deceived? The greatest wisdom on earth made the petition. Was it a petition of wickedness? Wickedness will surely never ask for a dogma which means sinlessness.

But before the Supreme Pontiff accedes to this universal petition he and the petitioners must pray to heaven. So the hymn of the Holy Ghost, the *Veni Creator*, rose in glorious melody from the hearts and lips of all in the temple, and tears of joy trickled down many a face there, with a soundless music of their own. While the echoes of the hymn, rising heavenward, were still faintly sounding high up in the lofty dome, Pius the IX, with great emotion in his voice, read the decree in which it is proclaimed:

"That it is a dogma of Faith that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from and in the first instant of her Conception, by special grace and privilege from God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved and placed beyond the reach and stain of original sin."

Ages ago, in a temple at Ephesus, when Mary's relationship towards Christ had been assailed by Nestorius, the Fathers of the Council vindicated the rights of her divine maternity. On that 8th of December, in St.

Peter's, the Pontiff and Bishops defended the honor of Mary's soul and the integrity of her innocence. Faith kept a feast of joy in the hearts of the faithful. The glory of the joy of faith, like a grand *Te Deum*, swept over the world. Ten thousand temples sounded with song, and twice a hundred thousand altars, in lowly chapels and in cathedrals grand, flamed with lights and shone fair with flowers. And the unbelieving world laughed. Let it laugh. And a part of the unbelieving world sneered. Let them sneer. If the faithful were glad, surely God and His angels were filled with joy.

Think you that the Immaculate Conception of Mary was the invention of a truth that day in St. Peter's temple? Truth cannot be invented. Divine truth is even beyond the reach of mere human discovery. But divine truth is no more beyond the reach of infallible human announcement than it is beyond the reach of human certain acceptance. No one save the prophets, the Apostles and the Church of Christ has received truths of the divine order directly and immediately from God. Since the ascension of Christ, God is still. He never himself breaks His silence. The Church has "the mind of Christ," and as Christ, in the days of His life, only gradually gave forth His revelations, so the Church, which is His human organ of speech on earth, only gradually, and in God's appointed time, gives to the world His announcements of the revealed truths in her possession.

The sun holds as much light on the rim of the eastern horizon in its morning rising as when it reaches the hour of its noon, but greater and brighter grows its light as it ascends the skies. So the Church, when it rose on the horizon of Judea eighteen centuries agone,

held all the light of truth in possessing Christ, the eternal light; but only gradually, like our material sun, did it shine with greater splendors as it rose over the world. Nor will its light ever decrease. It shines on the dial of the day of Christ, telling the hours of truth forever, and so shall it shine till it reaches its noonday here below, and then will come the end. The sun of truth has no west where it will go down in shadows. Its west is in the heavens, into whose everlasting light it will triumphant rise. What then is dogma? A new invention? Is it a new invention of light at nine o'clock in the morning, because there shines more light than just after morning's dawn? Is it not the same sun shining? Is it not the same light coming to the earth? Same sun? Yes. Same light? Truly so, the very same, but to our eyes growing brighter, and covering with its increasing brightness more of the heavens and more of the earth. What then are dogmas? They are the TRUTH whose bright light is shining forever in the Church, growing brighter, as the centuries pass, to the eyes of faith, in varied but not contradictory manifestations, and covering with the same increasing light more of the world of mind.

Look at the rainbow which spans the heavens and arches the earth, a sign of bright peace when the tempest has passed away, and learn a lesson. On the clouds shine rays of light. What else? From each drop of water in the cloud, out of each ray, seven different colors are reflected. The seven colors were hidden in each white ray till the rays touched the drops of water in the cloud, and then each ray reveals its hidden beauties to our eyes. So in the Church, there is but one truth, and that is all truth; but like unto the

ray with its seven colors, in that one truth are hidden countless truths, until they are reflected on our souls through dogmas defined by infallible authority, and like the rainbow after the storm, they come to bless the hearts of the faithful often, and generally after the tempests of sins and heresies have swept over the fold of Christ and filled His flock with uncertainty and fear.

Music is only a sweet sound, but in that sound, like unto the ray of the sun, seven notes lie hidden until revealed to our ears. The eighth note is but a repetition of the first and the beginning of another seven. So truth has but one sound, and that is the sound of the voice of Christ, but in that sound sleep countless songs of truth unheard until the voice of authority wakes them into the sweet words of divine faith.

Study the unit. All numbers and figures are contained in it. What are tens, hundreds, thousands, millions and more rising above the unit, but it itself manifested in higher and fuller forms? And what are all the fractions lying beneath the unit, but it itself broken into fragments? When the unit affirms itself it grows, it puts on greatness and glory; but when the unit denies itself it decreases, it puts off its power and breaks itself into ignominious fragments. In the unit then are countless affirmations. So in the one truth there are hidden innumerable affirmations. And the unit has the power of denial; when it denies itself it descends beneath itself, and gives up its life as unity.

So when reason, and no matter whose, denies truth in its unity, or any of its affirmations of faith, it descends into regions of deformed fragments and of darkness, and it loses the life by losing the light of truth, and then reason ceases to reason right. Mere religious

opinions are fractions of faith, and once reason begins to work at this sinful sum of fractions, there is no telling when it will stop. Dogmas are affirmations of truths, going to make up the whole sum of faith; and as truth is infinite while we are finite, not in this world shall we ever reach the fullness of the sacred sum; not till in the eternities, when we shall behold truth face to face in the vision of the Trinity.

Alas for those who are blind to the clear light of the divine dogmas which shine out of the heaven of truth, like suns for the days and stars for the nights! Alas for those whose eyes look only on the fitful light that flickers across the changeful clouds blown about by the winds of human opinions! Any church (we use the incommunicable name, which belongs to our Church alone, through mere courtesy) that cannot affirm the ancient truths has gone beyond their reach, and away from the light of Christ. Any church that has said its last word and can say no more, has exhausted its life and must die. Its very silence proves that it possesses only dead fragments. When any church ceases to affirm, it begins to deny. When once it has begun to deny, by a force which it cannot resist, it will continue to deny, and will lean on denials for its very existence. When it ceases to say YES before the throne of truth, it will begin to say NO behind the throne, and sometimes the first low muttered No leads to the loud, last, blasphemous, absolute No. Then dies the very light of truth and the night of darkness comes.

Oh beautiful Church! Bride of the crucified Christ, bearing the heart as well as the mind of Christ, possessing His divine person as well as His powers, thou didst come down from the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where

Mary was praying with thy Apostles, filled as were they with the Paraclete, and while thou didst preach Christ and Him crucified and risen from the grave, thou never didst forget the mother of the Christmas night, the mother of Good Friday, the mother of the Pentecost.

Oh living Church of the everlasting God! Queen of truth, bearing the sceptre of divine authority, wearing the triple crown of faith and hope and charity, with the mercy-clasped sandals of salvation on thy feet, when thou didst stand in Ephesus of old, and didst speak in honor of the name of Mary, thy voice was strong and sweet, but in the temple of St. Peter's thy voice didst rise to triumphant tones when thou didst defend against unbelievers the honor of Mary's sinless soul.

Ah! the olden words of Genesis, in God's malediction of Satan, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed," never before received such triumphant confirmation, and the malediction of Satan never before put on such dark and mighty meaning. Out of her glorious Magnificat and into the glorious dogma rang, with their crowning meaning, "All generations will call me blessed." Blessed the lips that announced the great truth, and blessed, in these days, the hearts that hailed with the welcome of faith and joy the glorious dogma. Was it all or only the work of men? No, it was the act of the Son of Mary, through His chosen representatives. Listen!

Had Christ Himself stood in the midst of that assembly, which represented eighteen centuries of doctrine, and had He been asked the question, "Tell us, was the conception of your Mother immaculate?" What would have been His answer? Would He have said *No*? Would He have replied, "Pontiff and Priests, you are

troubling yourselves too much about my Mother's honor?" No, no, a thousand times No. Listen. He would have said:

"Pontiff and Priests; and let the whole world hear: My mother was conceived as pure and stainless in time as she was conceived in the divine thought and decree of her and My predestination, in the bosom of the Divinity. You have to-day reached back to My mother's eternal predestination, and our divine act in eternity you have accepted by the light of faith, and by your authority, which is mine, you have affirmed our act in the days of time. You have reached back to the promise of My mother and Me in the garden of Eden, and you have given to that promise, this day, its full authentic meaning.

"Pontiff and Priests, was My mother, Mary of Nazareth, conceived in sin? Who here will dare assert it? No, no! I the Son of God, had the right, because I so willed to humble myself. Did I not do so? Did I not bear every humiliation for you and for all. But I, as the Son of God, could not degrade myself. Had My mother been conceived in sin she would have been the slave of him whose empire I came to destroy; and I, as the eternal Son of God, could not become the son of a slave of Satan. My divinity must be inviolate in My humanity, and therefore the mother who was to clothe My divinity with the clothing of humanity must be immaculate in soul and body; for out of her flesh and blood she is to weave the robes which my divinity must wear. The robes must be stainless. If she were stained by sin, could I, as the Son of God, wear robes with sin's stain on them? Pure as the heavens I came from, and purest of the pure to the touch of My divinity and

humanity must she be whose Son I myself predestined myself to be. Did I not, from all eternity, choose Mary of Nazareth to become my mother? Have I not all power? Would I be true to My infinite power if I had not preserved my mother from the contamination of Satan's touch and from the ignominy of his slavery? Am I not infinite love? Have I not proven My love for the world, even unto death? If I gave you a law to love and honor your mothers, must I not myself give you the most perfect example of keeping the law? Must I not love My mother with perfect love, and honor My mother with highest honor, the perfect love and highest honor of God and man? Would I be true to the perfect and infinite love wherewith I must, as God and man, love My mother, and would I not be false to the highest honor of My mother, if, having all power to which nothing is impossible, and an infinite will which nothing can resist, and an infinite love for her, which your thoughts cannot comprehend nor your speech describe, I would permit the fallen angel to glory in My mother's fall? And when I stand before the world with My mother, and with My love for her as her own and only child, proclaim that she is mine, could I leave it in the power of Satan to cry out in defiance: 'Yes, Christ! she is your mother, but she was my slave?' In heaven, that Lucifer would fain become equal to God. Hence he was cast out. No wonder he strives, in hate, to drag My mother down into the mire of sin. No, no, it would be an infamy that would degrade My divinity—it would be an ignominy that would disgrace My humanity—and before the angels in heaven, and men on earth, and demons in hell, it would be the everlasting opprobrium of My mother. And the

infinite honor of My eternal Father, whose chosen daughter My mother is, would be shamed that I, His Son, would have a sin-stained mother; and the infinite sanctity of Our own Holy Spirit, whose spouse My mother is, would suffer detriment if, for an instant, My mother's purity had been tarnished by guilt.

"Pontiff and Priests, ye have worshipped Me with highest worship to-day, My mother's feast on earth, in that you have crowned her with an honor than which none can be greater—an honor which has been her's from all eternity, and which you proclaim to earth to-day. Pontiff and priests, this day was foreseen from all eternity, and your proclamation on earth was written from the unbeginning in letters as pure as My mother in the mind of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Thus would Christ give His own divine testimony to the eternal honor of His mother. Thus would the Father and the Holy Spirit testify. And thus the dogma proclaimed that blessed day, in the grandest temple of faith on earth, is based not only on Scripture's inspired words, not only on the teachings of the holy Fathers, not only on the mystical illuminations of countless saints, not only on the traditions handed down from the beginning, not only on the divine proprieties of things, not only on the clearest, unanswerable reasonings of the minds of men; but it rests on the very reason of God, and on the infinite will that decreed it from the beginning, and on the infinite power that guarded the decree, and on the glorious love, which could not be more glorious, that made the eternal decree a reality in time, in the home of Joachim and Anna.

And now listen. Do not they who deny Mary's sin-

less conception deny, consciously or unconsciously, her full blessedness? Do they not, knowingly or unknowingly, lift up their voices against her prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed?" Do they not, let us hope in ignorance, stand by Satan in the garden, and when they read the curse uttered against Satan: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (the words are absolute), do they not think in fact, if not say in words: "No, there will not be absolute and everlasting enmity. There will be an instant, or more, when the enmity will be suspended or cease. She will be conceived in sin and fall under the power of Satan?" The attribution of such power to Satan involves the withdrawal from Christ's mother of her soul's pure honor, and from God the power to prevent or the will to resist such an indignity. Take away the principle of eternal enmity between the Woman and Satan for one instant, how will the enmity be resumed? To honor the power of Satan so as to make it prevail over Mary, is it not a sort of diabolic worship? And to deny the sinlessness of the Mother of Jesus Christ, is it not a sort of diabolic blasphemy?

Oh, Mary! Virgin, Mother, Queen! we are of the generations who rejoice to call thee blessed—blessed in thy predestination, blessed in the promise, and thrice blessed in thy holy and Immaculate Conception. To-day we twine the flower of thy sinless conception in thy crown. But, ah! it is too fair a flower to lend its beauty to but only one day. To-morrow, oh Queen of spotless purity, we will look on the beauty of this spotless flower, that we may fill our hearts with its mystical fragrance. We, who have been conceived in sin and

brought forth in sorrow, lift up our souls in praise to God for having by His preventing grace, preserved at least one of our race—thee, oh Mary! from stain of sin; and we magnify God, who hath done this thing for thee; and we worship God because He hath placed thee outside of the darkness of sin, and hath established thee in the full sunshine of His infinite grace.

And, oh! though sinless, thou wilt have pity on us sinners. Pray for us sinners “now and at the hour of our death,” that we may in our own measure fulfill the prophecy and share thy privilege—that like unto thee, there shall be enmities between our souls and Satan forever and forever.

ASPIRATION.

BLESSED art thou, O Virgin Mary, by the Lord, the most high God, above all women upon the earth. Thou art all fair, O Mary, and there is no stain of sin in thee.

PRAYER.

OH, God! who, by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son, we beseech Thee that as Thou didst, through the foreseen death of Thy same Son, preserve her from all stain, so Thou wilt also grant that we may reach Thee cleansed through her intercession.

SIXTH DAY.

The Flower of the Immaculate Conception.

SECOND PART.

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul.”—*Psalm, lxxv.*

TO-DAY let us gaze again upon the spotless purity of this beautiful flower. There are three Edens—the Eden of Genesis, the Eden of grace, and the Eden of glory. The first was an Eden of perfect happiness until innocence was lost; the second is an Eden of perfect grace, in which innocence is regained; the third is an Eden of perfect glory, where innocence, restored by grace, is forever crowned. The first was a material garden, bright with the beauty of all natural beautiful things; the second is the mystical garden of the Church, full of the spiritual beauties of supernatural grace; the third is the Eden of heaven, radiant with the ineffable beauties of everlasting glory.

Before the closed gate of the earthly Eden stands the angel of God's justice, with sword of flame, guarding the gate and barring entrance through it. That first perfect happiness, with innocence lost, never has been and never shall be found again here below. Before the ever-open gate of the mystical Eden of grace, the Holy Church, stands the angel of God's mercy, bidding those who are laden with sorrow and burdened by sin to come and enter. At the narrow gate of the Eden of glory, heaven, as sentinel stands the high Archangel of