



Living the Marian Life: Exterior Devotion

I once knew of a young girl whose family, who every weekend they went to Holy Mass, would sit either in the middle or back of Church on 'St. Joseph's side'. In a spirit of rebellion, she would say to herself, "When I grow up, I'm going to sit way up front and on 'Mary's side'!" Well, I have grown up and I get to sit way up front...but we're still on 'St. Joseph's side'! St. Joseph is very good to me and I've a special love for him, but my childhood – childish desire to sit on 'Mary's side' I believe is just part of my devotion to her. It's an external way of telling her "I love you and want to be next to you." While it is not often voiced, it is what every devotee of Mary must feel.

I'd like to share with you a poem about another Child devoted to Mary.

The Spinner (by Charles O'Donnell, C.S.C.)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus
A Lady of High degree
Sat by her cottage spinning
In Nazareth of Galilee.

A light fell over her shoulder
As she sat in the plane-tree's shade
While a delicate lace of shadows
the sun and the green leaves made.

Busy her foot on the treadle
And her wheel busily whirled
As a Child looked out from the doorway,
A Child who made the world.

Deftly she handled the distaff
And happily whirred her wheel
As the Child came down from the doorway
And ran at her side to kneel.

"Mother" He said as He watched her there

While she sat and spun.

"Some things are more fair than
I dreamed them the day that I made the sun.
And you are My Heart of all beauty, My
Star of all seas, of all lands"

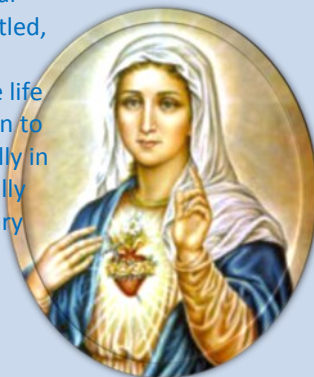
"Hush, Child" whispered Mary His Mother,
Her tears falling down on His hands.

True devotion to Mary began with Jesus and our love for her, rather than taking anything away from Him fills Him with delight.

Our topic this evening is exterior devotion to Mary; we can't just tell Mary we love her, we must show her that we do. Our consecration to her needs to be nourished and enlivened by external devotions. St. Louis de Montfort said, "Man is always guided by his senses and such practices remind him of what he has done or should do. Let no worldling or critic intervene to assert that true devotion is essentially in the heart and therefore externals should be avoided as inspiring vanity, or that real devotion should be hidden and private. I answer in the words of our Lord, "Let man see your good works that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Montfort, p. 117).

Our guide or teacher in exterior devotion is one of my favorite devotees of Mary named Teresita Quevedo; she was declared as venerable by Blessed Pope John Paul II on June 9, 1983. Such has been my inspiration from her that included in my final vow formula is part of her own consecration to Mary the day she entered the Carmelite Sisters of Charity as a postulant.

The book from which I have garnered all my information is titled, "Mary Was Her Life". A book uniquely titled to describe the life of one whose interior devotion to Mary expressed itself externally in various, ordinary and personally tailored ways. Her love of Mary was her driving force in life.



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Venerable Teresita was born while the Angelus bells were ringing on April 14, 1930 in Madrid, Spain to Don Calixto, a distinguished physician and his wife Maria del Carmen. She was the third of three children having come into the world around the time of the approach of the Spanish Civil War.

Her love for our Blessed Mother seems to have been naturally instinctive. Around the age of five she began to make frequent visits to Our Lady's statue in her bedroom. When a priest once asked her how her devotion to Mary began, she replied, "I believe our Lady herself taught me to pray through Papa. From early childhood, when Papa taught me to make the Morning Offering, it was always a prayer of holocaust to Our Lady" (Pierre, p. 6). Don Calixto directed her to pray, "O Sweet Virgin Mary, my Mother, I offer myself today completely to you. I beg you to give my body, eyes, ears and tongue, my heart and soul to Jesus. I am all yours, holy Mother of God. Watch over me! Amen." (Pierre, p.5)

Teresita did not just say this Morning Offering; she lived it daily with every fiber of her being. Everything she did, from the way she dressed to the sports she excelled in, was given to Jesus through the hands of Mary. Those around her were inspired by her example and often caught her infectious desire to please Our Lady in all things.

Teresita and her sister, Carmen, were students the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy. She is quipped as saying to her brother, Luis, "If it were not for books, school would be wonderful" (Pierre, p. 18). While she did not naturally like textbooks, she nevertheless did her best, turning in orderly work and achieving high scores. Whenever she did have difficulties in her studies, she kept herself inspired by placing a hold card of Our Lady near her books.

Elected as Captain of the basketball team in the 1946-47 season she prayed, "Dearest Mother Mary, today's elections mean that I must grow in virtue. Help me to edify the girls on my team. Teach me how to treat them with patience, charity and justice. Since you guide every move of my life, dearest Lady, show me how to use this honor that has come to me only for the purpose of bringing glory to God. You know, my Mother, that I would rather be on the second team than in the limelight, but since the latter is God's choice, I lovingly accept it" (Pierre p. 33).

We see how she lived this out as she called her team

together saying, "Girls, I called you here this evening because I have a proposal to make to you. I shall preface it by saying that I know you want to emerge from the basketball season with the championship title. So do I. Of ourselves we cannot win it. But we know that Our Lady can win anything for us from her Son – even this championship. Therefore, I would like to propose that we, as a team consecrate ourselves to our Blessed Mother this evening and promise her to hear Mass and to say the Rosary every day during the basketball season. We shall, of course carry on the custom of saying the *Memorare* immediately before we play a game..." (Pierre, p. 33-34).

Aside from basketball, Teresita was an avid tennis player, swimmer and dancer. She had many gifts and talents at which she excelled and through which she learned to practice virtue.

After having attended the annual November retreat at the Academy in 1943, at the age of 13, Teresita asked permission to make St. Luis de Montfort's consecration to Mary. The priest, recognizing her age, decided to ask her various questions. After answering all of them perfectly he asked, "Tell me something about your love for Our Lady. How long have you had a special devotion to her?" Teresita told Father of her childhood love for the Blessed Mother of God. She explained how she had placed her hand in the hand of Our Lay as she rose to go to the altar rail on her First Communion day. And she added that Our Lay still held it (Pierre, p.52).

It was from this central theme of consecration that all her love for Mary flowed. In 1944 her name was placed on a list of Sodality members. If after one year of probationship the girls' name remained on the list, they would be received as permanent Sodality members. Following tradition, each member selected a personal Marian motto to be engraved on the back of her medal. Teresita chose, "My Mother, grant that everyone who looks at me may see you".

After her family and friends, this sodality medal was her most prized possession – her sign of being a Child of Mary. Upon telling a friend at the Academy of her coming entrance into religious life, she "took the medal from her coat pocket – for a moment she let it dangle, admiring it. Then she pulled the blue satin ribbon over Carmen's head and said, "There, my friend is Teresita's proudest possession. Keep it forever, and may it keep you!" (Pierre p. 84-85).

She discerned this calling towards the end of her Senior year. The thought of giving up their Teresita was difficult, but



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her parents proudly embraced God's will. When her father asked why she insisted on entering the convent on February 23, Teresita explained in her usual innocence and simplicity, "Well – because two and three are five. Look, Papa: MARIA", she said, counting 1-2-3-4-5 on her fingers. "Five. In honor of the number of letters that spell our Lady's name!" (Pierre, p. 93).

That was not the only example of Teresita's mystical meaning of five. In the novitiate she often used the number five in her devotional exercises: 5 acts of mortification, 5 Hail Mary's, 5 visits to the Blessed Sacrament...5 acts of kindness! She called it her devotion to the Name of Mary" (Pierre, p.93).

On the evening of her reception as a novice she wrote to her Mary in her diary saying, "I am completely confident that you have adorned my soul with your own virtues, as you placed your precious scapular upon my heart. Grant that this scapular maybe my shield in life, my shroud in death and a constant reminder forever of your favor toward a most unworthy daughter" (Pierre, p.129).

Teresita's motto, "Mother of mine, may all who look at me, see you" reminds of us St. Paul who could boast in his humility, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." She so wished to be hidden and forgotten to the degree that others no longer thought of her, but of the Blessed Virgin. She wanted to mirror Mary in all things and sought to bring her into every aspect of daily life.

To the Blessed Virgin, she often said, "I want to imitate your beauty" (Pierre, p.119). This she sought to do by performing all her actions with the intention of pleasing God and edifying her neighbor. While striving to assiduously practice custody of the senses, was still careful to notice the needs of her neighbor. When a fellow novice asked to speak with her, she advised, "Little sister, when you feel afraid, or distressed, talk it over with our Blessed Lady. Place your fears in her hands and ask her to adorn your imperfect works with her final touch before presenting them to God. We know that she will never fail us."

Ever after, when the two novices passed each other on the stairs, one would whisper, "Madre Mia", and going along her way each would continue in her heart: "take me by the hand and do not ever abandon me" (Pierre, p.133).

Once to inspire her Sisters to obedience and guard their conversation while they worked in the kitchen, Teresita went to fetch a stool for Our Lady and placed it beside her own saying, "Because we are in the kitchen doesn't mean we must separate ourselves from Our Lady does it? We can please her while peeling potatoes and carrots

just as we please her by making a meditation or saying a Rosary" (Pierre, p. 146).

Teresita fell ill in January of 1950 but not without a premonition of dying during that Holy Year. How fitting it was that our Lord should deign to take her to heaven on Our Lady's day – Holy Saturday; she was 20 years old.

While ill, visitors remarked on Teresita's great love of Our Lady and walked away from her sick bed edified and renewed. While death was coming for her, she brought new life to souls by her example of complete surrender to Jesus through Mary.

Venerable Teresita inspires us to live our Marian life through outward signs of love for our Lady, embellishing our interior devotion by:

- Enrollment in her confraternities and sodalities
- Making her privileges known and appreciated
- Acts of self-denial in her honor
- Praying of the Rosary
- Wearing her medals and scapulars
- Adorning statues of her
- Praying the Angelus
- Visiting her shrines
- attending the annual IHM novena

The list could go on and on. Every standard devotion has its own important value, but our Lady loves our own personal expressions...even if it's just sitting on 'Mary's side' of the Church.

Venerable Teresita, pray for us. Amen.

¹de Montfort, St. Louis, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Bay Shore, Montfort Publications, 1980

²Pierre, R.S.M., Sister Mary, *Mary Was Her Life*, New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, San Francisco, Benziger Brothers, INC., 1960

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