

# *Alter Christus*

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

---

## *Of the Devout Service of the Blessed Virgin*

**By Thomas A Kempis**

[From the book *Sermons to the Novices*]

Thy memory is unto everlasting generations. Mary is the friend of poverty, the way of humility: the pattern of patience, and in all things perfect. From the beginning of the birth of Jesus she led a life of poverty: and unto its issue on the cross, she constantly held to patience. Let it please thee to follow her: to honour

her with humble and devout service is befitting: and daily it behoves to weigh: what mark of thankfulness and special love should be most earnestly paid. Thou wouldst willingly rejoice with Mary in Heaven: bear also willingly poverty and contempt with Mary upon earth. Behold her humble ways, and her maidenly modesty amid her companions: and restrain thy levity, and shun tumult. Beware of displeasing Jesus and

Mary by vain words: and unworthy actions. For it is not a light thing: to displease such dear Patrons. They see everything thou doest; and as thou showest thyself in amendment: so wilt thou experience them in thy aid. However their wisdom surpasses thy malice: and their indulgence brings thee to repentance. If thou dost recognize thy faults: change thy state unto a better. Persevere in good: and devoutly render thanks to God for His blessings. Thus did blessed Mary when she was filled with the

Holy Ghost: and bare Jesus in her womb. Learn by the example of her mildness to bear piously the troubles that befall thee: and submit thyself to the divine ordinance, as it was ordained from eternity. Jesus will be thy helper; Mary will be to thee a faithful Mother: be thou a good son and a devout servant ready for ever good work.

Dost thou wish to do what is pleasing to the blessed Virgin?

Be humble, patient: sober, bashful, chaste.

### **Author: Thomas A Kempis**

Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380 – 25 July 1471) was a German-Dutch canon regular of the late medieval period and the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, one of the most popular and best known Christian devotional books.

After leaving school, Thomas went to the nearby city of Zwolle to visit his brother, after Johann had become the prior of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes there. Thomas himself entered Mount St. Agnes in 1406. He was not ordained a priest, however, until almost a decade later. He became a prolific copyist and writer. Thomas received Holy Orders in 1411 and was made sub-prior of the monastery in 1429.

Thomas spent his time between devotional exercises in writing and in copying manuscripts. He copied the Bible no fewer than four times. In its teachings he was widely read and his works abound with biblical quotations, especially from the New Testament.

As subprior he was charged with instructing novices, and in that capacity wrote four booklets between 1420 and 1427, later collected and named after the title of the first chapter of the first booklet: *The Imitation of Christ*. Thomas More said it was one of the three books everybody ought to own. The *Imitation* is perhaps the most widely read Christian devotional work next to the Bible, and is regarded as a devotional and religious classic. Apart from the Bible, no book had been translated into more languages than the *Imitation of Christ* at the time.

Be fervent, mild: intern, of mind devout.

Go seldom forth: read, write, and often pray.

The service of Mary should not seem long, or burdensome. It is delightful and joyous: to serve such a Lady with heart and voice. For it shall not be without notable recompense: whatsoever little thing shall have been performed in her honour. The lowly Mother does not spurn little services; the loving Virgin willingly accepts small offerings: when they are offered freely and devoutly. She knows that we cannot give great things: nor does the pitiful Lady, the meek Queen demand impossibilities of her servants. That noble nature cannot refrain from pity for the needy: which brought forth mercy for the whole world. O how graciously she receives them that faithfully serve her: who has so frequently converted by her admonitions, and by evident miracles men who were living miserably in the world. How many would have been eternally damned, or would

have bided obstinate in despair: if the most gentle Virgin Mary had not interceded for them with her Son. Meetly then is it said of her, that she is pitiful to all the wretched: and the help of all sinners. She does not seek, or need what we have: whose beck the heavens obey. She loves our good when she exacts service of us; she desires our salvation: when she requires that we pay her praise. And when she sees that the memory of her name is celebrated; thence she seeks an occasion to do us good: for she delights to repay her servants. She is most faithful to her promises: and most generous in her gifts. She is full of delights: and ever enjoys the harmony of the angels. Nevertheless

she takes pleasure in the service of men: that the honour of God and the salvation of many may thence be more abundantly procured. She is moved by the tears of the wretched, she compassionates the sorrows of the distressed: she succours the perils of the tempted: she bows down to the prayers of the devout. If a man readily and humbly has recourse to her, and

**Dost thou wish to do  
what is pleasing to the  
Blessed Virgin?  
Be humble, patient:  
sober, bashful, chaste.  
Be fervent, mild:  
intern, of mind  
devout. Go seldom  
forth: read, write, and  
often pray.**

calls upon her sweet and glorious name: he shall not depart from her empty-handed. She has many who cleave to her; and the choirs of the angels obey her: and these she can send to the solace of the destitute. She commands the demons, that they presume not to trouble anyone: who submits himself to her dominion and charge. The evil spirits dread the Queen of Heaven: and they flee when they hear her holy name, as from fire. They fear the holy and terrible name of Mary: which to Christians is most lovable and ever glorious. They dare not appear and are unable to exercise their wiles: where they know that the name of Holy Mary shines forth. As if a thunderbolt had fallen from Heaven, they are overthrown at the sound of Holy Mary; and the more often it is uttered, and lovingly invoked: the

more speedily and the further are they put to flight.

Again the holy angels and the spirits of the just rejoice, and are glad over the devotion of the faithful: that they so lovingly and earnestly celebrate the memory of Holy Mary: whose honourable name is shown forth in all the bounds of the churches: which have been especially dedicated to her name. And it is befitting and meet, that in preference to all the saints of God the Mother should be honoured by the dwellers of earth: whom the world of angels worships with highest praise. The name of Mary then is to be venerated by all the faithful, ever to be loved by the devout, embraced by religious, commended to the people, preached to sinners: suggested to the afflicted, invoked in all dangers. For she is the nearest to God and the most dear to the Son of God her Child

***If a man readily and humbly has recourse to her, and calls upon her sweet and glorious name: he shall not depart from her empty-handed. She has many who cleave to her; and the choirs of the angels obey her: and these she can send to the solace of the destitute. She commands the demons, that they presume not to trouble anyone: who submits himself to her dominion and charge.***

the blessed Jesus; able faithfully to intercede for all the tearful sons of Adam: that He forgive their sins, and succour them in their perils. For when the occasion presents itself, she does not delay to whisper a good word in the ears of her Son: and to implore mercy for the needy. And she shall be most speedily heard in every cause entrusted to her, for her singular reverence: for her loving Son Jesus the Author of the salvation of the human race, honours her denying her nothing. Wherefore let all the faithful and devout desirous of escaping the shipwreck of the world, and of reaching the harbour of eternal salvation: fly to Our Lady St. Mary; whose unspeakable kindness tastes to the wretched most sweet, and cleaves to them most strongly: so that rightly may most abundant confidence be placed in her. Truly from infancy mercy grew up with her; nor hath it left her in Heaven that now she should be unmindful of her poor: but it has filled her most plentifully and sweetly. And although she be the highest of all, and encompassed with most blissful joys: nevertheless she is not forgetful of her lowliness: whereby she most worthily merited to be raised above all. And therefore does she know how to bow graciously to her least servants: rejoicing to become the

advocate of the miserable: and to be called the mother of the orphaned. Amen.

### **Of the Praise of the Most Sweet Name of Jesus: and of His Most Sweet Mother Mary**

Thy spirit is sweet above honey: and my inheritance above honey and the honey-comb. Worthily, indeed, and very beautifully, brethren, the words of eternal wisdom are referred to the Mother of mercy of whom arose the sun of justice Christ. Sweet is Jesus, sweet Mary: and there is not in them any bitterness: but supreme gentleness, mildness, love, and mercy without measure. Blessed he who cleaves to the steps of the humble Jesus, and devoutly turns himself to His Mother: to find favour in their sight. Gather together then, most faithful servant of God, into one bundle the actions of Jesus, what He did and said: and they will profit thee more than all the treasures of the world. Go over also by thyself with earnest mind the acts and words of the most holy Mother of Jesus: and they shall be comforting to thy soul: and most sweet above all spices. The body receives pleasure from sweet odours, and is refreshed by the remedy of food: but the soul is nourished, strengthened and rejoiced

by true virtues and holy meditations. But the more perfect studies one pursues, and the more noble masters one follows: the more clearly he learns: and the more speedily he arrives at the summit of blessedness. Sovereign masters of virtue, and lights of all holiness are Jesus and Mary; whom thou shouldst set before thee according to the measure of thy littleness: and look upon as if present. Join thyself to them: show thyself attentive and devout to them. Wherever thou hearest anything said concerning Jesus and Mary: there diligently lend thy ear: there tarry long: and weigh what edification and hidden sweetness there be within. As often also as thou comest to perform the Divine Work: or when thou art called to the common labour, or to some private task: first raise thy eyes to Heaven, and especially call upon Jesus and Mary: and suppliantly commend thyself to their constant protection. Offer thyself also to their good-pleasure in everything that is to be done; that thy action may be pleasing to God: profitable to the neighbour, and wholesome to thyself. Let thy intention be always pure: let thy goodwill be fervent: let thy work be discreet, thy speech circumspect: thy performance persevering, unto the praise of the holy name of Jesus, and

the honour of His blessed Mother. Here commence to praise, venerate and love: that hereafter thou mayest merit to reign with them: and for ever with the holy angels to praise, bless and proclaim them. The praise of Jesus is sweet and beautiful: the praise of Mary lovable and bright. When joyous therefore praise, when sad pray: for they are worthy of all praise: and constantly to be invoked at all times. The more frequently thou exercisest thyself in their praise; the more shalt thou grow in their love: and the stronger thou shalt become in the grace of devotion. They will never be unmindful of thee: if thou art never unmindful of them. And if thou neglect them, which God forbid; or behave thyself ill, which may God keep far away: or grow lukewarm in the devotion which thou hast commenced, which may God not suffer: it will be needful to scourge thee with meet chastisement, and to bring thee back to right mind by adversity: that thou mayest learn to converse with God with greater care: and to guard grace bestowed with greater watchfulness for the future. And then be mindful of these benefactors: and bewail thy negligence and great ingratitude: which thou hast foolishly committed. Happy he who merits to hear the admonitions of Jesus in spirit, to

amend himself unto better: that thereby after bitter tears, he may be again rapt into sweet ecstasies. For the loving kindness of Jesus surpasses all the sins of the world: and the indulgence of Mary can never be exhausted.

O if thou couldst make much progress in the love and praise of Jesus: and serve worthily and devoutly His blessed Mother Mary. But what wilt thou do since thou art not worthy to call them by name at all: seeing that thou art a man weak, lukewarm and careless, in many things also frequently offending? How then shalt thou praise: since praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner? For it is seemly that the holy should be praised by the just and worthy. Must thou keep silence then or say something? Woe to thee if thou dost not praise: and woe to thee if thou dost open unworthy lips. What shalt thou do to find mercy; and not to incur offence? Naught is better to

obtain the goodwill of the most gentle Jesus and of the most pitiful Mary His Mother, than that thou humble thyself in all things: and bow thyself beneath all, and set thyself in the lowest place: truly entertaining unworthy and lowly sentiments of thyself: and bringing thyself back to nothing if thou hast felt anything good. Thus shall God be appeased: and Jesus shall have mercy on thee. Mary also shall pray for thee: and thou shalt be comforted in thy lowliness. Thou shalt not be ashamed from their face: but thou shalt receive plentifully rendering canticles of praise. And if thou canst not praise worthily, do what thou canst: give what thou hast. For the pious intention will refresh thee: until thou becomest more rich to render better service. Those who are great and very devout praise magnificently and devoutly: but those who have little oil: let them willingly offer even this to the Son of oil and the Mother of

**For when the occasion presents itself, Mary does not delay to whisper a good word in the ears of her Son: and to implore mercy for the needy. And she shall be most speedily heard in every cause entrusted to her, for her singular reverence: for her loving Son Jesus the Author of the salvation of the human race, honours her denying her nothing.**

grace. It seems that one ought to be silent because of the surpassing glory and dignity of the glorious seed of the Virgin Mother: but since Mary does not spurn the little and sinners, she will mercifully admit thy shouting in the crowd of them that praise: as the holy Prophet says: "The poor and needy shall praise thy name." Therefore a little should be said to arouse devotion: and if not very elegantly: nevertheless of a more humble kind and more ready affection according to the measure of strength.

Who are the most sublime in Heaven; and the most lowly on earth? Are they not Jesus and Mary? Jesus made Himself a servant: Mary called herself a handmaid. The charity of both the whole world has experienced; their worth the citizens of Heaven proclaim: the host of angels worship. O if thou couldst be among them: and with untiring voice praise together the sweet name of Jesus and of the most sweet Virgin Mary. O how good and pleasant it is to serve these: who have served us both faithfully and humbly. Ye sons of men serve the Lord: Who has very often deigned to serve you. Serve ye the Mother of God: who has shown

you an example of holy service. O how befitting it is to honour these sovereign patrons: Who can aid more than all others: through Whose hands the judgements of Heaven pass and are fulfilled. Every hour then we should beseech them, who protect us from the foes of body and mind: and bestow everlasting bliss upon their clients. In every need whatsoever have recourse to Jesus and Mary; unfold to them all thy burden: confess thy faults, bewail thy guilt. Seek forgiveness, seize hold of penance; take up hope again, promise amendment: and trust well in the help of grace. If thou fallest easily: take care to rise the more speedily. They willingly grant the prayers of the suppliant, they spurn not the groaning of the poor: yea even the holy angels shall rejoice over thee, when thou shalt be converted with thy whole heart from all deformity of sin: and shalt take up a better life according to the pattern of Christ, and of the Mother of blessed Jesus. Do thou be only on thy guard against offending: and they will not refuse the protection desired. Do thou show due reverence: and they will have a most sure care of thee. Amen.