

This
My First Communion Journal
In Imitation of St. Paul:
Putting on the Armor of God
belongs to:

Date of First Holy Communion:

Place of First Holy Communion:

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General Instructions

(Note: If this journal is being used in conjunction with *Communion with the Saints, A Family Preparation Program for First Communion and Beyond in the Spirit of St. Therese*, be sure to read pages vi through viii in the “General Instructions” of that resource.)

This journal has been constructed in imitation of the “copybooks” used by Celine and Therese Martin as they prepared for their First Holy Communion in 1880 and 1884. These journals were lovingly made by Sr. Agnes of Jesus, the older sister of Celine and Therese Martin, who was at the time a Carmelite nun in the monastery at Lisieux, France. The homemade journals were described in a letter from Sr. Agnes to Therese as copybooks or “little books of preparation” where, under the symbols of flowers, the girls could record their sacrifices and pious thoughts. St. Therese’s journal had a cover of blue velvet with her initials embroidered in large white letters. Inside was “. . . one page for each day. Each page was decorated with a border, rays in each of the corners, the date in Gothic illumination, the name of a flower and a short aspiration which the scent of the flower symbolized; it was all done in black and red ink. . . . Prayers to the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the guardian angel preface each of the . . . months.”

During her preparation period, Therese was encouraged to turn her heart often to Jesus by reciting the prayers and aspirations in the copybook and to take every opportunity to humble her pride and make sacrifices for the good Jesus. Throughout her sixty-nine day preparation period, she recorded each day the number of times she recited the prayers and, by use of her “sacrifice beads” (a small chaplet of moveable beads—

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for which directions are provided at the end of this book), she counted each time she overcame her own desires in order to please Jesus.

Therese herself, in her letter to Sr. Agnes thanking her for the copybook, tells us the importance she placed in this preparation for Holy Communion: “Every day, I try to perform as many practices as I can, and I do all in my power not to let a single occasion pass by. I am saying at the bottom of my heart the little prayers as often as I can.”

At the end of her preparation period, Therese recorded that she had recited the aspirations a total of 2,773 times (an average of about 40 each day) and had performed 1,949 “practices” or little acts of mortification and sacrifice, for an average of 28 each day.

This journal contains the same method of encouraging continual daily prayer and sacrifice—and recording their numbers—as the copybook St. Therese used. However, instead of using flowers to illustrate virtues, this journal uses the battle model described by St. Paul in Ephesians 6:10-17. First communicants are encouraged to arm themselves with virtues as symbolized by spiritual and physical weapons in order to fight as soldiers of Christ.

I pray that this modern-day “copybook” will bring about the same results that the “little book of preparation” produced in the soul of little Therese so many years ago: the desire to please Jesus in every thought, word, and deed, thereby joining St. Paul’s “holy ones” (Ephesians 6:18) in heaven.

Janet P. McKenzie, OCDS

November 18, 2011

Feast of the Dedication of the Churches of
Sts. Peter and Paul

Prayers and Aspirations

(“For me, *prayer* is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven.” – St. Therese)

TO THE CHILD JESUS: (from the copybook of St. Therese)

- † “Little Jesus, I love You,”
- † “Little Jesus, don’t let me be proud anymore.”
- † “Little Jesus, may I always be simple and docile.”
- † “My whole heart is Yours, Jesus.”

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN:

- † “Holy Mary, help me, like you, to hold Jesus close to my heart.”
- † Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.
- † “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!”

TO ST. JOSEPH:

- † “Dear St. Joseph, teach me to love Jesus as you did.”
- † “St. Joseph, foster-father of Jesus, pray for us.”

TO MY GUARDIAN ANGEL:

- † “Angel dear, guard and guide me.”

(*Note: Within the daily meditations are numerous other aspirations that can be prayed.*)

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St. Paul: Putting on the Armor of God

“Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of the present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Ephesians 6: 10-17

Read-Aloud Story

The following story is Chapter 8, “The King’s Armory,” from *The King of the Golden City Study Edition*, a reprint of a book by Mother Mary Loyola originally published in 1921. Here, the little girl Dilecta is taken before the King so He can prepare her for battle against the world, her Self, and the devil (Malignus). Note the various weapons she is given on her Confirmation and their recommended uses.

You may be surprised that the youngsters had to fight so soon. But trying out their strength is a thing children take to very readily, and the worse the war is, the younger are the soldiers who are called out to fight. The war between the King of the Golden City and Malignus, the traitor, was the deadliest you can imagine, because if a soldier did not come out victorious in the end, there was no trying again for him. So the children, girls as well as boys, had to be taught well, and taught young. It was wonderful how grandly some of them fought, how soon they got promoted, and how afraid of them their cunning old enemy came to be.

One day Dilecta was summoned to the King’s Presence. She was so accustomed to go to him without ceremony that she was rather frightened when the Prince Guardian told her she must kneel before him and listen very attentively to what he was going to say. Not without trembling, she knelt down—the Prince standing reverently at her right hand.

“My child,” said the King, “you are now old enough to be enrolled in my Army. Malignus is getting fiercer and more cunning, and what he cannot do by himself, he is going to employ others to do for him. You are beginning to listen to people who are not on my side, who are not afraid of breaking my laws, and who laugh at my servants who try to keep these laws. Besides these enemies without, you have Self always with you. She is growing fast and getting stronger and bolder. You must grow strong-

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er, too, so that you may be able to stand your ground and fight more bravely than you have done yet. I never send anyone to fight without providing a proper outfit. The Prince Guardian will take you to the Armory and get the equipment you need.”

She was delighted and went off, asking questions all the way.

The Armory was a wonderful place. There you could see the weapons of many a brave soldier who had laid aside his arms only when the fight was fought and won, and the palm of victory had been placed in his hand instead. The Prince Guardian took her in and out among the war trophies, and explained to her why they were treasured there. Here was the sword of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which he himself hung up in the house of God to show he was going to be, from now on, a soldier of the King of kings alone. Over against it was the shield of St. Joan of Arc, the brave maid who fought for God and for her country.

Dilecta was immensely interested in all she saw—swords and shields, helmets and breastplates, and—shoes! She managed to make out the inscriptions:

On the sword—“Faith.” On the shield—“Trust in God.” On the helmet—“Prayer.” On the breastplate—“Mistrust of Self.” On the shoes—“Patience and Perseverance.”

“I think, Prince,” she observed, “the shield and the breastplate are much the same.”

“At least, they must always go together, Dilecta. ‘Mistrust of Self’ without ‘Confidence in God’ means discouragement—the beginning of all harm as you have discovered.”

“What a lot of helmets there are, more than I could count.”

“Yes, for every victory is won by ‘Prayer.’ Never suppose you can fight all by yourself. Ask for help quickly, the moment you see your enemy.”

Read-Aloud Story

“Look at all the shoes! Soldiers don’t fight with them; what are they there for?”

“To show that ‘Patience and Perseverance,’ in plodding on day after day, are necessary for every warrior. Opportunities of bringing the enemy down by a well-directed shot do not come every day, nor does the need of meeting him with sword and shield in open fight. But every day there is the toilsome march, the same dull round of duty, the hardships inseparable from life at the front. It is the constant trudging of weary feet that, more than anything else, brings a man to victory and reward.”

So Dilecta was measured for her equipment, and it was made to fit her exactly. And when all was ready, her Prince Guardian led her before the King and his Court. And she knelt down before them all and placed her little joined hands within the hands of the King, and promised to be a good soldier and faithful to him. Then she was solemnly enrolled in the regular Army and given a mark by which everyone would know that she was now a soldier. That mark would be a disgrace should she turn out a traitor to the King, but a sign of distinction and glory if she remained faithful to him and fought his battles bravely.

Sword and shield and helmet and breastplate and shoes—he gave them all to her. Moreover, he promised that whatever help she wanted, she should have the minute it was needed, if only she asked for it. At the end of the ceremony, he gave her a little stroke on the cheek, not to hurt, but just to remind her that she must expect to suffer in his cause. Her three enemies would now be more than ever on the lookout for her, and as a soldier commanded to stand at “attention,” she must be always on the alert.

Two of these enemies, Malignus and Self, you know. They were like hand and glove and generally worked together. The King was speaking of the third enemy when he said Malignus had accomplices, or helpers, who did

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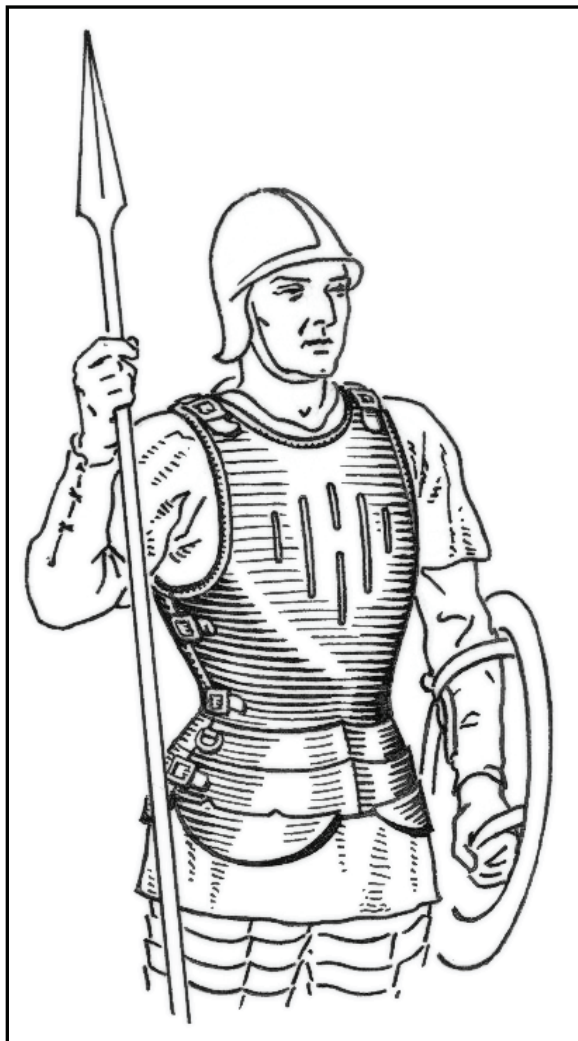
for him what he could not do by himself. They were men, women, and even children, who could not wait for the good things of the Golden City. They said they wanted their good things now. “The time of our life,” they said, “is short and tedious like the passing of a shadow. Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they are withered. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

These people hated hard work and made trouble of every sort. All they cared about was eating and drinking, dress and amusement, pleasure of every kind. They wanted to be as comfortable as money could make them—to be admired, praised, and honored. They called themselves the “Jolly Ones,” but their real name was “The Triflers.”

“How will I know them?” said Dilecta to her Prince Guardian. “I know Malignus and I know Self by what they say and do, but how will I know the Triflers?”

“In the same way—by what they say, and what they do, and what they care about. All their talk is about the good things of the Land of Exile, and all they care about is to please and amuse themselves. They do nothing to deserve the rewards of the King of the Golden City and have no fear of displeasing him. So far from trying to serve him, they do all they can to turn others from his service and to make them forsake the narrow, uphill way, which is the King’s highway. They try to draw his servants into the broad way that belongs to Malignus and leads to his place. Beware of them. They are doing the work of their master, and if you go with them, you will grow like them, and will share their fate.”

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IN IMITATION OF ST. PAUL:
PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

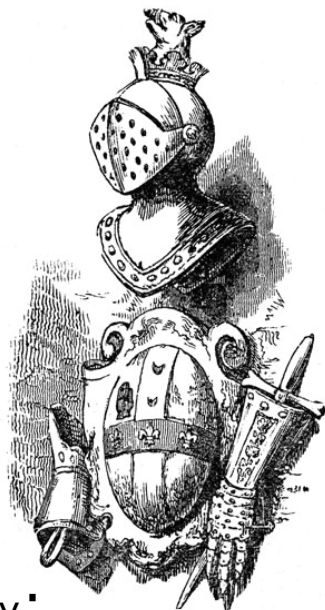


Daily Journal Entries

Week 1

“In two and a half months, Jesus will come down into your heart for the first time! What a lot of work there is to do . . . and how little time there is to do it in!”

Sr. Agnes (Pauline) to her sister Therese upon delivery of her “copybook”



I Pray Today :

My Battles Today:

My Sacrifices Today:

Week 1

As a Christian, you live in a hostile world, a world full of dangerous and mighty enemies of your soul. As you go forth to battle this world, you must use the tools of armor that God and our Church provide you. As a soldier of Christ, you will encounter many enemies of your soul. Therefore, “. . . *Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light*” (Romans 13:12).



I Pray Today :

My Battles Today:

My Sacrifices Today:

Week 1

“Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil.”
(Ephesians 6:11)



I Pray Today :

My Battles Today:

My Sacrifices Today:
