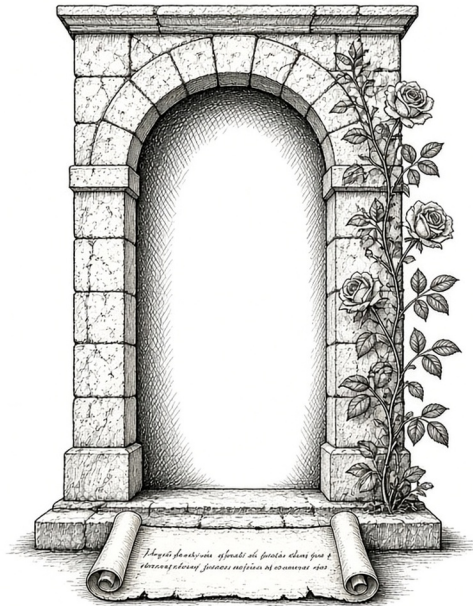




SILENT HOMILIES

The Names She Answers To

*Little-known titles from the
Litany of Loretto*



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures



The Names She Answers To

Little-known titles from the Litany of Loreto

Before You Begin



Most Catholics have heard the Litany of Loreto. Many have prayed it after the Rosary, often on a Saturday, often a little too quickly. Mirror of Justice. Seat of Wisdom. Mystical Rose. Tower of David. Tower of Ivory. House of Gold. Ark of the Covenant. Gate of Heaven. Morning Star. By the time we reach Queen of Peace we have already stopped listening.

That is a pity. Some of those titles come straight from Scripture. Some come through centuries of theology, art and prayer. A few were added within living memory. They are not decoration. They are the Church trying to say who Mary is, without reducing her to a single word.

This book is not a complete commentary on every line of the Litany. It stays with the titles that ordinary people most often hear and least often understand. The aim is simple. The next time one of those names is said, you should know what the Church has actually been saying.

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Chapter 1

A prayer with an address



A litany is a spoken chain of names. One title is said. The people answer, “Pray for us.” Another title is said. The same answer comes back. The Church has used this shape for a long time: for the saints, for the dying, for moments when a crowd needs one voice. The repetition is not padding. It is a way of staying with someone.

This particular litany is called “of Loreto” because it became famous at one shrine. Loreto is a small town on the Adriatic coast of Italy. At its centre is the Santa Casa, the Holy House. Catholic tradition says these walls are the house of Nazareth in which the angel spoke to Mary. The same tradition says the house was brought from the Holy Land at the end of the thirteenth century, when the last Crusader holdings were falling, and came to rest at Loreto in 1294.

Historians argue about how the stones arrived. Some think they were carried by human hands from Nazareth. The older story speaks of angels. This book will not pretend that argument is settled. What is not in dispute is the devotion. Pilgrims have prayed there for more than seven hundred years.

By the middle of the sixteenth century the pilgrims at Loreto were using a Marian litany that already sounded very like the one we know. The earliest printed copy so far found, from about 1558, was circulated in Germany and titled as the litany said every Saturday at Loreto. On 11 July 1587 Pope Sixtus V approved it for the wider Church. The name stuck because that is where the titles were first heard, week after week, in front of a doorway people believed had once opened onto Nazareth.

Reflection

It is easy to treat a famous prayer as if it had no address. We forget that somebody first said these words in a particular place, in front of particular walls. Catholicism is like that. It does not float above geography. The Annunciation happened in a house. The Litany became a public prayer because people kept going to a house.

Whether every stone at Loreto came from Nazareth is a historical question. The faith does not stand or fall on the answer. What the shrine keeps saying is simpler. God entered a real room. Mary said yes in a real room. Christians have always wanted to stand as near that room as they can.

That is why a prayer used across the world still carries the name of one Italian town. The Church is not being small-minded. She is remembering that the Gospel happened in real places, and that people have always wanted to pray as near those places as they can.

A Short Prayer

Holy Mary, first spoken to in a small house, teach us to say your names slowly. Amen.

Chapter 2

Why the Church gives Mary so many names



Why is “Mary” not enough? Because one name rarely holds a whole life. In ordinary speech a woman can be daughter, mother, wife, neighbour and colleague without becoming five people. Each word tells the truth from a different side. The Litany does the same work for the Mother of God.

Mother of God is not the same as Refuge of Sinners. Seat of Wisdom is not the same as Cause of Our Joy. The Church is not padding the prayer. She is trying to speak about Mary from more than one side. Some titles speak of what God did in her. Some speak of what she does for us. Some are pictures taken from Scripture. Some were born later, when a particular wound in history needed a particular word.

There is another reason for the list. For a long time most Catholics could not read a commentary. They could hear a chain of images. A farmer who never opened the Song of Songs could still hear “Tower of Ivory” and keep the picture. The titles teach. They carry theology that can be remembered without a book.

None of this makes Mary a goddess, or a fourth person of the Trinity. Every title, if it is Catholic, sends us back to Christ. That is the test. If a name for Mary hides her Son, it has been misunderstood. If it makes His coming clearer, it is doing its work.

Reflection

We sometimes fear that honouring Mary will take something from Christ. The Litany suggests the opposite. The more carefully the Church looks at her, the more she talks about what God has done. There are many names because there is a great deal to say, not because Mary needs to be promoted.

A person can be loved under many names without being divided. The danger is only that we use the names as decoration and never ask what they mean. Then “Mystical Rose” becomes a pretty noise. The Church did not write a pretty noise. She put teaching into a form that can be prayed.

If one title in this book stays with you, that is enough. You do not need to master the whole list. You need to hear one line the next time it is said, and know that it has a meaning.

A Short Prayer

Lord, save us from rushing a name that was meant to be lived with.

Amen.

Chapter 3

Mirror of Justice



Speculum iustitiae. Mirror of Justice. It is one of the first titles after the long group of “Mother” and “Virgin,” and it sounds cold to modern ears. We think of a courtroom. The older meaning is warmer and stranger.

A mirror does not invent its own light. It gives back what it receives. Mary is called a mirror because she does not stand between us and God as a second sun. She shows us God’s justice by reflecting it without twisting it. St John Henry Newman, writing about Our Lady, kept returning to this instinct: the more perfectly she belongs to God, the more clearly God is seen in her.

Justice here does not mean punishment first. In Scripture, God’s justice is His faithfulness to His own promise. It is the rightness of a Father who keeps His word. Mary’s life is that kind of rightness. She believes the word spoken to her. She keeps it. She does not edit it to make her own life easier.

So the title is not calling Mary a judge. It is calling her a clear surface. Look at her, and you do not stop at her. You see the faithfulness of God.

Reflection

There is a strange Catholic instinct here. We praise Mary precisely because she does not make herself the centre. A mirror is useful because it gives back something other than itself. If it started producing its own pictures, it would stop being a mirror.

That may explain something basic about Catholic devotion. The closer we look at Mary, the more insistently the Church sends us towards Christ. People who do not understand this think we have two centres. The title says there is one light, and a woman who did not stand in its way.

It is also a quiet warning. Devotion that stops at Mary and never reaches her Son has misunderstood her. She would be the first to say so. Catholic honour of Mary is distorted when she is treated as if she stood on her own.

A Short Prayer

Holy Mary, Mirror of Justice, let us see in you the faithfulness of God and not stop at the glass. Amen.

Chapter 4

Seat of Wisdom



Sedes Sapientiae. Seat of Wisdom. In Latin sedes can mean a seat or a throne. The picture is simple and almost shocking. Mary holds the Child. The Child is the Wisdom of God. St Paul calls Christ the wisdom of God. The woman who carries Him is therefore, in the language of the Church, the place where Wisdom sat.

Catholic art made the title visible. In many medieval images Mary is enthroned, the Child on her lap, sometimes with a book. She is not an empty chair. She is a living throne. That does not turn her into furniture. It means the eternal Son allowed Himself to need a lap.

He needed somewhere to sit. He needed arms. He needed milk. He needed somebody to put Him to sleep. The title is first a claim about the Incarnation. God did not hover above human life. He entered it so fully that He had to be carried.

Mary is honoured here because she said yes to that carrying. Wisdom did not sit on her against her will. The seat was offered.

Reflection

Christianity makes an extraordinary claim. The eternal Son of God allowed Himself to be carried by a woman. If that is true, holiness is not an escape from ordinary human need. It includes need.

People sometimes treat Mary's greatness as if it had nothing to do with ordinary human need. Seat of Wisdom will not allow that. The Wisdom of God slept on a shoulder. That is not a sentimental detail. It is the Incarnation taken seriously.

When we call Mary this name, we are not reducing her to an object. We are admitting that God chose to need her. The honour belongs first to the Child who sat there, and then to the woman who made room.

A Short Prayer

Seat of Wisdom, teach us to be astonished that God needed arms. Amen.

Chapter 5

Cause of Our Joy



Causa nostrae laetitiae. Cause of Our Joy. The word that needs care is cause. Catholics do not mean that Mary is the independent source of salvation. Christ is our joy. He is the one who saves. Mary is called a cause because, by her yes, she became the human beginning of the joy that followed.

No Mary, no Bethlehem as we know it. No fiat, no Child in the manger. The Church is being precise and also bold. God did not force His way into the world. He waited for a woman's consent. That consent did not create grace. It let grace arrive in flesh.

Joy, in this title, is not a mood. It is the news that God is with us. Mary carries that news before anyone else does. Elizabeth feels it. The unborn John leaps. Later the Church, looking back, says that the joy had a human doorway, and the doorway had a name.

So the title always points beyond Mary. She is called a cause because the joy of the Gospel entered history through her obedience. Christ remains the source of that joy.

Reflection

Catholic language about Mary often sounds too strong until you notice where it is pointing. Cause of Our Joy does not mean she invented happiness. It means the joy of the Gospel entered the world through a particular obedience.

That protects two truths at once. God is the source. Mary is not a spectator. Remove her yes and the story we have been given does not happen in this way. Treat her as a rival to Christ and the title has been twisted.

The same pattern runs through the whole Litany. Mary is great because of what she received and what she allowed. The joy is Christ's. She is the place where that joy first became visible in a human life.

A Short Prayer

Cause of Our Joy, keep us from stealing from your Son the gladness that came through you. Amen.

Chapter 6

Three vessels nobody understands



After Cause of Our Joy the Litany does something odd. It calls Mary a vessel three times. *Vas spirituale*. *Vas honorabile*. *Vas insigne devotionis*. Spiritual vessel. Vessel of honour. Singular vessel of devotion. Most of us say the words and never ask why a woman is being compared to a jar.

In Scripture a vessel is often a person set apart to hold something holy. St Paul speaks of vessels of honour in a great house. The image is not an insult. It means capacity. It means someone has been made ready to receive.

The three titles are not the same sentence said three times. Spiritual vessel points to what she received: the Holy Spirit and the Word made flesh. Vessel of honour points to the dignity of that receiving. God did not use her as a tool He could discard. Singular vessel of devotion points to the quality of her answer. She was not only capable. She was devoted. She belonged.

A vessel can sound passive. Mary was not only passive. She said yes. She kept the word. She stood at the Cross. The honour of the vessel is the honour of what it held, and also the honour of the person who consented to hold it.

Reflection

Catholic devotion can sound excessive if Mary is considered on her own. These titles become understandable when Christ remains at the centre. Why is the vessel honoured? Because of what it received.

But a vessel is not a stone jug with no will. Mary's yes is part of the title. God could have arrived in some other way. He chose a woman who agreed. That agreement does not make her the source of grace. It makes her the one who did not refuse it.

If the three vessels still sound strange, keep the strangeness. It is better than flattening them into "Mary is nice." The Church is saying that holiness is, among other things, a readiness to be filled with something that is not ourselves.

A Short Prayer

Holy Mary, vessel of the Word, let us honour what you carried and not forget that you said yes. Amen.

Chapter 7

Mystical Rose



Rosa mystica. Mystical Rose. The rose is one of the oldest Christian images for Mary, and also one of the easiest to overdo. Later devotion loved the idea of a rose without thorns, or a rose that bloomed in winter. Some of those pictures are affectionate. They are not all historical claims.

What can be said more safely is this. In the Middle Ages the rose already stood for beauty, love and secrecy — a closed garden, a precious thing. Mystical, in older Catholic speech, does not mean foggy. It means belonging to the mystery of God. A mystical rose is not a magic flower. It is Mary as the Church has contemplated her: lovely, hidden, and ordered towards Christ.

The title also sits among the others as a change of register. After vessels and seats and mirrors, the Litany allows a garden image. Scripture already used gardens and lilies and the beloved in the Song of Songs. The Church, reading those poems with Mary and the Church in mind, was not being merely decorative. She was saying that holiness can be beautiful without being showy.

If someone tells you an exact legend about the first person to call Mary a rose, treat it carefully. The image is older than most of the stories attached to it. The title remains even when the later embroidery is set aside.

Reflection

Beauty in Catholic language is not an extra. It is one of the ways the truth arrives. A rose is not an argument. It is still a real thing. The Church is allowed to speak of Mary like this, as long as the image does not replace the teaching.

Mystical does not mean we may say anything we like. It means we are talking about a life hidden in God. Mary's beauty, if the title is true, is the beauty of a person who belongs wholly to Him. It is quieter than most religious decoration.

The next time the name goes past in the Litany, you do not need a private vision of flowers. You only need to remember that the Church thought holiness could look like this: living, ordered, and not explaining itself at every turn.

A Short Prayer

Mystical Rose, keep our talk about you truthful, and our love free of decoration that hides your Son. Amen.

Chapter 8

Tower of David



Turris Davidica. Tower of David. The picture comes from the Song of Songs: “Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an arsenal, whereon hang a thousand bucklers.” It is a line from a love poem. That fact alone surprises people. Why is a love poem in Scripture supplying titles for Mary?

Because the Church has long read that book on more than one level. It is a human love song. It has also been heard as a song about God and Israel, Christ and the Church, and — by extension — Christ and Mary. Typology is the old name for this habit. One thing in Scripture is allowed to carry another without cancelling the first.

A tower of David is strength in the city of the king. Shields hang on it. It is not a pretty ruin. It is defence. Mary is called this because the Church sees in her a place of safety that belongs to the house of David. The Child she bears is the son of David. The mother stands in that line.

So the title is not calling Mary a military building. It is saying that God’s promise to David has a human home, and that home was first a woman who believed.

Reflection

It still startles some Catholics that the Church took titles for Mary from a love poem. We have grown used to keeping romance and doctrine in different rooms. Scripture did not always do that.

The Song of Songs is not a codebook. It is a poem the Church dared to keep. Once she kept it, she also dared to hear in it more than one beloved. Israel. The Church. Mary. The risk is over-reading. The opposite risk is pretending the Church never prayed this way.

Tower of David, heard slowly, is about promise more than stone. God said He would keep the house of David. In Mary that house receives the King. The shields on the tower are not our achievement. They are the faithfulness of God, hanging where they can be seen.

A Short Prayer

*Tower of David, keep us inside the promise God made and did not
abandon. Amen.*

Chapter 9

Tower of Ivory



Turris eburnea. Tower of Ivory. Here the modern ear is a problem. Today, of course, we use the phrase “ivory tower” in a completely different way. It usually means somebody cut off from ordinary life. That is not what the Litany means.

In the Song of Songs the beloved is again compared to ivory: a tower, a work of beauty and strength. Ivory was costly. It was hard. It took a long time to shape. It did not mean withdrawal from the world. It meant something precious that could also bear weight.

Purity belongs to the title, but not the thin modern idea that purity is only ignorance of life. Mary knew poverty, a disputed pregnancy, exile in Egypt, misunderstanding and the Cross. Catholic purity is not a life with nothing difficult in it. It is a life that still belongs to God after the difficult things have arrived.

Strength and purity are held together here. A tower that is only pretty falls. A tower that is only hard may be ugly. The old image wanted both.

Reflection

Our culture often treats purity as innocence caused by not knowing much. Mary's purity was not ignorance. She asked the angel a question. She noticed there was no wine. She stood under the Cross. She knew what the world could do.

So the title cannot mean that holiness is a sealed room. It means a life that has not been claimed by something other than God, even when it has been hurt. That is a harder purity than the kind that never leaves the house.

If "ivory tower" now means unreality, the Litany is using the older meaning. Mary is not cut off from life. She is the woman in whom the most real thing of all was carried. Ivory here means something precious and strong, not something useless.

A Short Prayer

*Tower of Ivory, teach us a purity that has looked at suffering and still
belongs to God. Amen.*

Chapter 10

House of Gold



Domus aurea. House of Gold. The obvious Catholic background is the Temple. In Scripture the house of God is overlaid with gold. Gold marks a place set apart for the Presence. If Mary is the living dwelling of the Word, the Church reaches for the same metal.

There was a famous Domus Aurea in Rome, Nero's Golden House. It is sometimes tempting to say the Litany was answering that palace. There is no solid evidence that the title was coined as a contrast with Nero. The coincidence of Latin is interesting. It is not a proof. The stronger line runs through Israel's sanctuary, not through an emperor's villa.

At Loreto the title has an extra sharpness. The Holy House is small and poor. Pilgrims stoop. The walls are not a treasury. Yet the prayer calls Mary a house of gold. The gold is not the stonework. It is the One who dwelt there.

That is how Catholic speech often works. It names a person by what God has done inside her, not by what would photograph well.

Reflection

A poor house can be a house of gold if God lives in it. That sentence is easy to say and hard to believe when we are looking at bricks. Loreto makes the thought physical. The shrine is famous. The room is still small.

Mary's greatness is of that kind. She is not gold because she collected splendour. She is gold because the Presence took flesh in her. The Temple had gold on the walls. She had the Lord in her womb.

The title also judges our taste. We still think God prefers impressive rooms. The Litany, prayed in front of a little house, suggests otherwise. He chose a willing woman and an ordinary room.

A Short Prayer

House of Gold, remind us that God chose a poor room and a willing woman. Amen.

Chapter 11

Ark of the Covenant



Foederis arca. Ark of the Covenant. This may be the strongest biblical title in the whole list. The old Ark held the tablets of the Law, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod. It was the sign of God's presence among His people. People did not treat it casually.

The Gospel of Luke appears to remember that story when Mary visits Elizabeth. David once said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" Elizabeth says, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" The unborn John leaps, as David danced before the Ark. Mary stays about three months, as the Ark stayed three months in the house of Obed-edom.

The parallels are not a secret code. Luke is a careful writer. He wants us to see that the Presence which once sat above the gold cherubim has now come hidden in a pregnant girl walking the hill country.

What the Ark held in sign, Mary holds in person. The Word, not only the tablets. The true bread, not only the manna. The true Priest, not only the rod. The title is large because the claim is large.

Reflection

The Old Testament Ark was approached with fear because God's presence was holy. Then, in the Gospel, that presence comes inside a woman visiting her cousin. What has changed? God has not become less holy. He has come closer.

That is a deeply Catholic thought. Holiness is not cancelled by nearness. It is given a human path. Elizabeth does not treat Mary as ordinary. She also does not run away. She asks a question and the child in her leaps.

If this title is true, Marian devotion is not an optional extra. It is one of the Church's ways of saying that the God of Sinai has taken flesh. We honour the Ark because of what it bears. We honour Mary for the same reason.

A Short Prayer

Ark of the Covenant, we greet the Presence you carried, and we do not forget how near He came. Amen.

Chapter 12

Gate of Heaven



Ianua caeli. Gate of Heaven. This is the title that most needs a careful Catholic explanation. Christ said, “I am the door.” He is the one mediator between God and man. So why may Mary be called a gate?

Because a gate is not the same thing as the life inside the house. Christ remains the way. Mary is called a gate because, when God chose to become man, He chose to come into the world through her. The Church, looking at that fact, says that those who come to Christ often find that they have come by a path that includes His Mother.

This is not a second plan of salvation. It is the first plan, looked at from the side of history. God chose to come through a woman. Prayer to Mary is a request that she do what she has always done: take us to Him.

Non-Catholics sometimes hear the title and think we have built another entrance beside Christ. That is not what the Church means. She means that the one entrance arrived through a particular door, and the door still has a name.

Reflection

Catholic language about Mary is easy to misuse. If we speak as if she were an alternative Saviour, we have left the faith. If we speak as if God barely needed her, we have left the Gospel of Luke.

Gate of Heaven holds the tension. Heaven is Christ. The gate is the way He chose to arrive, and the way many Christians still find themselves arriving. The honour is real. It is also secondary.

And that is important. Catholic devotion to Mary is meant to lead us towards Christ, not stop with Mary herself. If a title does not do that, it has been prayed badly. If it does, it has done what the Litany asked of it.

A Short Prayer

Gate of Heaven, take us through to your Son, and do not let us stop in the doorway. Amen.

Chapter 13

Morning Star



Stella matutina. Morning Star. In the night sky the morning star is the planet we see near dawn. It does not replace the sun. It announces that the sun is coming. Older Christian speech used that picture for Mary. She appears in the last dark. Christ is the day.

The title needs care because Scripture also gives the morning star to Christ. In the Book of Revelation He says, “I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” The same image can be used at two intensities. Christ is the light. Mary is the light that goes before Him, the way dawn is not the sun and still belongs to the sun.

That is why the title does not compete. A star at morning is not trying to be day. It is doing a smaller job faithfully. The Church, calling Mary this name, is saying that her whole life is turned towards His appearing.

People waiting in a long darkness have often loved this invocation. Not because Mary is a private sun, but because the Church believes she still points to the hour when night thins.

Reflection

Waiting is one of the ordinary Catholic conditions. We wait for a diagnosis, a child, a conversion, a death, a dawn we cannot force. Morning Star is a title for that condition. It does not end the night by itself. It says the night is not the last word.

Christ remains the light of the world. Mary does not take that sentence away. She stands where the first light stands: visible, earlier, and already belonging to the day that is coming.

If the name sounds merely decorative, try praying it in a difficult week. The Church did not add this title as ornament. She added a way of speaking when people are still in the dark and need to know that Christ is near.

A Short Prayer

Morning Star, keep us facing the day that is Christ, especially when the night has not yet gone. Amen.

Chapter 14

The titles the popes kept adding



Most Catholics assume the Litany has been frozen for centuries. It has not. Sixtus V approved a text in 1587. Later popes added invocations as the Church lived through new doctrines and new wounds. Mary herself did not change. The Church found new words for the same Mother.

Some dates are firm. In 1917, during the First World War, Benedict XV added Queen of Peace. After defining the Assumption in 1950, Pius XII added Queen assumed into heaven. In 1980 John Paul II added Mother of the Church. In 1995 he added Queen of Families. On 20 June 2020, the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Francis added three more: Mother of Mercy, Mother of Hope, and Solace of Migrants.

Other additions are certain as to meaning and a little less tidy as to the exact year they entered the official list. After the Immaculate Conception was defined in 1854, the Church began to say Queen conceived without original sin. Queen of the Most Holy Rosary has roots in the age of Lepanto and later papal use. Mother of Good Counsel and Mother of Divine Grace were drawn into the Litany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Where sources disagree about a precise year, this book will not invent one.

Why keep adding names to an old prayer? Because Christians in different centuries bring different wounds to the same Mother. A world war cries for peace. A definition of doctrine wants to be prayed, not only taught. A century of families under strain asks for a queen. A world of displaced people asks for solace. The Litany is ancient. It is not a museum label.

Reflection

There is something beautiful about an ancient prayer that is not sealed behind glass. The Church does not think Mary needs updating. She thinks history keeps showing new sides of the same motherhood.

That is how Catholic tradition works when it is alive. It does not invent a new Mary. It allows a new sorrow to be brought to the same person. The migrant, the family, the nation at war, the Church after a council: each of them already had a mother. The Litany found a way to say so in public prayer.

In 2026 the list is longer than it was in 1587. The answer is still the same. Pray for us. The extra names are not a fashion. They are the same faith speaking in a later century.

A Short Prayer

Holy Mary, whose names have grown with our history, pray for the wounds of this century as you prayed for the last. Amen.

Chapter 15

A name you need today



You do not always have to rush the whole Litany. Sometimes it is enough to stop at one title and stay there. That is not a technique. It is simply attention.

If somebody is grieving, Cause of Our Joy may sound almost impossible. They may still need to bring that title honestly to prayer, and even ask God what it means when joy feels very far away. If somebody is far from home, Solace of Migrants is no longer an abstract line. If somebody is waiting in a long darkness, Morning Star may finally make sense. If somebody is trying to understand Mary herself, Seat of Wisdom may open a door they had never noticed.

This is not about choosing a lucky title. It is about hearing what we are already praying. The Litany was never meant to be a list we hurry through in order to finish. It was meant to be a way of speaking to a person.

Take one name from this book back to the next Saturday Rosary. Say it more slowly than the rest. That will be enough.

Reflection

A prayer we know by heart can be the prayer we hear least. Familiarity is not the same as understanding. The Litany suffers from that more than most prayers, because it is long and beautiful and easy to treat as background.

Hearing one title properly already changes something. It does not turn you into a specialist. It simply means you stop saying words you do not mean.

If this book has done its work, the next time you hear Mirror of Justice, or Ark of the Covenant, or Morning Star, there will be a half-second of recognition. That half-second is the beginning of praying the Litany instead of merely surviving it.

A Short Prayer

Lord, when we say her names again, let us know what we are asking.

Amen.

A Last Word



Most Catholics already knew these names. That is the unusual thing about this Little Treasure. We did not need a new devotion. We needed to understand an old one.

Mirror of Justice. Seat of Wisdom. House of Gold. Ark of the Covenant. Morning Star. The words were already in our mouths. The meaning was sitting there unused. Some of it came from Scripture. Some of it came from the way the Church has looked at Mary for a very long time. A little of it was added only recently, when history gave Christians a new reason to speak.

The Litany will still be long the next time you hear it. That is all right. You were never asked to hold every title at once. If one of them now means something, the prayer has begun to work as it was meant to work.

You do not have to become an expert. You only have to stop treating the list as empty music. Mary answers to these names because the Church has found them true. One of them may now be true for you in a way it was not last year.

Say that one more slowly. Let the rest of the list carry you. “Pray for us” is still the right reply.

Sources and Further Reading

The Litany of Loreto (*Litaniae Lauretanae*), as approved for public use by Pope Sixtus V, bull *Reddituri*, 11 July 1587. Earliest known printed form associated with Loreto: Dillingen, about 1557–1558, circulated by St Peter Canisius.

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, letter of Cardinal Robert Sarah, 20 June 2020, inserting *Mater misericordiae*, *Mater spei* and *Solacium migrantium*.

Vatican News report of the same additions, 20 June 2020.

Sacred Scripture, especially Luke 1:26–56 and 1:39–56; 2 Samuel 6; Exodus 25 and Hebrews 9 on the Ark; Song of Songs 4:4 and 7:4; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Revelation 22:16.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 487–511 and 963–975, on Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Lumen Gentium, chapter 8; Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*.

On the Holy House of Loreto: the tradition of the shrine itself, together with modern historical discussion of how the fabric reached the Adriatic. Tradition and demonstrable history are not treated here as the same kind of claim.

On the history of the Litany: the Catholic Encyclopedia article “Litany of Loreto,” still useful on early printed copies, the 1571 difficulty under St Pius V, and Sixtus V’s approval. Later papal additions are taken from official notices where those exist. Where older handbooks disagree about a nineteenth-century date, the disagreement is noted rather than hidden.

St John Henry Newman, sermons and writings on Our Lady, especially on Mary as reflecting God rather than replacing Him.

If one of these old names now means something



Perhaps you have prayed the Litany for years. Perhaps one of these names passed your lips hundreds of times without you ever stopping to ask what it meant. If, after this booklet, *Mirror of Justice* or *House of Gold* or *Ark of the Covenant* now makes you pause for a second, then the time spent preparing these pages was worthwhile.

These are small A5 booklets, but producing them takes considerable time. There is research. There are Catholic sources to read. Historical claims need checking, because some beautiful stories turn out not to be historically certain. There is writing, then rewriting, then simplifying, then editing, then preparing the finished PDF, then keeping the website going so the books can remain freely available.

If you are able to support this work, I would be truly grateful. In a very real way, that support helps the next *Little Treasure* to be written, and helps these books remain available to anyone who wants them.

Thank you.



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