

May 26 – CONTINENCE

The vanilla

This plant fills the whole garden with a very strong fragrance; its flower has no beauty, but it serves to adorn the bouquet and perfumes it. It cannot stand by itself; it needs someone to support it.



Continence

Temperance, as the principal virtue, together with abstinence, sobriety, chastity, virginity, with penance and other mortification of the flesh, regulates the strongest passions of a person. Continence checks the passions of the lower order, and to achieve its objective it has at its disposal clemency, meekness, modesty, humility and moderation in pleasures and merrymaking. Continence depends on temperance: it is temperance that checks the passions of the lower

order; hence, the vanilla plant neither has beautiful flower nor could it stand by itself.



Continence in Mary

Since Mary's passion did not rebel, this virtue – continence – was given to her with all the perfection that was necessary.

The flower to Mary

When you feel moved and compelled to go against yourself in addition to the following passions: sadness and melancholy, excessive joy and happiness, unfounded fear and fright, audacity and daringness, love and hatred and other passions, what do you do? Do you give free expansion to the movement of the compeller? Do you extend the wings of the passion and give free flight? If this is so, you have to restrain them and keep the excess and the defect in a golden means dictated by right reason. Promise and propose to practice it and when you present to Mary your resolutions tell her:

Lady: I offer you, together with the bouquet of gillyflower the vanilla, emblem of continence and the restraint that I promise to put over all my passions. Receive my flower and grant that my flesh may be controlled by the holy fear of God.