



INTRODUCTION

The True Cult and Devotion to Mary

- **From the Heart of the Church: The true cult of the Blessed Mary in the Church and true devotion towards Our Lady.**

“This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that **the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries be made of great moment**, and those decrees, which have been given in the early days regarding the cult of images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.

But it exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word to abstain zealously both from all gross exaggerations as well as from petty narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God. Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which always look to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity and piety. Let them assiduously keep away from whatever, either by word or deed, could lead separated brethren or any other into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church.

Let the faithful remember moreover that **true devotion** consists neither in sterile or transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but

proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.” (Vat. II, LG 67)

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II**

“By relating the Mother of Christ to the Trinitarian mystery, Montfort helped me to understand that the Virgin belongs to the plan of salvation, by the Father's will, as the Mother of the incarnate Word, who was conceived by her through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary's every intervention in the work of the regeneration of the faithful is not in competition with Christ, but derives from him and is at his service. Mary's action in the plan of salvation is always Christocentric, that is, it is directly related to a mediation that takes place in Christ.” (Address of the Holy Father to the Participants in the 8th Mariological Colloquium, October 13, 2000.)

- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort**

“It is therefore very important, first, to recognize false devotions to our Blessed Lady so as to avoid them, and to recognize true devotion in order to practice it. Second, among so many different forms of true devotion to our Blessed Lady we should choose the one most perfect and the most pleasing to her, the one that gives greater glory to God and is most sanctifying for us.” (TD 91)

False devotion to Our Lady

“There are, I find, seven kinds of false devotion to Mary, namely, the devotion of (1) the critical, (2) the scrupulous, (3) the superficial, (4) the presumptuous, (5) the inconstant, (6) the hypocritical, (7) the self-interested.” (TD 92)

(1) & (2) “**Critical and Scrupulous** devotees are for the most part proud scholars... (who) criticize nearly all those forms of devotion... question all miracles and stories which testify to the mercy and power of the Blessed Virgin, even those recorded by trustworthy authors...They cannot bear to see simple and humble people on their knees before an altar or statue of our Lady, or at prayer before some outdoor shrine.” (TD 93) “They fear that by exalting Mary they are belittling Jesus. They cannot bear to see people giving to our Lady the praises due to her and which the Fathers of the Church have lavished upon her... Here are some of the things they say: ‘What is the good of all these rosaries?’... ‘Tell us about those who

are devoted to Jesus!’ ... ‘We should go directly to Jesus, since he is our sole Mediator. We must preach Jesus; that is sound devotion!’” (TD 94)

(3) (4) & (6) “**Superficial, presumptuous, and hypocritical** devotees are people whose entire devotion to our Lady consists in exterior practices... They say many rosaries with great haste and assist at many Masses distractedly...without reforming their lives or restraining their passions or imitating Mary's virtues.” (TD 96) “(They are) sinners who give full rein to their passions or their love of the world... They sleep peacefully in their wicked habits, without making any great effort to correct them...They convince themselves that God will forgive them, that they will not die without confession, that they will not be lost for all eternity. They take all this for granted because they say the Rosary, fast on Saturdays, are enrolled in the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary or the Scapular.” (TD 97) “These hide their sins and evil habits under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin so as to appear to their fellow-men different from what they are.” (TD 102)

(5) & (7) “**Inconsistent and Self-Interested** Devotees are those whose devotion to our Lady is practiced in fits and starts. Sometimes they are fervent and sometimes they are lukewarm... It is better not to burden ourselves with a multitude of prayers and pious practices but rather adopt only a few and perform them with love and perseverance in spite of opposition from the devil the world and the flesh.” (TD 101) “(They) turn to her only to win a court-case, to escape some danger, to be cured of some ailment, or have some similar need satisfied. Except when in need they never think of her. Such people are acceptable neither to God nor to his Mother.” (TD 103)

Summary. We must, then, carefully avoid joining the critical devotees, who believe nothing and find fault with everything; the scrupulous ones who, out of respect for our Lord, are afraid of having too much devotion to his Mother; the exterior devotees whose devotion consists entirely in outward practices; the presumptuous devotees who under cover of a fictitious devotion to our Lady wallow in their sins; the inconstant devotees who, being unstable, change their devotional practices or abandon them altogether at the slightest temptation; the hypocritical ones who join confraternities and wear emblems of our Lady only to be thought of as good people; finally, the self-interested devotees who pray

to our Lady only to be rid of bodily ills or to obtain material benefits. (TD 104)

Marks of authentic devotion to Our Lady

After having explained and condemned false devotions to the Blessed Virgin we shall now briefly describe what **true** devotion is. It is (1) interior, (2) trustful, (3) holy, (4) constant and (5) disinterested. (TD 105)

1. “First, true devotion to our Lady is **interior**, that is, it comes from within the mind and the heart and follows from the esteem in which we hold her, the high regard we have for her greatness, and the love we bear her.” (TD 106)
2. “Second, it is **trustful**, that is to say, it fills us with confidence in the Blessed Virgin, the confidence that a child has for its loving Mother. It prompts us to go to her in every need of body and soul with great simplicity, trust and affection. We implore our Mother’s help always, everywhere, and for everything.” (TD 107)
3. “Third, true devotion to our Lady is **holy**, that is, it leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary. Her ten principal virtues are: deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness, and heavenly wisdom.” (TD 108)
4. “Fourth, true devotion to our Lady is **constant**. It strengthens us in our desire to do good and prevents us from giving up our devotional practices too easily. It gives us the courage to oppose the fashions and maxims of the world, the vexations and unruly inclinations of the flesh and the temptations of the devil. Thus a person truly devoted to our Blessed Lady is not changeable, fretful, scrupulous or timid.” (TD 109)
5. Fifth, true devotion to Mary is **disinterested**. It inspires us to seek God alone in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves. The true subject of Mary does not serve his illustrious Queen for selfish gain. He does not serve her for temporal or eternal well-being but simply and solely because she has the right to be served and God alone in her.” (TD 110)

“How pleasing and precious in the sight of God and his holy Mother must these servants of Mary be, who serve her without any self-seeking. How rare they are nowadays! It is to increase their number that I have taken

up my pen to write down what I have been teaching with success both publicly and in private in my missions for many years.” (TD 110)

Various Practices of Devotion to Mary

In Chapter 4 of the Treatise of True Devotion, Montfort lists several practices, some which he calls interior and others which he calls exterior, of devotion to Mary. In this book, we limited ourselves to highlight just a few which wisely express the way to cultivate the devotion. For St. Louis de Montfort, as a wise pedagogue, these ways were very important.

“There are several **interior** practices of **true** devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Here briefly are the main ones: (1) Honoring her, as the worthy Mother of God, by the cult of hyperdulia, that is, esteeming and honoring her more than all the other saints as the masterpiece of grace and the foremost in holiness after Jesus Christ, true God and true man. (2) Meditating on her virtues, her privileges and her actions. (3) Contemplating her sublime dignity. (4) Offering to her acts of love, praise and gratitude. (5) Invoking her with a joyful heart. (6) Offering ourselves to her and uniting ourselves to her.” (TD 115)

“**True** devotion to our Lady has also several **exterior** practices. Here are the principal ones: (1) Enrolling in her confraternities and joining her sodalities. (2) Joining religious orders dedicated to her. (3) Making her privileges known and appreciated. (4) Giving alms, fasting, performing interior and exterior acts of self-denial in her honor. (5) Carrying such signs of devotion to her as the rosary, the scapular, or a little chain. (6) Reciting with attention, devotion and reverence the Rosary... or the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin in honor of her crown of twelve stars or privileges (3 Our Fathers and 12 Hail Marys); the Little Office of our Lady so widely accepted and recited in the Church; or various other prayers and hymns of the Church, such as, the hymns of the liturgical seasons, the Ave Maris Stella, the O Gloriosa Domina ; the Magnificat and other prayers. (7) Singing hymns to her or teaching others to sing them... (9) Taking charge of her confraternities, decorating her altars, crowning and adorning her statues. (10) Carrying her statues or having others carry them in procession, or keeping a small one on one's person as an effective protection against the evil one. (11) Having statues made of her or her name engraved and placed on the walls of churches or houses and on the gates and entrances of towns, churches and houses.” (TD 116)

Conditions for These Devotions to Be Conducive to Holiness

“The Holy Spirit has inspired saintly souls with other practices of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, all of which are conducive to holiness...These devotions are a wonderful help for souls seeking holiness provided they are performed in a worthy manner, that is: (1) With the right intention of pleasing God alone, seeking union with Jesus, our last end, and giving edification to our neighbor. (2) With attention, avoiding willful distractions. (3) With devotion, avoiding haste and negligence. (4) With decorum and respectful bodily posture.” These guidelines are very important to practice vocal devotions or liturgies well. Preparation will always be the key to success for good execution.



Preparation and Consecration

- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #227-233**

First Part. “Those who desire to take up this special devotion, (which has not been erected into a confraternity, although this would be desirable), **should spend at least twelve days in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus, as I have recommended in the first part of this preparation for the reign of Jesus Christ.** They should then spend three weeks imbuing themselves with the spirit of Jesus through the most Blessed Virgin. Here is a program they might follow:

During the **Second Part** they should offer up all their prayers and acts of devotion to **acquire knowledge of themselves** and sorrow for their sins. Let them perform all their actions in a spirit of humility. With this end in view they may, if they wish, meditate on what I have said concerning our corrupted nature, and consider themselves during six days of the week as nothing but sails, slugs, toads, swine, snakes and goats. Or else they may meditate on the following three considerations of St. Bernard:

"Remember what you were - corrupted seed; what you are - a body destined for decay; what you will be - food for worms." They will ask our Lord and the Holy Spirit to enlighten them saying, "Lord, that I may see," or "Lord, let me know myself," or the "Come, Holy Spirit". Every day they should say the Litany of the Holy Spirit, with the prayer that follows, as indicated in the first part of this work. They will turn to our Blessed Lady and beg her to obtain for them that great grace which is the foundation of all others, the grace of self-knowledge. **For this intention they will say each day the Ave Maris Stella and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.**

Each day of the **Third Part** they should endeavor in all their prayers and works to **acquire an understanding of the Blessed Virgin** and ask the Holy Spirit for this grace. They may read and meditate upon what we have already said about her. **They should recite daily the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the Ave Maris Stella as during the first week. In addition they will say at least five decades of the Rosary for greater understanding of Mary.**

During the **Fourth Part** they should seek to understand Jesus Christ better. They may read and meditate on what we have already said about him. They may say the prayer of St. Augustine which they will find at the beginning of the second part of this book. Again with St. Augustine, they may pray repeatedly, "Lord, that I may know you," or "Lord, that I may see." **As during the previous week, they should recite the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the Ave Maris Stella, adding every day the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.**

At the end of these three weeks they should go to confession and Holy Communion with the intention of consecrating themselves to Jesus through Mary as slaves of love. When receiving Holy Communion they could follow the method given later on. They then recite the act of consecration which is given at the end of this book. If they do not have a printed copy of the act, they should write it out or have it copied and then sign it on the very day they make it.

It would be very becoming if on that day **they offered some tribute to Jesus and his Mother**, either as a penance for past unfaithfulness to the promises made in baptism or as a sign of their submission to the sovereignty of Jesus and Mary. Such a tribute would be in accordance with each one's ability and fervor and may take the form of fasting, an

act of self-denial, the gift of alms or the offering of a votive candle. If they gave only a pin as a token of their homage, provided it were given with a good heart, it would satisfy Jesus who considers only the good intention. **Every year at least, on the same date, they should renew the consecration following the same exercises for three weeks. They might also renew it every month or even every day by saying this short prayer: "I am all yours and all I have is yours, O dear Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother."**



FIRST PART – EMPTYING OURSELVES OF THE WORLD

12 Days (From Day 1-12)

COMMON PRAYERS FOR THESE DAYS

- **Veni Creator Spiritus**
- **Ave, Maris Stella**
- **Magnificat**

1st Day

GOD IS LOVE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: I John 4:16**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: Love of Eternal Wisdom (LEW) #70**

“Finally, in order to draw closer to men and give them a more convincing proof of his love, eternal Wisdom went so far as to become man, even to become a little child, to embrace poverty and to die upon a cross for them.

How many times while here on earth could he be heard pleading, "Come to me, come to me, all of you. Do not be afraid, it is I. Why are you afraid? I am just like you; I love you. Are you afraid because you are sinners? But they are the very ones I am looking for; I am the friend of sinners. If it is because you have strayed from the fold through your own fault, then I am the good shepherd. If it is because you are weighted down with sin,

covered with grime and utterly dejected, then that is just why you should come to me for I will unburden you, purify you and console you."

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, October 2, 1985**

"'God is Love': these words, contained in one of the last books of the New Testament, the First Letter of Saint John (4:16), constitute as the definitive key to the vault of the truth about God, which opened its way through many words and many events, until they become full assurance of the faith with the coming of Christ, and above all with his cross and his resurrection."

2nd Day

CREATION, THE WORK OF LOVE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Genesis 1:1-25**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #32**

"After creating all things, eternal Wisdom abides in them to contain, maintain and renew them (Wis 1:7; 7:27). It was this supremely perfect beauty who, after creating the universe, established the magnificent order we find there. He it was who separated, arranged, evaluated, augmented and calculated everything.

He spread out the skies; he set the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets in perfect order. He laid the foundations of the earth and assigned limits and laws to the sea and depths to the ocean. He raised mountains and gave moderation to all things even to the springs of water. Finally, he says, 'I was with God and I disposed everything with such perfect precision and such pleasing variety that it was like playing a game to entertain my Father and myself' (Prov. 8:30-31)."

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, January 29, 1986**

"Together with all that Sacred Scripture says in different places about the work of creation and about God the Creator, this description enables us to set out certain elements in relief: (1) God created the world by himself. The creative power is not transmissible-*incommunicabilis*. (2) God freely created the world, without any exterior compulsion or interior obligation.

He could create or not create; he could create this world or another one. (3) The world was created by God in time; therefore, it is not eternal. It has a beginning in time. (4) The world created by God is constantly maintained in existence by the Creator. This "maintenance" is, in a certain sense, a continual creation (*conservatio est continua creatio*)."

3rd Day

MAN, IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Genesis 1:26-28**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #35-38**

"If the power and gentleness of eternal Wisdom were so luminously evident in the creation, the beauty and order of the universe, they shone forth far more brilliantly in the creation of man. For man is his supreme masterpiece, the living image of his beauty and his perfection, the great vessel of his graces, the wonderful treasury of his wealth and in a unique way his representative on earth. 'By your wisdom you appointed man to have dominion over every creature you made' (Wisd. 9:2).

For the glory of this magnificent and powerful Worker I must describe the original beauty and excellence of man as created by divine Wisdom. But the state of man's grievous sin has fallen upon me, poor miserable child of Eve, dulling my understanding to the point that I can describe only very imperfectly the work of man's creation.

We might say that eternal Wisdom made copies, that is, shining likenesses of his own intelligence, memory, and will, and infused them into the soul of man so that he might become the living image of the Godhead. In man's heart he enkindled the fire of the pure love of God. He gave him a radiant body and virtually enshrined within him a compendium of all the various perfections of angels, animals, and other created things.

Man's entire being was bright without shadow, beautiful without blemish, pure without stain, perfectly proportioned without deformity, flaw, or imperfection. His mind, gifted with the light of wisdom, understood perfectly both Creator and creature. The grace of God was in his soul making him innocent and pleasing to the most High God. His body was endowed with immortality. He had the pure love of God in his heart without any fear of death, for he loved God ceaselessly, without wavering

and purely for God himself. In short, man was so godlike, so absorbed and rapt in God that he had no unruly passions to subdue and no enemies to overcome.

Such was the generosity shown to man by eternal Wisdom and such was the happiness that man enjoyed in his state of innocence.”

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, December 6, 1978**

“It is necessary to reflect with greater intensity on the texts that speak of it. They belong to the first chapter of the book of Genesis, in which the description of the creation of the world is presented in the succession of seven days. The description of the creation of man, on the sixth day, is somewhat different from the preceding descriptions. In these descriptions we are witnesses only of the act of creation, expressed with the words: ‘God said—Let there be ... ’; here, on the contrary, the author wishes to highlight first the intention and the plan of the Creator (of God-Elohim); we read, in fact: ‘Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ (Gen 1:26). As if the Creator entered into himself; as if, creating, not only did he call things into existence from nothingness with the words: ‘Let there be’, but, as if, in a special way, he drew man from the mystery of his own Being. That is understandable, because it is not a question just of Being, but of the Image. The image must ‘reflect’, it must, in a certain way, almost reproduce ‘the substance’ of its Prototype. The Creator says, furthermore, ‘after our likeness’. It is clear that it must not be understood as a ‘portrait’, but as a living being, who will live a life similar to that of God.”

4th Day

The Presence of Evil

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Genesis 3:1-13**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #39**

“But, alas, the vessel of the Godhead was shattered into a thousand pieces. This beautiful star fell from the skies. This brilliant sun lost its light. Man sinned, and by his sin lost his wisdom, his innocence, his beauty, his immortality. In a word, he lost all the good things he was given and found himself burdened with a host of evils. His mind was darkened and impaired. His heart turned cold towards the God he no longer loved. His

sin-stained soul resembled Satan himself. The passions were in disorder; he was no longer master of himself. His only companions are the devils who have made him their slave and their abode. Even creatures have risen up in warfare against him.

In a single instant, man became the slave of demons, the object of God's anger (Cf. Eph. 2:3), the prey of the powers of hell. He became so hideous in his own sight that he hid himself for shame. He was cursed and condemned to death. He was driven from the earthly paradise and excluded from heaven. With no hope of future happiness, he was doomed to eke out a pitiable life upon an earth under curse (cf. Gen. 3:10; 17:23; 4:11,12). He would eventually die like a criminal and after death, together with all his posterity, share the devil's damnation in body and soul.

Such was the frightful calamity which befell man when he sinned. Such was the well-deserved sentence God in his justice pronounced against him."

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, September 10, 1986**

"As it appears in the biblical account, human sin does not originate first in the heart (and consciousness) of man, it does not spring from a spontaneous initiative of man. It is, in a certain sense, the reflection and consequence of the sin that occurred previously in the world of invisible beings. To this world belongs the tempter, "the ancient serpent." Already before ("formerly") these beings endowed with conscience and freedom had been 'proven' to choose according to their purely spiritual nature. In them had arisen the 'doubt' that, as the third chapter of Genesis says, injects the tempter into the first parents. Earlier, those beings had suspected and accused God, that as the Creator he is the only source of the gift of good to all creatures and, especially, to spiritual creatures. They had answered the truth of existence, which demands the total subordination of the creature to the Creator. This truth had been supplanted by an original suspicion, which had led them to make their own spirit the principle and rule of freedom. They had been the first to pretend to be able to 'know good and evil as God,' and they had chosen themselves against God, instead of choosing themselves 'in God,' according to the demands of their being. of creatures: because, 'Who is

like God?’ And man, by yielding to the suggestion of the tempter, became a henchman and accomplice of rebellious spirits.”

5th Day

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Mark 7:21-23**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #79**

The sin of Adam has almost entirely spoiled and soured us, filling us with pride and corrupting every one of us, just as leaven sours, swells and corrupts the dough in which it is placed. The actual sins we have committed, whether mortal or venial, even though forgiven, have intensified our base desires, our weakness, our inconstancy and our evil tendencies, and have left a sediment of evil in our soul.

Our bodies are so corrupt that they are referred to by the Holy Spirit as bodies of sin, as conceived and nourished in sin, and capable of any kind of sin. They are subject to a thousand ills, deteriorating from day to day and harboring only disease, vermin and corruption.

Our soul, being united to our body, has become so carnal that it has been called flesh. "All flesh had corrupted its way". Pride and blindness of spirit, hardness of heart, weakness and inconstancy of soul, evil inclinations, rebellious passions, ailments of the body, - these are all we can call our own. By nature we are prouder than peacocks, we cling to the earth more than toads, we are more base than goats, more envious than serpents, greedier than pigs, fiercer than tigers, lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more changeable than weather-cocks. We have in us nothing but sin, and deserve only the wrath of God and the eternity of hell.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, November 12, 1986**

“Precisely this ‘surrendering (or self-surrendering) of man to his iniquities’ explains in the most eloquent way the meaning of sin as the alienation of man. However, evil is not complete or at least remediable, while man is aware of it, while preserving the sense of sin. But when this is also lacking, the total fall of moral values is practically inevitable, and the risk of final perdition becomes terribly threatening. Therefore, we

must always remember and meditate with great attention these serious words of Pius XII (an expression that has become almost proverbial): 'The sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin' (see Discorsi e Radiomessaggi, VIII , 1946, 288)."

6th Day

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 3:16-17**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #42-46**

I seem to see this lovable Sovereign convoking and assembling the most holy Trinity, a second time, so to speak, for the purpose of rehabilitating man in the state he formerly created him (cf. Gen. 1:26). We can picture a kind of contest going on in this grand council between eternal Wisdom and God's justice.

I seem to hear eternal Wisdom, in his plea on behalf of man, admit that because of his sin man and all his descendants deserve to be condemned and to spend all eternity with the rebel angels. Still, man should be pitied because he sinned more through ignorance and weakness than through malice. He points out that it would be a pity if such an exquisite masterpiece were to become the slave of the devil forever, and millions upon millions of men were to be lost eternally, through the sin of only one man. Besides, eternal Wisdom draws attention to the places left vacant by the fall of the apostate angels. Would it not be fitting to fill these places? And would not God receive great glory in time and in eternity if man were saved?

It seems to me that I hear the God of justice replying that the sentence of death and eternal damnation has been pronounced against man and his descendants, and it must be carried out without pardon or mercy, just as happened in the case of Lucifer and his followers. Man has shown himself ungrateful for the gifts he received, has followed the devil in pride and disobedience and should therefore follow him in his punishment, for sin must necessarily be punished.

Eternal Wisdom seeing that nothing on earth can expiate man's sin, that nothing can satisfy divine justice and appease God's anger and still, wishing to save unfortunate man whom he cannot help loving, finds a wonderful way of accomplishing this.

Wonder of wonders! With boundless and incomprehensible love, this tender-hearted Lord offers to comply with his justice, to calm the divine anger, to rescue us from the slavery of the devil and from the flames of hell, and to merit for us eternal happiness.

His offer is accepted; a decision is reached and made. Eternal Wisdom, the Son of God, will become man at a suitable time and in determined circumstances. For about four thousand years - from the creation of the world and Adam's sin until the Incarnation of divine Wisdom - Adam and his descendants were subject to death, just as God had decreed. But in view of the Incarnation of the Son of God, they received the graces they needed to obey his commandments and do salutary penance for any they might have transgressed. If they died in the state of grace and in God's friendship, their souls went to Limbo, there to await their Savior and Deliverer who would open the gates of heaven for them.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, April 5, 2000**

“At the center of our faith is the Incarnation, in which the glory of the Trinity and the Trinity's love for us is revealed: ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... we have beheld his glory’ (Jn 1: 14). ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son’ (Jn 3: 16). ‘In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him’ (1 Jn 4: 9). Through these words of the Johannine writings, we can understand how the revelation of the Trinity's glory in the Incarnation is not a flash of light dispelling the darkness for a moment, but a seed of divine life sown in the world and in human hearts forever.”

“In the Incarnation we contemplate the Trinitarian love which is revealed in Jesus: a love that does not remain closed in a perfect circle of light and glory, but shines forth in human flesh and in human history; it pervades man, giving him new birth as a son in the Son. For this reason, as St Irenaeus said, the glory of God is the living man: ‘Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei’. He is not so only because of his physical life, but especially because ‘man's life consists in the vision of God’ (Adversus Haereses IV, 20, 7). And to see God is to be transfigured in him: ‘We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’ (1 Jn 3: 2).”

7th Day

THE WISDOM OF GOD

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Wisdom 7:24-30**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #13**

In the general sense of the term wisdom means a delectable knowledge, a taste for God and his truth. There are several kinds of wisdom.

First, true and false wisdom. True wisdom is a taste for truth without falsehood or deception. False wisdom is a taste for falsehood disguised as truth.

This false wisdom is the wisdom or the prudence of the world, which the Holy Spirit divides into three classes: earthly, sensual, and diabolical.

True wisdom may be divided into natural and supernatural wisdom.

Natural wisdom is the knowledge, in an outstanding degree, of natural things in their principles.

Supernatural wisdom is knowledge of supernatural and divine things in their origin.

This supernatural wisdom is divided into substantial or uncreated Wisdom, and accidental or created wisdom. Accidental or created wisdom is the communication that uncreated Wisdom makes of himself to mankind. In other words, it is the gift of wisdom. Substantial or uncreated Wisdom is the Son of God, the second person of the most Blessed Trinity. In other words, it is eternal Wisdom in eternity or Jesus Christ in time.

It is precisely about this eternal Wisdom that we are going to speak.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, April 5, 2000**

“It is easy to intuit that this ‘wisdom’ is not mere intelligence or practical ability, but rather a participation in the very mind of God who ‘with his wisdom [has] established man’ (cf. v. 2). Thus it is the ability to penetrate

the deep meaning of being, of life and of history, going beyond the surface of things and events to discover their ultimate meaning, willed by the Lord.

Wisdom is a lamp that enlightens the moral choices of daily life and leads us on the straight path' to understand what is pleasing in [the] eyes [of the Lord] and what is comformable with your commands' (cf. v. 9). For this reason the Liturgy makes us pray with the words of the Book of Wisdom at the beginning of the day, so that God may be close to us with his wisdom and 'assist us and support us in our (daily) toil' (cf. v. 10), revealing to us the good and evil, the just and unjust."

8th Day

WORLDLY AND DEMONIC WISDOM

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: James 3:13-18**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: from the Book "Mary and the Weakness of God" by Father Jean Morinay**

The Wisdom of the World

The wisdom of the world: when you know, you love, and when you love, you make known. Everything depends then on the knowledge that there is in the starting point, of the wisdom that animates us. Why are there many wisdoms. San Augustine said that "two loves have built two cities: the love of God built the city of God ... and self-love built the city of evil and sin". In his own way, Saint Louis of Montfort adds: "Two wisdoms have built two loves." The wisdom of the world has built the love of oneself through the false riches, the false pleasures, the false greatness of this world; and the Wisdom of God has built love to God and to our brothers and sisters: through poverty, the Cross, the humiliation that leads to true wealth, to true pleasures, to true greatness.

The Three Pillars of the Wisdom of the World

Once again we find the three paths of the search for wisdom. The wisdom of the world is not false because it wanders by them, but because it goes astray through alleyways with no exit. Instead of looking for the authentic "treasures" of which Jesus speaks and of "storing them up in the heavens, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal," (Mt 6:20), he runs after the false riches of this world.

And since there are three false "treasures", there are also three false wisdoms corresponding to them. Montfort calls them "earthly wisdom," "carnal wisdom," and "diabolical wisdom." (LEW 80-82)

"Earthly wisdom" [...] is love for the goods of the earth. The wise men of the world profess this wisdom [...] when they attach their hearts to their possessions; when everything leads to enrichment; when they promote useless trials and litigation to acquire or preserve their wealth; when - most of the time - they do not think, speak or act except to achieve or preserve some temporary good ... "(LEW 80).

Instead of seeking the "solid pleasures "of true happiness, carnal wisdom leads to who follow her not to seek "but the joy of the senses; [...] they love these passing joys; ... habitually only think about eating, drinking, playing, laughing, having fun and having the best possible "(LEW 81).

Finally, the diabolical wisdom, instead of looking for the true greatness that passes through being last, loves and appreciates the honors. Those who follow her "aspire - albeit secretly - to greatness, honors, dignities and important positions; [...] they seek to be noticed, esteemed, praised and applauded by men ... "(LEW 82).

This picture of the three pillars of the world's wisdom has hardly yet to be modified so that it adapts to our day: it describes so perfectly not only to the "gentleman" of the seventeenth century, but to the man of all times who, tomorrow - the same as yesterday and today – does not fail to seek his happiness by those three ways, and is at risk of being taken away by taking for granted the false values.

Three Characteristics of Worldly Wisdom

The wisdom of the world is sealed by cunning, conformism and compromises.

Cunning is the way in which the wisdom of the world draws us towards evil, making us believe that it is about good. You don't draw someone to evil by telling them that it is evil; you have to cover it with the appearance of good. "The world has never been as corrupt as it is today - says Montfort - [...] it has never been so sagacious, prudent and clever in its own way. It uses so well the Truth to inspire deceit; virtue, to authorize sin; the maxims of Jesus Christ, to justify themselves ..., that even the

wisest according to God are victims of their own lies "(LEW 79)." Cunning "is also the way in which everyone, when guided by the spirit of the world, we know how to hide our mistakes under the guise of virtue. The "wise men of the world," says Montfort, "aspire - albeit secretly - to greatness." They seek their caprices and interests "but not in a patent and provocative manner [...] but in a skillful, astute, deceptive and political manner" (LEW 75)

"The wise person according to this century [...] knows how to develop ... to take temporary advantage of everything, without giving the impression of looking for it; knows perfectly the tastes and compliments of the world ... " (LEW 76).

The World is so "skillful" that it manages to make you believe that to convert is to walk against the Gospel. It's that simple. It knows how to make you give up by conformism too. In the seventeenth century, they spoke of "fashion" and "human respect." Work as others do, like everyone else, follow the flock. Conformism can change in area and name, yet it is always part of the wisdom of the world, which Fr. Montfort describes above all as "perfect conformity to the fashions and maxims of the world." When one wants to follow the Gospel, simply to the letter, he always distinguishes himself from others, and the world does not like those who are not like him, who are not "like the others". Try to get in the row. We must obey the "what they will say" ... On the contrary, says Montfort, what counts is what God thinks of us, because we live under the gaze of "our great Jesus." [For example, the fierce resistance that the journalists Daniel Samper, Florence Thomas, and Carlos Gaviria had against the election of the Attorney General Alejandro Ordoñez who had not been afraid to profess his Catholic faith publically. See "El Tiempo" December 10-13, 2008]

The third characteristic of the wisdom of the world is the compromises, the "middle term", "the man" of the seventeenth century who refuses to choose between the Gospel and a human success. A piece of the path with the Gospel and another with the world. And to advance like this until death, without ever opting, without true commitment. Because you have to experience everything and stay "free".

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, January 29, 2003**

“Taking the hand of divine Wisdom, we go forward confidently in the world. We cling to her loving her with a spousal love after the example of Solomon who, according to the Book of Wisdom, confessed: ‘I loved and sought after her from my youth; I sought to take her for my bride and was enamored of her beauty’ (Wis 8:2).”

9th Day

DESIRE FOR TRUE WISDOM

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Psalm 62:2-4**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #181-182**

Children of men, how long will your hearts remain heavy and earthbound? How long will you go on loving vain things and seeking what is false? (Ps 4:3) Why do you not turn your eyes and your hearts towards divine Wisdom who is supremely desirable and who, to attract our love, makes known his origin, shows his beauty, displays his riches, and testifies in a thousand ways how eager he is that we should desire him and seek him? "Be desirous, therefore, of hearing my words," (Wis 6:12) he tells us. "Wisdom anticipates those who want her. (Wis 6:14) The desire of Wisdom leads to the everlasting kingdom." (Wis 6:21)

The desire for divine Wisdom must indeed be a great grace from God because it is the reward for the faithful observance of his commandments. "Son, if you rightly desire wisdom, observe justice and God will give it to you. Reflect on what God requires of you and meditate continually on his commandments and he himself will give you insight, and your desire for wisdom will be granted." (Sir 1.26; 6.37) "For Wisdom will not enter into a deceitful soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin." (Wis 1:4)

This desire for Wisdom must be holy and sincere, and fostered by faithful adherence to the commandments of God. There are indeed an infinite number of fools and sluggards moved to be good by countless desires, or rather would-be desires, which, by not bringing them to renounce sin and do violence to themselves, are but spurious and deceitful desires which are fatal and lead to damnation. (Prov 21:25) The Holy Spirit, who is the teacher of true knowledge, shuns what is deceitful and withdraws himself

from thoughts that are without understanding; iniquity banishes him from the soul. (Wis 1:5)

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, January 16, 2002**

“Origen, the great Christian author of the third century, explained that the human search for God is a never-ending venture because progress is ever possible and necessary. In one of his homilies on the Book of Numbers he writes: ‘Those who make their journey on the road to seek God's wisdom do not build permanent homes but mobile tents, for they are in constant movement covering new ground, and the further they go, the more the road that lies ahead of them opens up, presenting a horizon lost in immensity’ (Homily XVII, In Numeros [on Numbers] GCS VII, 159-160).”

10th Day

HOW TO ASK FOR TRUE WISDOM

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Wisdom 9:1-6 & 9-18**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #185-190**

First, we should pray for this gift with a strong and lively faith, not wavering, because he who wavers in his faith must not expect to receive any gift from the Lord. (Jas 1:6-7)

Secondly, we must pray for it with a pure faith, not counting on consolations, visions or special revelations. Although such things may be good and true, as they have been in some saints, it is always dangerous to rely on them. For the more our faith is dependent on these extraordinary graces and feelings, the less pure and meritorious it is. The Holy Spirit has revealed to us the grandeur and the beauty of Wisdom, and the desire of God to bestow this gift upon us, and our own need of it. Here we find motives strong enough to make us want it and pray God for it with unbounded faith and eagerness.

Simple faith is both the cause and the effect of Wisdom in our soul. The more faith we have, the more we shall possess wisdom. The more we possess it, the stronger our faith (cf Rom 1:17) without seeing, without feeling, without tasting and without faltering. "God has said it or promised it;" these words form the basis of all the prayers and actions of

every wise man, although from a natural point of view it may seem that God is blind to his plight, deaf to his prayers, powerless to crush his enemies, seemingly empty-handed when help is needed, even though he may be troubled by distractions and doubts, by darkness of the mind, by illusions of the imagination, by weariness and boredom of the heart, by sadness and anguish of soul.

The wise man does not ask to see extraordinary things such as saints have seen, nor to experience sensible sweetness in his prayers. He asks with faith for divine Wisdom. And he will feel surer that this Wisdom will be given him than if it were vouched for by an angel come down from heaven, because God has said that all who pray in the right manner will receive what they ask for. (Lk 11:10) "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good spirit (of Wisdom) to those who ask him?" (Lk 11:13)

Thirdly, we must pray perseveringly to obtain this Wisdom. The acquisition of this precious pearl and infinite treasure requires from us a holy importunity in praying to God, without which we shall not obtain it. We ought not to act as so many do when praying for some grace: after they have prayed for a long time, perhaps for years, and God has not granted their request, they become discouraged and give up praying, thinking that God does not want to listen to them. Thus they deprive themselves of the benefit of their prayers and offend God, who loves to give and who always answers, in some way or another, prayers that are well said.

Whoever then wishes to obtain Wisdom must pray for it day and night without wearying or becoming disheartened. Blessings in abundance will be his if, after ten, twenty, thirty years of prayer, or even an hour before he dies, he comes to possess it. And if he does obtain this treasure after having spent his whole life seeking for it and praying for it and meriting it with much toil and suffering, let him remind himself that it is not a gift due to him in justice, a recompense that he has earned, but rather a charitable alms given to him out of mercy.

No, it is not those who are careless and inconstant in their prayers and searching who obtain Wisdom, but those rather who are like the man in the Gospel who goes during the night to knock at the door of a friend, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread (cf Lk 11:15). Note that it is

divine Wisdom himself who in this parable or story teaches us how we should pray if we wish to be heard. This man knocked and repeated his knocking and entreaties four or five times with increased force and insistence, in spite of the untimely hour, near midnight, and his friend having already gone to bed; and in spite of having been rebuffed and told repeatedly to be off and not make himself a selfish nuisance. At length the friend became so annoyed by the persistence of the man that he got out of bed, opened the door and gave him all he asked for. (cf Lk 11:5-8)

That is how we must pray to obtain Wisdom. And assuredly God wants to be importuned, will sooner or later rise up, open the door of his mercy and give us the three loaves of Wisdom, that is, the bread of life, the bread of understanding and the bread of angels.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, February 1, 1979**

“Through prayer, everyone should find his reference: this is the reference to God; my inner world and also the objective world, in which we live and know. If we convert to God, everything in us is directed to Him. Prayer is precisely the expression of this addressing God; and this is, at the same time, our continuous conversion: our path.”

11th Day

HOW TO REACH TRUE WISDOM

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Mark 8:34-37**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #180**

Friends of Jesus Christ drink of his bitter cup and your friendship with him will increase. Suffer with him and you will be glorified with him. Suffer patiently and your momentary suffering will be changed into an eternity of happiness.

Make no mistake about it; since incarnate Wisdom had to enter heaven by the Cross, you also must enter by the same way. No matter which way you turn, says the Imitation of Christ, you will always find the Cross. Like the elect you may take it up rightly, with patience and cheerfulness out of love for God; or else like the reprobate you may carry it impatiently and unwillingly as those doubly unfortunate ones who are constrained to

repeat perpetually in hell, "We have labored and suffered in the world and after it all, here we are with the damned." (Wis 5:7)

True wisdom is not to be found in the things of this world nor in the souls of those who live in comfort. He has fixed his abode in the Cross so firmly that you will not find him anywhere in this world save in the Cross. He has so truly incorporated and united himself with the Cross that in all truth we can say: Wisdom is the Cross, and the Cross is Wisdom.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, November 9, 1988**

"In light of this truth, all who suffer can feel called to participate in the work of redemption through the cross. Participating in the cross of Christ means believing in the salvific power of sacrifice that every believer can offer along with the Redeemer. Then the suffering is released from the shadow of the absurd, which seems to cover it, and acquires a deep dimension, reveals its meaning and creative value. It would be said, then, that the scenario of existence changes, from which the destructive power of evil moves away more and more, precisely because suffering produces copious fruits. Jesus himself reveals and promises to us, when he says: 'The time has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you: if the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and it dies, it remains alone; if it dies it bears much fruit.' (Jn 12:23-24) From the cross to glory!"

12th Day

IMMACULATE MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Genesis 3:15**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #209-212**

Only through Mary, then, can we possess divine Wisdom.

But if we do receive this great gift, where are we to lodge him? What dwelling, what seat, what throne are we to offer this Prince who is so dazzling that the very rays of the sun are dust and darkness in his presence? No doubt we will be told that he has asked only for our heart, that it is our heart we must offer him, and it is there we must lodge him.

But we know that our heart is tainted, carnal, full of unruly inclinations and consequently unfit to house such a noble and holy guest. If we had a thousand hearts like our own and offered him the choice of one of them as his throne, he would rightly reject our offer, turn a deaf ear to our entreaties, and even accuse us of boldness and impertinence in wanting to house him in a place so unclean and so unworthy of his royal dignity.

What then can we do to make our hearts worthy of him? Here is the great way, the wonderful secret. Let us, so to speak, bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreservedly to her as servants and slaves. Let us surrender into her hands all we possess, even what we value most highly, keeping nothing for ourselves. This good mistress who never allows herself to be surpassed in generosity will give herself to us in a real but indefinable manner; and it is in her that Eternal Wisdom will come and settle as on a throne of splendor.

Mary is like a holy magnet attracting Eternal Wisdom to herself with such power that he cannot resist. This magnet drew him down to earth to save mankind, and continues to draw him every day into every person who possesses it. Once we possess Mary, we shall, through her intercession, easily and in a short time possess divine Wisdom.

Mary is the surest, the easiest, the shortest, and the holiest of all the means of possessing Jesus Christ. Were we to perform the most frightful penances, undertake the most painful journeys, or the most fatiguing labors, were we to shed all our blood in order to acquire divine Wisdom, all our efforts would be useless and inadequate if not supported by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and a devotion to her. But if Mary speaks a word in our favor, if we love her and prove ourselves her faithful servants and imitators, we shall quickly and at little cost possess divine Wisdom.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, October 13, 1995**

“The affirmation: "Jesus was born of Mary, the Virgin", implies that in this event a transcendent mystery is present, which can only find its fullest expression in the truth of the divine filiation of Jesus. To this central formulation of the Christian faith is closely linked the truth of the divine

motherhood of Mary. In effect, she is Mother of the Incarnate Word, who is ‘God of God (...), true God of true God.’

The title of Mother of God, already witnessed by Matthew in the equivalent formula of Mother of Emmanuel, God with us (cf Mt 1:23), was explicitly attributed to Mary only after a reflection that lasted around two centuries. It is the third century Christians who, in Egypt, begin to invoke Mary as Theotókos, Mother of God.

With this title, which finds wide echo in the devotion of the Christian people, Mary appears in the true dimension of her motherhood: she is mother of the Son of God, whom she begot virginally according to human nature and educated with her maternal love, contributing to the growth human being of the divine person, who came to transform the destiny of humanity.”



SECOND PART – SELF-KNOWLEDGE
7 Days (From Day 13-19)
COMMON PRAYERS FOR THESE DAYS

- **Litany of the Virgin Mary**
- **Ave, Maris Stella**

13th Day

WE BELONG TO JESUS AND MARY

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Peter 1:18-20**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #68**

From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says, that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves, for he bought us at an infinite price - the shedding of his Precious Blood. Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, but baptism made us in very truth slaves of Jesus.

We must therefore live, work and die for the sole purpose of bringing forth fruit for him, glorifying him in our body and letting him reign in our soul. We are his conquest, the people he has won, his heritage.

It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit compares us: 1) to trees that are planted along the waters of grace in the field of the Church and which must bear their fruit when the time comes; 2) to branches of the vine of which Jesus is the stem, which must yield good grapes; 3) to a flock of sheep of which Jesus is the Shepherd, which must increase and give milk; 4) to good soil cultivated by God, where the seed will spread and produce crops up to thirty-fold, sixty-fold, or a hundred-fold. Our Lord cursed the barren fig-tree and condemned the slothful servant who wasted his talent.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: 12TH World Youth Day Paris Baptismal Vigil - August 23, 1997**

“Baptism — ‘mystery and hope of the world to come’ (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Procatechesis 10, 12) — is the most beautiful of God's gifts, inviting us to become disciples of the Lord. It brings us into intimacy with God, into the life of the Trinity, from this day forward and on into eternity. It is a grace given to the sinner, a grace which purifies us from sin and opens to us a new future. It is a bath which washes and regenerates. It is an anointing which conforms us to Christ, Priest, Prophet and King. It is an enlightenment which illumines our path and gives it full meaning. It is a vestment of strength and perfection. Dressed in white on the day of our Baptism, as we shall be on the last day, we are called to preserve every day its bright splendor and to discover it anew, through forgiveness, prayer and Christian living. Baptism is the sign that God has joined us on our journey, that he makes our existence more beautiful and that he transforms our history into a history of holiness.”

14th Day

OUR ENSLAVEMENT

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: 1 Corinthians 7:22-23**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #70-72**

Now there are three kinds of slavery; natural slavery, enforced slavery, and voluntary slavery. All creatures are slaves of God in the first sense,

for "the earth and its fullness belong to the Lord". The devils and the damned are slaves in the second sense. The saints in heaven and the just on earth are slaves in the third sense. Voluntary slavery is the most perfect of all three states, for by it we give the greatest glory to God, who looks into the heart and wants it to be given to him. Is he not indeed called the God of the heart or of the loving will? For by this slavery we freely choose God and his service before all things, even if we were not by our very nature obliged to do so.

There is a world of difference between a servant and a slave. 1) A servant does not give his employer all he is, all he has, and all he can acquire by himself or through others. A slave, however, gives himself to his master completely and exclusively with all he has and all he can acquire. 2) A servant demands wages for the services rendered to his employer. A slave, on the other hand, can expect nothing, no matter what skill, attention or energy he may have put into his work. 3) A servant can leave his employer whenever he pleases, or at least when the term of his service expires, whereas the slave has no such right. 4) An employer has no right of life and death over a servant. Were he to kill him as he would a beast of burden, he would commit murder. But the master of a slave has by law the right of life and death over him; so that he can sell him to anyone he chooses or - if you will pardon the comparison - kill him as he would kill his horse. 5) Finally, a servant is in his employer's service only for a time; a slave for always.

No other human state involves belonging more completely to another than slavery. Among Christian peoples, nothing makes a person belong more completely to Jesus and his holy Mother than voluntary slavery. Our Lord himself gave us the example of this when out of love for us he "took the form of a slave". Our Lady gave us the same example when she called herself the handmaid or slave of the Lord. The Apostle considered it an honor to be called "slave of Christ". Several times in Holy Scripture, Christians are referred to as "slaves of Christ". The Latin word "servus" at one time signified only a slave because servants as we know them did not exist. Masters were served either by slaves or by freedmen.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, September 4, 1996**

“The words ‘Let it be to me according to your word’ (Lk 1:38), manifest in Mary, who declares herself a slave of the Lord, a total obedience to the will of God. The optional ‘let it be done’ (genoito), used by Saint Luke, not only expresses acceptance, but also a convinced acceptance of the divine project, a fact made with the commitment of all her personal resources.”

15th Day

WE MUST CLOTHE OURSELVES WITH THE NEW SELF

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Colossians 3:5-10**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #78**

Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us. When pure, clear water is poured into a foul-smelling jug, or wine into an unwashed cask that previously contained another wine, the clear water and the good wine are tainted and readily acquire an unpleasant odor. In the same way when God pours into our soul, infected by original and actual sin, the heavenly waters of his grace or the delicious wines of his love, his gifts are usually spoiled and tainted by the evil sediment left in us by sin. Our actions, even those of the highest virtue, show the effects of it. It is therefore of the utmost importance that, in seeking the perfection that can be attained only by union with Jesus, we rid ourselves of all that is evil in us. Otherwise our infinitely pure Lord, who has an infinite hatred for the slightest stain in our soul, will refuse to unite us to himself and will drive us from his presence.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Homily in Temuco, Chile, April 5, 1987**

“In the reading of the Letter to the Colossians that we have recently heard, the Apostle asks us, in the name of Christ: ‘Despoil yourselves of the old man with his works’ (Col 3:9), at the same time that he commands us: of the new man’ (Ibid 3:10).

Who is this old man and this new man of whom St. Paul speaks to us? The old man is the man who has not been renewed by Christ, the one who still allows himself to be dominated by sin, by passions and vices; He who lives according to the flesh, not according to the spirit (see Rm 8:8). A new

man, on the other hand, is one whose works are pleasing to the Lord, because they conform to the condition of son of God; that is, a man aware that in baptism he has been born to a new life and lives in friendship with his Father God.

Old and new are two ways of life that can hardly coexist in the same person. Already in baptism we have abandoned that old man, but the consequences of original sin and personal sins are felt in our being and in our actions. Therefore, strive to eliminate from your lives what you apart from God and the brothers. Reject hate and resentment, divisions and confrontations, alcoholism, drugs, leisure, laziness, family disorders, marital infidelity, lack of solidarity with the problems of others and everything that opposes the great commandment of love to God and neighbor. On the contrary, put on Christ, that is, 'put on the bowels of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, enduring one another and forgiving one another, if one has a complaint against another ... and above all this put on love, which is the bond of perfection '(Col 3, 12-14)."

16th Day

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: 1 John 2:15-17**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #79**

To rid ourselves of selfishness, we must first become thoroughly aware, by the light of the Holy Spirit, of our tainted nature. Of ourselves we are unable to do anything conducive to our salvation. Our human weakness is evident in everything we do and we are habitually unreliable. We do not deserve any grace from God. Our tendency to sin is always present. The sin of Adam has almost entirely spoiled and soured us, filling us with pride and corrupting every one of us, just as leaven sours, swells and corrupts the dough in which it is placed. The actual sins we have committed, whether mortal or venial, even though forgiven, have intensified our base desires, our weakness, our inconstancy and our evil tendencies, and have left a sediment of evil in our soul.

Our bodies are so corrupt that they are referred to by the Holy Spirit as bodies of sin, as conceived and nourished in sin, and capable of any kind of sin. They are subject to a thousand ills, deteriorating from day to day and harboring only disease, vermin and corruption.

Our soul, being united to our body, has become so carnal that it has been called flesh. "All flesh had corrupted its way". Pride and blindness of spirit, hardness of heart, weakness and inconstancy of soul, evil inclinations, rebellious passions, ailments of the body, - these are all we can call our own. By nature we are prouder than peacocks, we cling to the earth more than toads, we are more base than goats, more envious than serpents, greedier than pigs, fiercer than tigers, lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more changeable than weather-cocks. We have in us nothing but sin, and deserve only the wrath of God and the eternity of hell.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, April 30, 1995**

“The concupiscence of the flesh and, together with it, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life is ‘in the world’ and, at the same time, ‘comes from the world’, not as a result of the mystery of creation, but as the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Gen 2:17) in the heart of man. What is fruitful in the triple concupiscence is not the ‘world’ created by God for man, whose fundamental ‘goodness’ we have read more times in Gen 1: ‘God saw that it was good ... it was very good’. On the other hand, in the triple concupiscence, the rupture of the first Covenant with the Creator, with God-Elohim, with God-Yahweh, is fruitful. This Covenant broke in the heart of man. It would be necessary here to make a careful analysis of the events described in Gen 3:1-6. However, we refer only in general to the mystery of sin, at the beginning of human history. Indeed, only as a result of sin, as a result of the rupture of the Covenant with God in the human heart - in the depths of man - the ‘world’ of the book of Genesis has become the ‘world’ of the words of God. Saint John (1, 2, 15-16): place and source of concupiscence.”

17th Day

RENOUNCING OURSELVES

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 12:25**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #80-81**

Is it any wonder then that our Lord laid down that anyone who aspires to be his follower must deny himself and hate his very life? He makes it clear that anyone who loves his life shall lose it and anyone who hates his life shall save it. Now, our Lord, who is infinite Wisdom, and does not give

commandments without a reason, bids us hate ourselves only because we richly deserve to be hated. Nothing is more worthy of love than God and nothing is more deserving of hatred than self.

Secondly, in order to empty ourselves of self, we must die daily to ourselves. This involves our renouncing what the powers of the soul and the senses of the body incline us to do. We must see as if we did not see, hear as if we did not hear and use the things of this world as if we did not use them. This is what St. Paul calls "dying daily". Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain and does not bear any good fruit. If we do not die to self and if our holiest devotions do not lead us to this necessary and fruitful death, we shall not bear fruit of any worth and our devotions will cease to be profitable. All our good works will be tainted by self-love and self-will so that our greatest sacrifices and our best actions will be unacceptable to God. Consequently when we come to die we shall find ourselves devoid of virtue and merit and discover that we do not possess even one spark of that pure love which God shares only with those who have died to themselves and whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in him.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Message for the 16th World Youth Day in Toronto, 2002**

“‘He must deny himself’. To deny oneself is to give up one’s own plans that are often small and petty in order to accept God’s plan. This is the path of conversion, something indispensable in a Christian life, and that led Saint Paul to say, ‘it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20).

Jesus does not ask us to give up living, but to accept a newness and a fullness of life that only He can give. The human being has a deep-rooted tendency to ‘think only of self’, to regard one’s own person as the center of interest and to see oneself as the standard against which to gauge everything. One who chooses to follow Christ, on the other hand, avoids being wrapped up in himself and does not evaluate things according to self-interest. He looks on life in terms of gift and gratuitousness, not in terms of conquest and possession. Life in its fullness is only lived in self-giving, and that is the fruit of the grace of Christ: an existence that is free and in communion with God and neighbor (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 24).

If to live as a follower of the Lord becomes the highest value, then all other values are given their rightful rank and importance. Whoever depends solely on worldly goods will end up by losing, even though there might seem to be an appearance of success. Death will find that person with an abundance of possessions but having lived a wasted life (cf. Lk 12:13-21). Therefore, the choice is between being and having, between a full life and an empty existence, between truth and falsehood."

18th Day

CARRYING OUR CROSS

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Luke 9:23**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #173-175**

While waiting for that great day of the last judgement, Eternal Wisdom has decreed the Cross to be the sign, the emblem and the weapon of his faithful people. He welcomes no child that does not bear its sign. He recognizes no disciple who is ashamed to display it, or who has not the courage to accept it, or who either drags it reluctantly or rejects it outright. He proclaims, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mt 16.24; Lk 9.23)

He enlists no soldier who does not take up the cross as the weapon to defend himself against all his enemies, to attack, to overthrow and to crush them. And he exclaims, "In this sign you will conquer. Have confidence, soldiers of mine, I am your leader; I have conquered my enemies by the cross (Jn 16.33), and by it you also will be victorious."

He has enclosed in the cross such an abundance of grace, life and happiness that only those who enjoy his special favor know about them. He often reveals to his friends his other secrets, as he did to his Apostles: "All things I have made known to you," (Jn 15.15) but he reveals the secrets of the Cross only to those who make themselves worthy by their great fidelity and great labors. One must be humble, little, self-disciplined, spiritual and despised by the world to learn the mystery of the Cross. The Cross even today is a source of scandal and an object of folly not only to Jews and pagans, Moslems and heretics, the worldly-wise and bad Catholics, but even to seemingly devout and very devout people. Yes, the Cross remains an object of scandal, folly, contempt and fear: not in theory, for never has so much been spoken or written about its beauty

and its excellence than in these times; but in practice, because people lose courage, complain, excuse themselves, and run away as soon as a possibility of suffering arises.

"Father," said this incarnate Wisdom, when beholding in joyful rapture the beauty of the Cross, "I thank you for having hidden these things - the treasures and graces of my cross - from the wise and prudent of this world and revealed them to the little ones." (Lk 10.21)

If the knowledge of the mystery of the Cross is such a special grace, how great must be the enjoyment when one actually possesses it? This is a favor Eternal Wisdom bestows only on his best friends and only after they have prayed for it, longed for it, pleaded for it. However excellent is the gift of faith by which we please God, draw near to him and overcome our enemies, and without which we would be lost, the Cross is an even greater gift.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Message for the 16th World Youth Day in Toronto, 2002**

“‘Take up his cross daily and follow me’. As the cross can be reduced to being an ornament, ‘to carry the cross’ can become just a manner of speaking. In the teaching of Jesus, however, it does not imply the pre-eminence of mortification and denial. It does not refer primarily to the need to endure patiently the great and small tribulations of life, or, even less, to the exaltation of pain as a means of pleasing God. It is not suffering for its own sake that a Christian seeks, but love. When the cross is embraced it becomes a sign of love and of total self-giving. To carry it behind Christ means to be united with him in offering the greatest proof of love.

We cannot speak about the cross without considering God’s love for us, the fact that God wishes to shower us with good things. With his invitation ‘follow me’, Jesus not only says again to his disciples: take me as your model, but also: share my life and my choices, and stake your life for love of God and for neighbor together with me. This is how Jesus opens up before us the ‘way of life’. Unfortunately, this is constantly being threatened by the ‘way of death’. Sin is this way that separates a person from God and neighbor and brings about division and undermines society from within.

The 'way of life' continues and renews the mind of Christ in us and becomes the way of faith and conversion. It is indeed the way of the cross. It is the way that leads one to trust in him and his plan of salvation, and to believe that He died in order to show God's love for each one. It is the way to salvation in a society often divided, confused and contradictory. It is the way to the happiness found in following Christ right to the end, in the sometimes dramatic circumstances of daily life. It is the way that does not fear failure, difficulties, isolation, loneliness, because it fills our hearts with the presence of Jesus. It is the path of peace, self-control and a joyful heart."

19th Day

WE CARRY THE TREASURE OF GRACE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: 2 Corinthians 4:7**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #88-89**

It is very difficult, considering our weakness and frailty, to keep the graces and treasures we have received from God. 1. We carry this treasure, which is worth more than heaven and earth, in fragile vessels, that is, in a corruptible body and in a weak and wavering soul which requires very little to depress and disturb it.

2. The evil spirits, cunning thieves that they are, can take us by surprise and rob us of all we possess. They are watching day and night for the right moment. They roam incessantly seeking to devour us and to snatch from us in one brief moment of sin all the grace and merit we have taken years to acquire. Their malice and their experience, their cunning and their numbers ought to make us ever fearful of such a misfortune happening to us. People, richer in grace and virtue, more experienced and advanced in holiness than we are, have been caught off their guard and robbed and stripped of everything. How many cedars of Lebanon, how many stars of the firmament have we sadly watched fall and lose in a short time their loftiness and their brightness!

What has brought about this unexpected reverse? Not the lack of grace, for this is denied no one. It was a lack of humility; they considered themselves stronger and more self-sufficient than they really were. They thought themselves well able to hold on to their treasures. They believed their house secure enough and their coffers strong enough to safeguard

their precious treasure of grace. It was because of their unconscious reliance on self - although it seemed to them that they were relying solely on the grace of God - that the most just Lord left them to themselves and allowed them to be despoiled. If they had only known of the wonderful devotion that I shall later explain, they would have entrusted their treasure to Mary, the powerful and faithful Virgin. She would have kept it for them as if it were her own possession and even have considered that trust an obligation of justice.

3. It is difficult to persevere in holiness because of the excessively corrupting influence of the world. The world is so corrupt that it seems almost inevitable that religious hearts be soiled, if not by its mud, at least by its dust. It is something of a miracle for anyone to stand firm in the midst of this raging torrent and not be swept away; to weather this stormy sea and not be drowned, or robbed by pirates; to breathe this pestilential air and not be contaminated by it.

It is Mary, the singularly faithful Virgin over whom Satan had never any power, who works this miracle for those who truly love her.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 22, 2003**

"We Christians possess a treasure in clay jars, that is, knowledge of the divine glory, which is reflected in the face of Christ but in the fragility of our human condition" so that it appears that such an extraordinary force is of God and not of us' (2 Cor 4: 7) "



THIRD PART – KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LADY

7 Days (From Day 20-26)

COMMON PRAYERS FOR THESE DAYS

- **Litany of the Holy Spirit**
- **Ave, Maris Stella**
- **Holy Rosary**

20th Day

MARY IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY KNOWN

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Psalm 45**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #10-13**

And yet in truth we must still say with the saints: De Maria numquam satis : We have still not praised, exalted, honored, loved and served Mary adequately. She is worthy of even more praise, respect, love and service. Moreover, we should repeat after the Holy Spirit, "All the glory of the king's daughter is within", meaning that all the external glory which heaven and earth vie with each other to give her is nothing compared to what she has received interiorly from her Creator, namely, a glory unknown to insignificant creatures like us, who cannot penetrate into the secrets of the king.

Finally, we must say in the words of the apostle Paul, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man understood" the beauty, the grandeur, the excellence of Mary, who is indeed a miracle of miracles of grace, nature and glory. "If you wish to understand the Mother," says a

saint, "then understand the Son. She is a worthy Mother of God." *Hic taceat omnis lingua* : Here let every tongue be silent.

My heart has dictated with special joy all that I have written to show that Mary has been unknown up till now and that that is one of the reasons why Jesus Christ is not known as he should be. If then, as is certain, the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ must come into the world; it can only be as a necessary consequence of the knowledge and reign of Mary. She who first gave him to the world will establish his kingdom in the world.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, October 15, 1997**

“We can certainly say that Marian devotion has developed down to our day in wonderful continuity, alternating between flourishing periods and critical ones that, nonetheless, often had the merit of fostering its renewal even more.

Since the Second Vatican Council, Marian devotion seems destined to develop in harmony with a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church and in dialogue with contemporary cultures, to be ever more firmly rooted in the faith and life of God’s pilgrim people on earth.”

21st Day

MARY IS THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Luke 1:31-32**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #16**

God the Father gave his only Son to the world only through Mary. Whatever desires the patriarchs may have cherished, whatever entreaties the prophets and saints of the Old Law may have had for 4,000 years to obtain that treasure, it was Mary alone who merited it and found grace before God by the power of her prayers and the perfection of her virtues. "The world being unworthy," said Saint Augustine, "to receive the Son of God directly from the hands of the Father, he gave his Son to Mary for the world to receive him from her." The Son of God became man for our salvation but only in Mary and through Mary. God the Holy Spirit formed Jesus Christ in Mary but only after having asked her consent through one of the chief ministers of his court.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Apostolic Trip to Ephesus, Homily, November 30, 1979**

“The answer comes to us with the clear and convincing simplicity of God's works. Christ wanted to be an authentic offspring (cf Is 11:1) of the lineage he came to save. He wanted the redemption to come forth from within humanity, as something of humanity. Christ wanted to help man not as a stranger, but as a brother, making himself like him in everything, except in sin (see Heb 4:15). This is why he wanted a mother found her in the person of Mary. The fundamental mission of the maiden of Nazareth was, then, to be the means of union of the Savior with the human race. In the history of salvation, however, the action of God does not develop without resorting to the collaboration of men: God does not impose salvation. He did not even impose it on Mary. In the event of the Annunciation, God did not impose his will and, instead, waited for Mary to give an answer that sprung from her faith. The Fathers have perfectly grasped this aspect, emphasizing that ‘the Blessed Virgin Mary, who gave birth believing, had conceived believing’ (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 215, 4, cf. S. León M., *Sermo I in Nativitate*, 1, etc.), and this has also underlined the recent Second Vatican Council, affirming that the Virgin ‘at the announcement of the angel received in the heart and body the Word of God’ (*Lumen gentium*, 53).

The ‘fiat’ of the Annunciation thus inaugurates the New Covenant between God and the creature: while this ‘fiat’ incorporates Jesus into our ancestry according to nature, it incorporates Mary to Him according to grace. The link between God and humanity, broken by sin, is now happily restored.”

22nd Day

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Luke 9:51**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #19**

If we examine closely the remainder of the life of Jesus Christ, we see that he chose to begin his miracles through Mary. It was by her word that he sanctified Saint John the Baptist in the womb of his mother, Saint Elizabeth; no sooner had Mary spoken than John was sanctified. This was his first and greatest miracle of grace. At the wedding in Cana he changed

water into wine at her humble prayer, and this was his first miracle in the order of nature. He began and continued his miracles through Mary and he will continue them through her until the end of time

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, October 2, 1996**

“St. Luke seems to invite us to see in Mary the first evangelist, who spreads the good news, beginning the missionary journeys of the divine Son.

The direction of the journey of the Blessed Virgin is particularly significant: it will be from Galilee to Judea, as the missionary journey of Jesus (cf Lk 9:51).

Indeed, with her visit to Elizabeth, Mary carried out the prelude to the mission of Jesus and, collaborating from the beginning of her motherhood in the redemptive work of the Son, became the model of those in the Church who were on the way to bring the light and joy of Christ to men of all places and of all times.

The encounter with Isabel presents features of a joyful salvific event, which overcomes the spontaneous feeling of family sympathy. While the confusion of disbelief seems to be reflected in the silence of Zacharias, Mary bursts in with the joy of her ready and available faith: ‘She entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth’ (Lk 1:40).

St. Luke says that ‘when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child jumped in her bosom’ (Lk 1:41). The greeting of Mary provokes a joyful leap in Elizabeth's son: the entrance of Jesus into the house of Elizabeth, thanks to her Mother, conveys to the prophet that the joy that the Old Testament announces as a sign of the presence of the Messiah will be born.

At the greeting of Mary, Elizabeth also felt the messianic joy and ‘was filled with the Holy Spirit, and exclaiming with a loud voice, said: ‘Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb’ (Lk 1:41-42).

By virtue of a superior enlightenment, he understands the greatness of Mary who, more than Yael and Judith, who prefigured her in the Old Testament, is blessed among women by the fruit of her womb, Jesus, the Messiah."

23rd Day

MARY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Galatians 4:19**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #31-32**

God the Son wishes to form himself, and, in a manner of speaking, become incarnate every day in his members through his dear Mother. To her he said: "Take Israel for your inheritance." It is as if he said, God the Father has given me as heritage all the nations of the earth, all men good and evil, predestinate and reprobate. To the good I shall be father and advocate, to the bad a just avenger, but to all I shall be a judge. But you, my dear Mother, will have for your heritage and possession only the predestinate represented by Israel. As their loving mother, you will give them birth, feed them and rear them. As their queen, you will lead, govern and defend them.

"This one and that one were born in her." According to the explanation of some of the Fathers, the first man born of Mary is the God-man, Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ, the head of mankind, is born of her, the predestinate, who are members of this head, must also as a necessary consequence be born of her. One and the same mother does not give birth to the head without the members nor to the members without the head, for these would be monsters in the order of nature. In the order of grace likewise the head and the members are born of the same mother. If a member of the mystical body of Christ, that is, one of the predestinate, were born of a mother other than Mary who gave birth to the head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but a monster in the order of grace.

Moreover, Jesus is still as much as ever the fruit of Mary, as heaven and earth repeat thousands of times a day: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." It is therefore certain that Jesus is the fruit and gift of Mary for every single man who possesses him, just as truly as he is for all mankind. Consequently, if any of the faithful have Jesus formed in their heart they can boldly say, "It is thanks to Mary that what I possess is Jesus her fruit,

and without her I would not have him." We can attribute more truly to her what Saint Paul said of himself, "I am in labor again with all the children of God until Jesus Christ, my Son, is formed in them to the fullness of his age." Saint Augustine, surpassing himself as well as all that I have said so far, affirms that in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God all the predestinate, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just. This is indeed a mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate and little known even to the predestinate!

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, October 2, 1996**

The title "Mother of the Church" thus reflects the deep conviction of the Christian faithful, who see in Mary not only the mother of the person of Christ, but also of the faithful. She who is recognized as mother of salvation, life and grace, mother of the saved and mother of the living, is rightly proclaimed Mother of the Church.

Pope Paul VI would have liked the Second Vatican Council itself to have proclaimed "Mary Mother of the Church, that is, of the whole People of God, of the faithful and their Pastors". He did so himself in his speech at the end of the Council's third session (21 November 1964), also asking that "henceforth the Blessed Virgin be honored and invoked with this title by all the Christian people" (AAS 1964, 37).

In this way, my venerable Predecessor explicitly enunciated the doctrine contained in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*, hoping that the title of Mary, Mother of the Church, would have an ever more important place in the liturgy and piety of the Christian people.

24th Day

MARY IN THE FINAL BATTLE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Genesis 3:15**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #51-54**

It is chiefly in reference to these last wicked persecutions of the devil, daily increasing until the advent of the reign of anti-Christ, that we should

understand that first and well-known prophecy and curse of God uttered against the serpent in the garden of paradise. It is opportune to explain it here for the glory of the Blessed Virgin, the salvation of her children and the confusion of the devil. "I will place enmities between you and the woman, between your race and her race; she will crush your head and you will lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15).

God has established only one enmity - but it is an irreconcilable one - which will last and even go on increasing to the end of time. That enmity is between Mary, his worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and followers of Lucifer.

Thus the most fearful enemy that God has set up against the devil is Mary, his holy Mother. From the time of the earthly paradise, although she existed then only in his mind, he gave her such a hatred for his accursed enemy, such ingenuity in exposing the wickedness of the ancient serpent and such power to defeat, overthrow and crush this proud rebel, that Satan fears her not only more than angels and men but in a certain sense more than God himself. This does not mean that the anger, hatred and power of God are not infinitely greater than the Blessed Virgin's, since her attributes are limited. It simply means that Satan, being so proud, suffers infinitely more in being vanquished and punished by a lowly and humble servant of God, for her humility humiliates him more than the power of God. Moreover, God has given Mary such great power over the evil spirits that, as they have often been forced unwillingly to admit through the lips of possessed persons, they fear one of her pleadings for a soul more than the prayers of all the saints, and one of her threats more than all their other torments.

What Lucifer lost by pride, Mary won by humility. What Eve ruined and lost by disobedience Mary saved by obedience. By obeying the serpent, Eve ruined her children as well as herself and delivered them up to him. Mary by her perfect fidelity to God saved her children with herself and consecrated them to his divine majesty.

God has established not just one enmity but "enmities", and not only between Mary and Satan but between her race and his race. That is, God has put enmities, antipathies and hatreds between the true children and servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and slaves of the devil.

They have no love and no sympathy for each other. The children of Belial, the slaves of Satan, the friends of the world, - for they are all one and the same - have always persecuted and will persecute more than ever in the future those who belong to the Blessed Virgin, just as Cain of old persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob. These are the types of the wicked and of the just. But the humble Mary will always triumph over Satan, the proud one, and so great will be her victory that she will crush his head, the very seat of his pride. She will unmask his serpent's cunning and expose his wicked plots. She will scatter to the winds his devilish plans and to the end of time will keep her faithful servants safe from his cruel claws.

But Mary's power over the evil spirits will especially shine forth in the latter times, when Satan will lie in wait for her heel, that is, for her humble servants and her poor children whom she will rouse to fight against him. In the eyes of the world they will be little and poor and, like the heel, lowly in the eyes of all, down-trodden and crushed as is the heel by the other parts of the body. But in compensation for this they will be rich in God's graces, which will be abundantly bestowed on them by Mary. They will be great and exalted before God in holiness. They will be superior to all creatures by their great zeal and so strongly will they be supported by divine assistance that, in union with Mary, they will crush the head of Satan with their heel, that is, their humility, and bring victory to Jesus Christ.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, May 29, 1996**

“In the same biblical text, moreover, the enmity between the woman and her lineage, on the one hand, and the serpent and her offspring, on the other, is proclaimed. It is a hostility expressly established by God, which takes on a singular relief if we consider the question of the personal sanctity of the Virgin. To be the irreconcilable enemy of the serpent and its lineage, Mary must be exempt from all domination of sin. And this from the first moment of its existence.

In this regard, the encyclical *Fulgens Corona*, published by Pope Pius XII in 1953 to commemorate the centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, argues: ‘If at a certain time the Blessed Virgin Mary had been deprived of grace Divine, for having been

contaminated in her conception by the hereditary taint of sin, between her and the serpent there would no longer be - at least during that period of time, however brief - the eternal enmity that is spoken of in the tradition primitive until the solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception, but rather certain servitude '(AAS 45 [1953], 579).

The absolute enmity placed by God between the woman and the devil demands, therefore, in Mary the Immaculate Conception, that is, a total absence of sin, from the beginning of her life. The Son of Mary obtained the definitive victory over Satan and benefited his Mother in advance, preserving her from sin. As a result, the Son granted her the power to resist the devil, thus realizing in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception the most remarkable effect of his redeeming work.

The name full of grace and the *Protoevangelium*, by drawing our attention to the special sanctity of Mary and to the fact that she was completely freed from the influence of Satan, make us intuit in the unique privilege granted to Mary by the Lord the beginning of a new order, which is the fruit of friendship with God and which implies, in consequence, a deep enmity between the serpent and men."

25th Day

THE MATERNAL ACTION OF MARY FACILITATES OUR ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 2:16-17**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #83-86**

It is more perfect because it supposes greater humility to approach God through a mediator rather than directly by ourselves. Our human nature, as I have just shown, is so spoilt that if we rely on our own work, effort and preparedness to reach God and please him, it is certain that our good works will be tainted and carry little weight with him. They will not induce him to unite himself to us or answer our prayers. God had his reasons for giving us mediators with him. He saw our unworthiness and helplessness and had pity on us. To give us access to his mercies he provided us with powerful advocates, so that to neglect these mediators and to approach his infinite holiness directly and without help from any one of them, is to be lacking in humility and respect towards God who is so great and holy. It would mean that we have less esteem for the King of kings than for an

earthly king or ruler, for we would not dare approach an earthly king without a friend to speak for us.

Our Lord is our Advocate and our Mediator of redemption with God the Father. It is through him that we must pray with the whole Church, triumphant and militant. It is through him that we have access to God the Father. We should never appear before God, our Father, unless we are supported by the merits of his Son, and, so to speak, clothed in them, as young Jacob was clothed in the skin of the young goats when he appeared before his father Isaac to receive his blessing.

But have we no need at all of a mediator with the Mediator himself? Are we pure enough to be united directly to Christ without any help? Is Jesus not God, equal in every way to the Father? Therefore is he not the Holy of Holies, having a right to the same respect as his Father? If in his infinite love he became our security and our Mediator with his Father, whom he wished to appease in order to redeem us from our debts, should we on that account show him less respect and have less regard for the majesty and holiness of his person?

Let us not be afraid to say with St. Bernard that we need a mediator with the Mediator himself and the divinely-honored Mary is the one most able to fulfil this office of love. Through her, Jesus came to us; through her we should go to him. If we are afraid of going directly to Jesus, who is God, because of his infinite greatness, or our lowliness, or our sins, let us implore without fear the help and intercession of Mary, our Mother. She is kind, she is tender, and there is nothing harsh or forbidding about her, nothing too sublime or too brilliant. When we see her, we see our own human nature at its purest. She is not the sun, dazzling our weak sight by the brightness of its rays. Rather, she is fair and gentle as the moon, which receives its light from the sun and softens it and adapts it to our limited perception.

She is so full of love that no one who asks for her intercession is rejected, no matter how sinful he may be. The saints say that it has never been known since the world began that anyone had recourse to our Blessed Lady, with trust and perseverance, and was rejected. Her power is so great that her prayers are never refused. She has but to appear in prayer before her Son and he at once welcomes her and grants her requests. He

is always lovingly conquered by the prayers of the dear Mother who bore him and nourished him.

All this is taken from St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure. According to them, we have three steps to take in order to reach God. The first, nearest to us and most suited to our capacity, is Mary; the second is Jesus Christ; the third is God the Father. To go to Jesus, we should go to Mary, our mediatrix of intercession. To go to God the Father, we must go to Jesus, our Mediator of redemption. This order is perfectly observed in the devotion I shall speak about further on.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, May 29, 1996**

“Mary’s maternal mediation does not obscure the unique and perfect mediation of Christ. Indeed, after calling Mary ‘Mediatrix’, the Council is careful to explain that this ‘neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator’ (Lumen Gentium, n. 62). And on this subject it quotes the famous text from the First Letter to Timothy: ‘For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all’ (2:5-6).

In addition, the Council states that ‘Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power’ (Lumen Gentium, n. 60).

Therefore, far from being an obstacle to the exercise of Christ’s unique mediation, Mary instead highlights its fruitfulness and efficacy. ‘The Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it’ (Lumen Gentium, n. 60).

The value of Mary’s mediation derives from Christ and thus the salutary influence of the Blessed Virgin ‘does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it’ (ibid.).

The intrinsic orientation to Christ of the ‘Mediatrix’s’ work spurred the Council to recommend that the faithful turn to Mary ‘so that, encouraged

by this maternal help they may the more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer' (Lumen Gentium, n. 62).

In proclaiming Christ the one mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2:5-6), the text of St Paul's Letter to Timothy excludes any other parallel mediation, but not subordinate mediation. In fact, before emphasizing the one exclusive mediation of Christ, the author urges 'that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men' (2:1). Are not prayers a form of mediation? Indeed, according to St Paul, the unique mediation of Christ is meant to encourage other dependent, ministerial forms of mediation. By proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ's mediation, the Apostle intends only to exclude any autonomous or rival mediation, and not other forms compatible with the infinite value of the Savior's work.

It is possible to participate in Christ's mediation in various areas of the work of salvation. After stressing that 'no creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer' (n. 62), Lumen Gentium describes how it is possible for creatures to exercise certain forms of mediation which are dependent on Christ. In fact, 'just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold co-operation which is but a sharing in this one source' (Lumen Gentium, n. 62).

This desire to bring about various participations in the one mediation of Christ reveals the gratuitous love of God who wants to share what he possesses."

26th Day

BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 19:25-27**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #120-121**

As all perfection consists in our being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus it naturally follows that the most perfect of all devotions is that which conforms, unites, and consecrates us most completely to Jesus. Now of all God's creatures Mary is the most conformed to Jesus. It therefore follows that, of all devotions, devotion to her makes for the

most effective consecration and conformity to him. The more one is consecrated to Mary, the more one is consecrated to Jesus.

That is why perfect consecration to Jesus is but a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach; or in other words, it is the perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism.

This devotion consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. It requires us to give:

- (1) Our body with its senses and members;
- (2) Our soul with its faculties;
- (3) Our present material possessions and all we shall acquire in the future;
- (4) Our interior and spiritual possessions, that is, our merits, virtues and good actions of the past, the present and the future.

In other words, we give her all that we possess both in our natural life and in our spiritual life as well as everything we shall acquire in the future in the order of nature, of grace, and of glory in heaven. This we do without any reservation, not even of a penny, a hair, or the smallest good deed. And we give for all eternity without claiming or expecting, in return for our offering and our service, any other reward than the honor of belonging to our Lord through Mary and in Mary, even though our Mother were not - as in fact she always is - the most generous and appreciative of all God's creatures.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, May 29, 1996**

“The Evangelist concludes by saying that ‘from that hour the disciple welcomed her into his house’ (Jn 19:27). This means that the disciple responded immediately to the will of Jesus: from that moment, welcoming Mary into his home, he showed her his filial affection, he has surrounded her with all kinds of cares, he has acted in such a way that she could enjoy recollection and peace waiting to be reunited with her Son, and to play her role in the new Church, both on Pentecost and in years to come.

That gesture of John was the putting into practice the testament of Jesus with respect to Mary: but it had a symbolic value for all Disciples of Christ must invite and welcome Mary, to make her a place in their own life. By the force of Jesus' words at death, all Christian life must offer a 'space' to Mary; she cannot do without her presence.

We can conclude this reflection and catechesis on the message of the cross, with the invitation that I address to each one, to ask how he welcomes Mary in her home, in her life; also with an exhortation to appreciate more and more the gift that the crucified Christ has given us, leaving us as mother to his own Mother."



FOURTH PART – KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

7 Days (From Day 27-33)

COMMON PRAYERS FOR THESE DAYS

- **Ave, Maris Stella**
- **Litany of the Holy Spirit**
- **Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus**

27th Day

JESUS, WISDOM INCARNATE IS SWEET IN ORIGIN

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Galatians 4:4-5**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #118**

As the divine Wisdom became man only to stir the hearts of men to love and imitate him, he took pleasure in gracing his human nature with every kind of quality, especially an endearing gentleness and a kindness without any defect or blemish. If we consider him in his origin he is everything that is good and gentle. He is a gift sent by the love of the eternal Father

and a product of the love of the Holy Spirit. He was given out of love and fashioned by love (Jn. 3:16). He is therefore all love, or rather the very love of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He was born of the sweetest, tenderest and the most beautiful of all mothers, Mary, the divinely favored Virgin. To appreciate the gentleness of Jesus we must first consider the gentleness of Mary, his Mother, whom he resembles by his pleasing nature. Jesus is Mary's child; consequently there is no haughtiness, or harshness, or unpleasantness in him and even less, infinitely less, in him than in his Mother, since he is the eternal Wisdom and therefore pure gentleness and beauty.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, December 10, 1997**

“In becoming man, the Word of God brought about a fundamental change in the very condition of time. We can say that in Christ human time was filled with eternity.”

“He came to offer everyone participation in his divine life. The gift of this life includes sharing in his eternity... The communication of Christ’s eternal life also means that we share in his attitude of filial love for the Father.”

“The entry of eternity into time is the entrance, in Jesus’ earthly life, of the eternal love that unites the Son to the Father... The eternity that enters into us is a sovereign power of love that seeks to guide our whole life to its ultimate purpose, hidden in the mystery of the Father... Eternity has entered human life. Now human life is called to make the journey with Christ from time to eternity.”

28th Day

JESUS, WIDOM MADE FLESH IS SWEET IN ALL HIS BEHAVIOR

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Psalm 118**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #123-126**

Finally, Jesus is gentle in his actions and in the whole conduct of his life. "He did everything well" (Mt. 7:37), which means that everything he did was done with such uprightness, wisdom, holiness and gentleness that

nothing faulty or distorted could be found in him. Let us consider what gentleness our loving Savior always manifested in his conduct.

Poor people and little children followed him everywhere seeing him as one of their own. The simplicity, the kindness, the humble courtesy and the charity they witnessed in our dear Savior made them press close about him. One day when he was preaching in the streets the children, who were usually about him, pressed upon him from behind. The apostles who were nearest to our Lord pushed them back. On seeing this Jesus rebuked his apostles and said to them, "Do not keep the children away from me" (Mt. 19:14). When they gathered about him he embraced and blessed them with gentleness and kindness.

The poor, on seeing him poorly dressed and simple in his ways, without ostentation or haughtiness, felt at ease with him. They defended him against the rich and the proud when these calumniated and persecuted him, and he in his turn praised and blessed them on every occasion.

But how describe the gentleness of Jesus in his dealings with poor sinners: his gentleness with Mary Magdalene, his courteous solicitude in turning the Samaritan woman from her evil ways, his compassion in pardoning the adulterous woman taken in adultery, his charity in sitting down to eat with public sinners in order to win them over? Did not his enemies seize upon his great kindness as a pretext to persecute him, saying that his gentleness only encouraged others to transgress the law of Moses, and tauntingly called him the friend of sinners and publicans? With what kindness and concern did he not try to win over the heart of Judas who had decided to betray him, even when Jesus was washing his feet and calling him his friend! With what charity he asked God his Father to pardon his executioners, pleading their ignorance as an excuse.

How beautiful, meek and charitable is Jesus, the incarnate Wisdom! Beautiful from all eternity, he is the splendor of his Father, the unspotted mirror and image of his goodness. He is more beautiful than the sun and brighter than light itself. He is beautiful in time, being formed by the Holy Spirit pure and faultless, fair and immaculate, and during his life he charmed the eyes and hearts of men and is now the glory of the angels. How loving and gentle he is with men, and especially with poor sinners whom he came upon earth to seek out in a visible manner, and whom he still seeks in an invisible manner every day.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Homily for the Canonization of St. Faustina Kowalska on April 30, 2000**

This consoling message is addressed above all to those who, afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to give in to despair. To them the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from his heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope. How many souls have been consoled by the prayer "Jesus, I trust in you", which Providence intimated through Sr Faustina! This simple act of abandonment to Jesus dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life. Jezu, ufam tobie.

29th Day

REASONS TO LOVE JESUS, WISDOM INCARNATE

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Galatians 2:20**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #157-162**

The third circumstance is the amount, the grievousness and the duration of his sufferings. Their extent was so great that he is called "Man of sorrows". "A man of every sorrow in whom there is no soundness from the sole of the foot to the top of the head." (Is 53:3) This dear friend of our souls suffered in every way exteriorly and inwardly, in body and soul. He suffered even in material things, apart from the poverty of his birth, of his flight into Egypt and his stay there, and the poverty of his entire life; during his passion he was stripped of his garments by soldiers who shared them among themselves, and then fastened him naked to a cross without as much as a rag to cover his body.

He suffered in honor and reputation, for he was overwhelmed with insults and called a blasphemer, a revolutionary, a drunkard, a glutton and a possessed person.

He suffered in his wisdom when they classed him as an ignorant man and an impostor, and treated him as a fool and a madman.

He suffered in his power, for his enemies considered him a sorcerer and a magician who worked false miracles through a compact with the devil. He suffered in his disciples, one of whom bartered him for money and

betrayed him; another, their leader, denied him; and the rest abandoned him.

He suffered from all kinds of people; from kings, governors, judges, courtiers, soldiers, pontiffs, priests, officials of the temple and lay members; from Jews and gentiles, from men and women; in fact, from everyone. Even his Blessed Mother's presence added painfully to his sufferings for, as he was dying, he saw her standing at the foot of the cross engulfed in a sea of sorrow.

Moreover, our dear Savior suffered in every member of his body. His head was pierced with a crown of thorns. His hair and beard were torn out; his cheeks were buffeted; his face covered with spittle; his neck and arms bound with cords; his shoulders weighed down and bruised by the weight of the cross. His hands and feet were pierced by the nails, his side and heart opened by a lance; his whole body lacerated by more than five thousand strokes of the scourge, so that his almost fleshless bones became visible.

All his senses were almost immersed in a sea of sufferings. He suffered in his sight as he beheld the mocking faces of his enemies and the tears of grief of his friends. He suffered in his hearing as he listened to insulting words, false testimonies, calumnious statements and horrible blasphemies which evil tongues vomited against him. He suffered in his sense of smell by the foulness of the filth they spat into his face. He suffered in his sense of taste by a feverish thirst in which he was only given gall and vinegar to drink. He suffered in his sense of touch by the excruciating pain of the lashes, thorns and nails.

His most holy soul was grievously tormented because every sin committed by man was an outrage against his Father whom he loved infinitely; because sin was the cause of the damnation of so many souls who would be lost despite his passion and death; and because he had compassion not only for all men in general but for each one in particular, as he knew them all individually.

All these torments were much increased by the length of time they lasted, that is, from the first instance of his conception to the moment of his death, because all the sufferings he was to endure were, in the timeless view of his wisdom, always distinctly present to his mind.

To all these torments we must add the most cruel and the most fearful one, namely his abandonment upon the cross which caused him to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Apostolic Letter "SALVIFICI DOLORIS" (1984), n. 16**

"At any rate, Christ drew close above all to the world of human suffering through the fact of having taken this suffering upon his very self. During his public activity, he experienced not only fatigue, homelessness, misunderstanding even on the part of those closest to him, but, more than anything, he became progressively more and more isolated and encircled by hostility and the preparations for putting him to death. Christ is aware of this, and often speaks to his disciples of the sufferings and death that await him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise' (35). Christ goes towards his Passion and death with full awareness of the mission that he has to fulfil precisely in this way. Precisely by means of this suffering he must bring it about 'that man should not perish, but have eternal life'. Precisely by means of his Cross he must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of his Cross he must accomplish the work of salvation. This work, in the plan of eternal Love, has a redemptive character.

And therefore Christ severely reproves Peter when the latter wants to make him abandon the thoughts of suffering and of death on the Cross. And when, during his arrest in Gethsemane, the same Peter tries to defend him with the sword, Christ says, 'Put your sword back into its place... But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?' And he also says, 'Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?'. This response, like others that reappear in different points of the Gospel, shows how profoundly Christ was imbued by the thought that he had already expressed in the conversation with Nicodemus: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'. Christ goes toward his own suffering, aware of its saving power; he goes forward in obedience to the

Father, but primarily he is united to the Father in this love with which he has loved the world and man in the world. And for this reason Saint Paul will write of Christ: 'He loved me and gave himself for me.'

30th Day

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE CROSS

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: 1 Corinthians 1:18**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: LEW #173-175**

While waiting for that great day of the last judgement, Eternal Wisdom has decreed the Cross to be the sign, the emblem and the weapon of his faithful people.

He welcomes no child that does not bear its sign. He recognizes no disciple who is ashamed to display it, or who has not the courage to accept it, or who either drags it reluctantly or rejects it outright. He proclaims, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mt 16.24; Lk 9.23)

He enlists no soldier who does not take up the cross as the weapon to defend himself against all his enemies, to attack, to overthrow and to crush them. And he exclaims, "In this sign you will conquer. Have confidence, soldiers of mine, I am your leader; I have conquered my enemies by the cross (Jn 16:33), and by it you also will be victorious."

He has enclosed in the cross such an abundance of grace, life and happiness that only those who enjoy his special favor know about them. He often reveals to his friends his other secrets, as he did to his Apostles: "All things I have made known to you," (Jn 15:15) but he reveals the secrets of the Cross only to those who make themselves worthy by their great fidelity and great labors. One must be humble, little, self-disciplined, spiritual and despised by the world to learn the mystery of the Cross. The Cross even today is a source of scandal and an object of folly not only to Jews and pagans, Moslems and heretics, the worldly-wise and bad Catholics, but even to seemingly devout and very devout people. Yes, the Cross remains an object of scandal, folly, contempt and fear: not in theory, for never has so much been spoken or written about its beauty and its excellence than in these times; but in practice, because people lose courage, complain, excuse themselves, and run away as soon as a possibility of suffering arises.

"Father," said this incarnate Wisdom, when beholding in joyful rapture the beauty of the Cross, "I thank you for having hidden these things - the treasures and graces of my cross - from the wise and prudent of this world and revealed them to the little ones." (Lk 10:21)

If the knowledge of the mystery of the Cross is such a special grace, how great must be the enjoyment when one actually possesses it? This is a favor Eternal Wisdom bestows only on his best friends and only after they have prayed for it, longed for it, pleaded for it. However excellent is the gift of faith by which we please God, draw near to him and overcome our enemies, and without which we would be lost, the Cross is an even greater gift.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: Apostolic Letter “SALVIFICI DOLORIS” (1984), n. 18**

“Human suffering has reached its culmination in the Passion of Christ. And at the same time it has entered into a completely new dimension and a new order: it has been linked to love, to that love of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus, to that love which creates good, drawing it out by means of suffering, just as the supreme good of the Redemption of the world was drawn from the Cross of Christ, and from that Cross constantly takes its beginning. The Cross of Christ has become a source from which flow rivers of living water. In it we must also pose anew the question about the meaning of suffering, and read in it, to its very depths, the answer to this question.”

31st Day

THIS DEVOTION HELPS US TO IMITATE THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: Luke 2:51**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #139-143**

Our good Master stooped to enclose himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, a captive but loving slave, and to make himself subject to her for thirty years. As I said earlier, the human mind is bewildered when it reflects seriously upon this conduct of Incarnate Wisdom. He did not choose to give himself in a direct manner to the human race though he could easily have done so. He chose to come through the Virgin Mary. Thus he did not come into the world independently of others in the

flower of his manhood, but he came as a frail little child dependent on the care and attention of his Mother. Consumed with the desire to give glory to God, his Father, and save the human race, he saw no better or shorter way to do so than by submitting completely to Mary.

He did this not just for the first eight, ten or fifteen years of his life like other children, but for thirty years. He gave more glory to God, his Father, during all those years of submission and dependence than he would have given by spending them working miracles, preaching far and wide, and converting all mankind. Otherwise he would have done all these things.

What immeasurable glory then do we give to God when, following the example of Jesus, we submit to Mary! With such a convincing and well-known example before us, can we be so foolish as to believe that there is a better and shorter way of giving God glory than by submitting ourselves to Mary, as Jesus did?

Let me remind you again of the dependence shown by the three divine Persons on our Blessed Lady. Theirs is the example which fully justifies our dependence on her. The Father gave and still gives his Son only through her. He raises children for himself only through her. He dispenses his graces to us only through her. God the Son was prepared for mankind in general by her alone. Mary, in union with the Holy Spirit, still conceives him and brings him forth daily. It is through her alone that the Son distributes his merits and virtues. The Holy Spirit formed Jesus only through her, and he forms the members of the Mystical Body and dispenses his gifts and his favors through her.

With such a compelling example of the three divine Persons before us, we would be extremely perverse to ignore her and not consecrate ourselves to her. Indeed we would be blind if we did not see the need for Mary in approaching God and making our total offering to him.

Here are a few passages from the Fathers of the Church which I have chosen to prove what I have just said: "Mary has two sons, the one a God-man, the other, mere man. She is Mother of the first corporally and of the second spiritually" (St. Bonaventure and Origen).

"This is the will of God who willed that we should have all things through Mary. If then, we possess any hope or grace or gift of salvation, let us acknowledge that it comes to us through her" (St. Bernard).

"All the gifts, graces, virtues of the Holy Spirit are distributed by the hands of Mary, to whom she wills, when she wills, as she wills, and in the measure she wills" (St. Bernardine).

"As you were not worthy that anything divine should be given to you, all graces were given to Mary so that you might receive through her all graces you would not otherwise receive" (St. Bernard).

St. Bernard tells us that God, seeing that we are unworthy to receive his graces directly from him, gives them to Mary so that we might receive from her all that he decides to give us. His glory is achieved when he receives through Mary the gratitude, respect and love we owe him in return for his gifts to us. It is only right then that we should imitate his conduct, "in order", as St. Bernard again says, "that grace might return to its author by the same channel through which it came to us".

This is what we do by this devotion. We offer and consecrate all we are and all we possess to the Blessed Virgin in order that our Lord may receive through her as intermediary the glory and gratitude that we owe to him. We deem ourselves unworthy and unfit to approach his infinite majesty on our own, and so we avail ourselves of Mary's intercession.

Moreover, this devotion is an expression of great humility, a virtue which God loves above all others. A person who exalts himself debases God, and a person who humbles himself exalts God. "God opposes the proud, but gives his graces to the humble." If you humble yourself, convinced that you are unworthy to appear before him, or even to approach him, he condescends to come down to you. He is pleased to be with you and exalts you in spite of yourself. But, on the other hand, if you venture to go towards God blindly without a mediator, he vanishes and is nowhere to be found. How dearly he loves the humble of heart! It is to such humility that this devotion leads us, for it teaches us never to go alone directly to our Lord, however gentle and merciful though he may be, but always to use Mary's power of intercession, whether we want to enter his presence, speak to him, be near him, offer him something, seek union with him or consecrate ourselves to him.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, December 10, 1997**

One might think that Jesus, having in himself the fullness of divinity, had no need of educators. But the mystery of the Incarnation reveals to us that the Son of God came into the world in a human condition totally similar to ours, except in sin (cf Heb 4:15). As it happens with every human being, the growth of Jesus, from his childhood to his adulthood (cf Lk 2:40), required the educational action of his parents.

The Gospel of St. Luke, particularly attentive to the period of childhood, narrates that Jesus in Nazareth was subject to Joseph and Mary (cf Lk 2:51). This dependence shows us that Jesus was willing to receive and was open to the educational work of his mother and Joseph, who also fulfilled their mission by virtue of the docility that he always manifested.

The special gifts, with which God had filled Mary, made her especially fit to fulfill the mission of mother and educator. In the concrete circumstances of each day, Jesus could find in her a model to follow and imitate, and an example of perfect love for God and for his brothers and sisters.

In addition to Mary's motherly presence, Jesus could count on the father figure of Joseph, a righteous man (cf Mt 1:19), who guaranteed the necessary balance of educational action. In the role of father, Joseph cooperated with his wife so that the house of Nazareth would be an environment favorable to the growth and personal maturation of the Savior of humanity. Then, by teaching him the hard work of a carpenter, Joseph allowed Jesus to enter the world of work and social life.

The few elements that the gospel offers do not allow us to know and fully appreciate the modalities of the pedagogical action of Mary with respect to her divine Son. Certainly she was, along with Joseph, who introduced Jesus into the rites and prescriptions of Moses, in praying to the God of the covenant through the use of the psalms and in the history of the people of Israel, centered on the exodus from Egypt. From her and Joseph Jesus learned to frequent the synagogue and to make the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the occasion of Easter.

Looking at the results, we can certainly deduce that Mary's educational work was very effective and profound, and that she found a very fertile ground in Jesus' human psychology.

The educational mission of Mary, directed to such a unique child, presents some particular characteristics with respect to the role played by other mothers. She guaranteed only favorable conditions so that the dynamisms and essential values of growth, already present in the child, could be realized. For example, the fact that in Jesus there was no sin demanded from Mary an always positive orientation, excluding interventions aimed at correcting. Furthermore, although it was his mother who introduced Jesus into the culture and traditions of the people of Israel, it will be he who reveals, from the episode of his loss and encounter in the temple, his full awareness of being the Son of God, sent to radiate the truth in the world, exclusively following the will of the Father. As a 'teacher' of her Son, Mary thus became a humble disciple of the divine Master, begotten by her.

The greatness of the task entrusted to the Virgin Mother remains: she helps her Son Jesus to grow, from childhood to adulthood, "in wisdom, in stature and in grace" (Lk 2, 52) and to be formed for his mission.

32nd Day

JESUS CHRIST, THE ULTIMATE END OF MARIAN DEVOTION

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 15:6**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: TD #61-66**

First principle: Christ must be the ultimate end of all devotions Jesus, our Savior, true God and true man must be the ultimate end of all our other devotions; otherwise they would be false and misleading. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of everything. "We labor," says St. Paul, "only to make all men perfect in Jesus Christ." For in him alone dwells the entire fullness of the divinity and the complete fullness of grace, virtue and perfection...

We are given no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. God has laid no other foundation for our salvation, perfection and glory than Jesus. Every edifice which is not built on that firm rock, is founded upon shifting sands and will certainly fall sooner or later. Every one of the faithful who is not united to him is like a branch broken from the stem of

the vine. It falls and withers and is fit only to be burnt. If we live in Jesus and Jesus lives in us, we need not fear damnation. Neither angels in heaven nor men on earth, nor devils in hell, no creature whatever can harm us, for no creature can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Through him, with him and in him, we can do all things and render all honor and glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit; we can make ourselves perfect and be for our neighbor a fragrance of eternal life.

If then we are establishing sound devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ. If devotion to our Lady distracted us from our Lord, we would have to reject it as an illusion of the devil. But this is far from being the case. As I have already shown and will show again later on, this devotion is necessary, simply and solely because it is a way of reaching Jesus perfectly, loving him tenderly, and serving him faithfully.

Here I turn to you for a moment, dear Jesus, to complain lovingly to your divine Majesty that the majority of Christians, and even some of the most learned among them, do not recognize the necessary bond that unites you and your Blessed Mother. Lord, you are always with Mary and Mary is always with you. She can never be without you because then she would cease to be what she is. She is so completely transformed into you by grace that she no longer lives, she no longer exists, because you alone, dear Jesus, live and reign in her more perfectly than in all the angels and saints. If we only knew the glory and the love given to you by this wonderful creature, our feelings for you and for her would be far different from those we have now. So intimately is she united to you that it would be easier to separate light from the sun, and heat from the fire. I go further, it would even be easier to separate all the angels and saints from you than Mary; for she loves you ardently, and glorifies you more perfectly than all your other creatures put together.

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, January 29, 1997**

La unión entre Jesús y la «llena de gracia» supera con mucho la que normalmente existe entre una madre y un hijo, porque está arraigada en

una particular condición sobrenatural y está reforzada por la especial conformidad de ambos con la voluntad divina.

33rd Day

THE LIFE OF CHRIST GROWING IN US THROUGH TOTAL MARIAN CONSECRATION

- **From the Heart of the Word of God: John 14:23**
- **From the Heart of St. Louis de Montfort: SM (The Secret of Mary) 70-77**

Have you understood with the help of the Holy Spirit what I have tried to explain in the preceding pages? If so, be thankful to God. It is a secret of which very few people are aware.

If you have discovered this treasure in the field of Mary, this pearl of great price, you should sell all you have to purchase it. You must offer yourself to Mary, happily lose yourself in her, only to find God in her. If the Holy Spirit has planted in your soul the true Tree of Life, which is the devotion that I have just explained, you should see carefully to its cultivation, so that it will yield its fruit in due season. This devotion is like the mustard seed of the Gospel, which is indeed the smallest of all seeds, but nevertheless it grows into a big plant, shooting up so high that the birds of the air, that is, the elect, come and make their nest in its branches. They repose there, shaded from the heat of the sun, and safely hidden from beasts of prey.

HOW TO CULTIVATE IT: Some suggestions

a) Christian Freedom

This tree, once planted in a docile heart, requires fresh air and no human support. Being of heavenly origin, it must be uninfluenced by any creature, since a creature might hinder it from rising up towards God who created it. Hence you must not rely on your own endeavors or your natural talents or your personal standing or the guidance of men. You must resort to Mary, relying solely on her help.

b) Contemplative Gaze

The person in whose soul this tree has taken root must, like a good gardener, watch over it and protect it. For this tree, having life and capable of producing the fruit of life, should be raised and tended with

enduring care and attention of soul. A soul that desires to be holy will make this its chief aim and occupation.

c) Evangelical Renunciation

Whatever is likely to choke the tree or in the course of time prevent its yielding fruit, such as thorns and thistles, must be cut away and rooted out. This means that by self-denial and self-discipline you must sedulously cut short and even give up all empty pleasures and useless dealings with other creatures. In other words, you must crucify the flesh, keep a guard over the tongue, and mortify the bodily senses.

d) Away with Selfishness!

You must guard against grubs doing harm to the tree. These parasites are love of self and love of comfort, and they eat away the green foliage of the Tree and frustrate the fair hope it offered of yielding good fruit; for love of self is incompatible with love of Mary.

e) Fight Against Sin

You must not allow this tree to be damaged by destructive animals, that is, by sins, for they may cause its death simply by their contact. They must not be allowed even to breathe upon the Tree, because their mere breath, that is, venial sins, which are most dangerous when we do not trouble ourselves about them.

f) Christian Life

It is also necessary to water this Tree regularly with your Communion, Masses and other public and private prayers. Otherwise it will not continue bearing fruit.

g) Fidelity Amidst Adversity

Yet you need not be alarmed when the winds blow and shake this tree, for it must happen that the storm-winds of temptation will threaten to bring it down, and snow and frost tend to smother it. By this we mean that this devotion to our Blessed Lady will surely be called into question and attacked. But as long as we continue steadfastly in tending it, we have nothing to fear.

h) Jesus Christ, Fruit of Mary

Chosen soul, provided you thus carefully cultivate the Tree of Life, which has been freshly planted in your soul by the Holy Spirit, I can assure you

that in a short time it will grow so tall that the birds of the air will make their home in it. It will become such a good tree that it will yield in due season the sweet and adorable Fruit of honor and grace, which is Jesus, who has always been and will always be the only fruit of Mary.

Happy is that soul in which Mary, the Tree of Life, is planted. Happier still is the soul in which she has been able to grow and blossom. Happier again is the soul in which she brings forth her fruit. But happiest of all is the soul which savors the sweetness of Mary's fruit and preserves it up till death and then beyond to all eternity. Amen. "Let him who possesses it, hold fast to it."

- **From the heart of Saint John Paul II: General Audience, May 2, 1990**

In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* I wrote: "The Holy Spirit has already descended upon Her, who has become his faithful wife in the annunciation, welcoming the Word of the true God, giving 'the homage of understanding and will, and willingly nodding to the revelation made by Him, even more, abandoning himself fully to God through the 'obedience of faith', by which he responded to the angel: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word'" (No. 26).

Mary, with this act and gesture, totally different from that of Eve, becomes, in the spiritual history of humanity, the new Bride, the new Eve, the Mother of the living, as doctors and fathers will often say, of the Church. She will be the type and model, in the New Covenant, of the nuptial union of the Holy Spirit with individuals and with the entire human community, far beyond the scope of ancient Israel: all individuals and all peoples will be called to receive the gift and to benefit from it in the new community of believers who have received "power to become sons of God" (Jn 1:12) and in baptism have been reborn "of the Spirit" (Jn 3:3), becoming part of the family of God.



METHODS FOR SAYING THE ROSARY

St. Louis Marie de Montfort

Opening Prayer

I unite with all the saints in heaven and with all the just on earth; I unite with you, my Jesus, to praise your holy Mother worthily and to praise you in her and by her. I renounce all the distractions that may come to me while I am saying this Rosary. O Blessed Virgin Mary, we offer you this creed to honor the faith you had upon earth and to ask you to permit us to share in that same faith. O Lord, we offer you this Our Father to adore you in your oneness and to acknowledge you as the first cause and the last end of all things. Most Holy Trinity, we offer you these three Hail Mary to thank you for all the graces which you have given to Mary and which you have given to us through her intercession.

Our Father, three Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father....

Offering of the Decades

Joyful Mysteries (Mondays and Saturdays)

First decade: Annunciation

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this first decade in honor of your Incarnation. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for humility of heart.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of the Incarnation come into me and make me truly humble.

Second decade: The Visitation

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this second decade in honor of the Visitation of your holy Mother to her cousin Saint Elizabeth. Through this mystery and the intercession of Mary we ask for a perfect love of our neighbor.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of the Visitation come into me and make me truly charitable.

Third decade: The Birth of Our Lord

We offer you, Child Jesus, this third decade in honor of your holy Birth. Through this mystery and the intercession of your blessed Mother we ask for detachment from the things of this world, love of poverty and love of the poor.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the Birth of Jesus come into me and make me truly poor in spirit.

Fourth decade: The Presentation

We offer you, O Lord Jesus, this fourth decade in honor of your presentation in the temple by the hands of Mary. Through this mystery and the intercession of your blessed Mother we ask for the gift of wisdom and purity of heart and body.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of the presentation come into me and make me truly wise and pure.

Fifth decade: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this fifth decade to honor Mary's finding you in the temple among the learned men after she had lost you. Through this mystery and the intercession of your blessed Mother we ask you to convert us and all sinners, heretics, schismatics and pagans.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of the Finding of Jesus in the temple come into me that I may be truly converted.

Luminous Mysteries (Thursdays)

First decade: Baptism of Jesus

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this decade in honor Baptism in the Jordan; and we ask you through this mystery, intercession of your Most Holy Mother, great fidelity to the promises of our baptism.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

The graces of the mystery of the Baptism of Jesus, descend to our souls. Amen.

Second decade: The weddings of Cana

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of your revelation at the Wedding of Cana and we ask you for this mystery and for the intercession of your Most Holy Mother a deep faith in you Amen.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

The graces of the mystery of the wedding at Cana, descend to our souls. Amen.

Third decade: The announcement of the Kingdom

We offer you, Lord Jesus this decade in honor to the announcement of Kingdom and the invitation to conversion; and we ask for the mystery and for the intercession of your Most Holy Mother the grace of sincere repentance. Amen.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

The graces of the mystery of the announcement of the Kingdom, or our souls. Amen.

Fourth decade: The Transfiguration

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this decade Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and we ask you for this honor and through the intercession of your most holy Mother a great docility to all your teachings. Amen.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

The graces of the mystery descend to our souls. Amen.

Fifth decade: The institution of the Eucharist

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of the institution of the Eucharist; and we ask you for this mystery and through the intercession of our Most Holy Mother, a love deep to this great mystery of our faith.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

The graces of the mystery of the Eucharist, descend to our souls. Amen.

Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesdays and Fridays)**First decade: The Agony at the Garden**

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this sixth decade in honor of your intense agony in the garden of Olives. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for perfect sorrow for our sins and perfect conformity to your holy will.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the Agony of Jesus come into me and make me truly contrite and perfectly obedient to the will of God.

Second Decade: The Scourging at the Pilar

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this seventh decade in honor of your cruel Scourging. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for the grace to mortify our senses.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the Scourging of Jesus come into me and make me truly mortified

Thirds decade: The Crowning of Thorns

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this eighth decade in honor of being crowned with Thorns. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for a deep contempt of the world.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of Our Lord's Crowning with Thorns come into me and make me truly opposed to the world.

Fourth decade: The Carrying of the Cross

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this ninth decade in honor of your carrying the Cross. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for great patience in carrying our cross after you all the days of our life.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the mystery of the carrying of the Cross come into me and make me truly patient.

Fifth decade: The Crucifixion

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this tenth decade in honor of your Crucifixion on Mount Calvary. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for a great horror of sin, a love for the Cross and the grace of a holy death for us and for those who are now in their last agony.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

May the grace of the Death and Passion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ come into me and make me truly holy.

Glorious Mysteries (Wednesdays and Sundays)

First decade: The Resurrection

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this eleventh decade in honor of your triumphant Resurrection. Through this mystery and through the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for a lively faith.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

May the grace of the Resurrection come into me and make me truly faithful.

Second decade: The Ascension

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this twelfth decade in honor of your glorious Ascension. Through this mystery and the intercession of your holy Mother we ask for a firm hope and a great longing for heaven.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

May the grace of the mystery of the Ascension of Our Lord come into me and prepare me for heaven.

Third decade: The Coming of the Spirit at Pentecost

We offer you, O Holy Spirit, this thirteenth decade in honor of the mystery of Pentecost. Through this mystery and the intercession of Mary, your most holy spouse, we ask for your holy wisdom that we may know, taste and practice your truth and share it with everyone.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

May the grace of Pentecost come into me and make me truly wise in the eyes of God.

Fourth decade: The Assumption

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this fourteenth decade in honour of the Immaculate Conception of your holy Mother and her assumption into heaven body and soul. Through these two mysteries and her intercession we ask for the gift of true devotion to her in order to live a good life and have a happy death.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

May the grace of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary come into me and make me truly devoted to her.

Fifth decade: The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

We offer you, Lord Jesus, this fifteenth and last decade in honor of the Crowning in glory of your holy Mother in heaven. Through this mystery and her intercession, we ask for perseverance and an increase in virtue up to the moment of our death and thereafter the eternal crown that is prepared for us. We ask for the same grace for all the just and all our benefactors.

Our Father, ten Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

Closing Prayer

I greet you, Mary, most kind Daughter of the Eternal Father, Admirable Mother of the Son, Most Faithful Spouse of the Holy Spirit, comfortable Temple of the Most Holy Trinity. I greet you, sovereign Princess, to whom everything is submitted in Heaven and on earth. I greet you, safe refuge of sinners, our Lady of mercy, who has never rejected anyone. As sinful as I am, I prostrate myself in your presence, pleading with you for the good Jesus, your beloved Son, the contrition and forgiveness of all my sins, together with divine Wisdom. I consecrate myself to You completely and with all that I have. I choose you from today for my Mother and Lady. Treat me, then, as the last of your children and the most submissive of your servants. Listen, my Princess, listen to the sighs of a heart that wants to love you and serve you faithfully. Let it not be said that, of all those who have appealed to You, I am the first to have been abandoned. My hope, my life, my faithful and immaculate Virgin Mary, listen to me, defend me, feed me, instruct me and save me! Amen.

• **LITANY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*

Christ, have mercy on us. **R.** *Christ, have mercy on us.*

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*

Jesus, graciously hear us. **R.** *Jesus, graciously hear us.*

God the Father of Heaven, **R.** *Have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **R.**

God the Holy Spirit, **R.**

Holy Trinity, One God, **R.**

Divine Essence, one true God, **R.**

Spirit of the Lord who planned the world at the beginning of creation, **R.**

Spirit which through your inspiration, the prophets have spoken, **R.**

Spirit which through your anointing, teaches us all things, **R.**

Spirit that testifies to Christ, **R.**

Spirit of truth that instructs us in all things, **R.**

Spirit that descended upon Mary, **R.**

Spirit that fills the orb, **R.**

Spirit of God that lives within us, **R.**

Spirit of wisdom and understanding, **R.**

Spirit of counsel and fortitude, **R.**

Spirit of knowledge and piety, **R.**

Spirit of the fear of the Lord, **R.**

Spirit of grace and mercy, **R.**

Spirit of strength, dilection, and sobriety, **R.**

Spirit of faith, hope, and love, **R.**

Spirit of humility and chastity, **R.**

Spirit of kindness and meekness, **R.**

Spirit of grace multiform, **R.**

Spirit that scrutinizes even the secrets of God, **R.**

Spirit that prays for us with ineffable moans, **R.**

Spirit, who rested on Jesus at his baptism, **R.**

Spirit in whom we are reborn at baptism, **R.**

Spirit that spreads the charity within us, **R.**

Spirit of adoption of the children of God, **R.**

Spirit, who as a tongue of fire rested on and filled the apostles, **R.**

Spirit, who descended on the day of Pentecost, **R.**

Spirit that distributes your gifts to each one according to your will, **R.**

Most loving Father, **R.** *forgive us.*

Divine Word, **R.** *have pity on us.*

From all evil, **R.** *Deliver us, O Holy Spirit.*

From all sins, **R.**

From the crafts and assaults of the devil, **R.**

From pride and despair, **R.**

From unbelief and hardness of heart, **R.**

From obstinacy and impenitence, **R.**

From uncleanness of heart and life, **R.**

From fornication, **R.**

From all evil spirits, **R.**

By the eternal procession of the Father and the Son, **R.**

By the incarnation, **R.**

By your decent upon Jesus in the Jordan, **R.**

By your advent to the disciples, **R.**

In the day of judgement, **R.**

As sinner, **R.** We pray to the Lord.

So that as we live by the Spirit, we may also work for the Spirit, **R.**

So that, remembering that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, we may not profane ourselves, **R.**

So that, living according to the Spirit, we may dominate the desires of the flesh, **R.**

So that we may not cause grief for the Holy Spirit of God, **R.**

So that we may be solicitous in keeping the unity of the Spirit in the link of peace, **R.**

So that we may not believe all spirits, **R.**

So that we may discern if the spirits are of God, **R.**

So that it may please you to renew us in the spirit of rectitude, **R.**

So that you may confirm us with your sovereign Spirit, **R.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Forgive us, Lord.*

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Graciously hear us.*

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Have mercy on us.*

Let us Pray: God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant us by the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen.

• **LITANY OF THE SWEET NAME OF JESUS**

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*
Christ, have mercy on us. **R.** *Christ, have mercy on us.*
Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*
Jesus, graciously hear us. **R.** *Jesus, graciously hear us.*

God the Father of Heaven, **R.** *Have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **R.**
God the Holy Spirit, **R.**
Holy Trinity, one God, **R.**
Jesus, Son of the living God, **R.**
Jesus, splendor of the Father, **R.**
Jesus, brightness of eternal light. **R.**
Jesus, King of glory. **R.**
Jesus, sun of justice. **R.**
Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary. **R.**
Jesus, most amiable. **R.**
Jesus, most admirable. **R.**
Jesus, the mighty God. **R.**
Jesus, Father of the world to come. **R.**
Jesus, angel of great counsel. **R.**
Jesus, most powerful. **R.**
Jesus, most patient. **R.**
Jesus, most obedient. **R.**
Jesus, meek and humble of heart. **R.**
Jesus, lover of chastity. **R.**
Jesus, lover of us. **R.**
Jesus, God of peace. **R.**
Jesus, author of life. **R.**
Jesus, example of virtues. **R.**
Jesus, zealous lover of souls. **R.**
Jesus, our God. **R.**
Jesus, our refuge. **R.**
Jesus, father of the poor. **R.**

Jesus, treasure of the faithful. **R.**
Jesus, good Shepherd. **R.**
Jesus, true light. **R.**
Jesus, eternal wisdom. **R.**
Jesus, infinite goodness. **R.**
Jesus, our way and our life. **R.**
Jesus, joy of Angels. **R.**
Jesus, King of the Patriarchs. **R.**
Jesus, Master of the Apostles. **R.**
Jesus, teacher of the Evangelists. **R.**
Jesus, strength of Martyrs. **R.**
Jesus, light of Confessors. **R.**
Jesus, purity of Virgins. **R.**
Jesus, crown of Saints. **R.**

Be merciful, **R.** *spare us, O Jesus.*
Be merciful, **R.** *graciously hear us, O Jesus.*

From all evil, **R.** *deliver us, O Jesus.*
From all sin, **R.**
From Your wrath, **R.**
From the snares of the devil. **R.**
From the spirit of fornication. **R.**
From everlasting death. **R.**
From the neglect of Your inspirations. **R.**
By the mystery of Your holy Incarnation. **R.**
By Your Nativity. **R.**
By Your Infancy. **R.**
By Your most divine Life. **R.**
By Your labors. **R.**
By Your agony and passion. **R.**
By Your cross and dereliction. **R.**
By Your sufferings. **R.**
By Your death and burial. **R.**
By Your Resurrection. **R.**
By Your Ascension. **R.**
By Your institution of the most Holy Eucharist. **R.**
By Your joys. **R.**
By Your glory. **R.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R. Forgive us, Lord.**
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R. Graciously hear us.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R. Have mercy on us.**

Blessed be the name of the Lord, **R. Now and forever!**

Let us pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, You have said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you." Grant, we beg of You, to us who ask it, the gift of Your most divine love, that we may ever love You with our whole heart, in word and deed, and never cease praising You.

• **LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Lord, have mercy on us. **R. Lord, have mercy on us.**
Christ, have mercy on us. **R. Christ, have mercy on us.**
Lord, have mercy on us. **R. Lord, have mercy on us.**
Jesus, graciously hear us. **R. Jesus, graciously hear us.**

God, the Father of heaven, **R. Have mercy on us.**
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, **R.**
God, the Holy Spirit, **R.**
Holy Trinity, One God, **R.**

Holy Mary, **R. pray for us.**
Holy Mother of God, **R.**
Holy Virgin of virgins, **R.**
Mother of Christ, **R.**
Mother of divine grace, **R.**
Mother most pure, **R.**
Mother most chaste, **R.**
Mother inviolate, **R.**
Mother undefiled, **R.**
Mother most amiable, **R.**
Mother most admirable, **R.**
Mother of good counsel, **R.**
Mother of our Creator, **R.**

Mother of our Savior, **R.**
Virgin most prudent, **R.**
Virgin most venerable, **R.**
Virgin most renowned, **R.**
Virgin most powerful, **R.**
Virgin most merciful, **R.**
Virgin most faithful, **R.**
Mirror of justice, **R.**
Seat of wisdom, **R.**
Cause of our joy, **R.**
Spiritual vessel, **R.**
Vessel of honor, **R.**
Singular vessel of devotion, **R.**
Mystical rose, **R.**
Tower of David, **R.**
Tower of ivory, **R.**
House of gold, **R.**
Ark of the covenant, **R.**
Gate of Heaven, **R.**
Morning star, **R.**
Health of the sick, **R.**
Refuge of sinners, **R.**
Comforter of the afflicted, **R.**
Help of Christians, **R.**
Queen of angels, **R.**
Queen of patriarchs, **R.**
Queen of prophets, **R.**
Queen of apostles, **R.**
Queen of martyrs, **R.**
Queen of confessors, **R.**
Queen of virgins, **R.**
Queen of all saints, **R.**
Queen conceived without original sin, **R.**
Queen assumed into heaven, **R.**
Queen of the most holy Rosary, **R.**
Queen of peace. **R.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Forgive us, Lord.*
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Graciously hear us.*

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, **R.** *Have mercy on us.*

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray: Grant, O Lord God, we beseech Thee, that we Thy servants may rejoice in continual health of mind and body; and, through the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, may be freed from present sorrow, and enjoy eternal gladness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

• **LITANY OF ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT**

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*

Christ, have mercy on us. **R.** *Christ, have mercy on us.*

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** *Lord, have mercy on us.*

Jesus, graciously hear us. **R.** *Jesus, graciously hear us.*

God, the Father of heaven, **R.** *Have mercy on us.*

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, **R.**

God, the Holy Spirit, **R.**

Holy Trinity, One God, **R.**

Holy Mary, **R.** *pray for us*

Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, **R.**

Faithful disciple of Christ, incarnate Wisdom, **R.**

Apostle of the Cross and the Rosary, **R.**

Loving slave of Jesus in Mary, **R.**

Doctor of perfect devotion to Mary, **R.**

Man of solitude and prayer, **R.**

Marvel of trust in divine Providence, **R.**

Model priests and missionaries, **R.**

Founder of religious congregations, **R.**

Former of laity for the service of the Church, **R.**

Friend of the poor and the sick, **R.**

Christian Educator of the young, **R.**

Obtain for us the spirit of faith, **R.** *Blessed Father de Montfort*

Obtain for us the spirit of prayer, **R.**
Obtain for us devotion to the cross, **R.**
Obtain for us your devotion to Mary, **R.**
Obtain for us your love of the Church, **R.**
Obtain for us your courage in trials, **R.**
Obtain for us a missionary spirit, **R.**

V. Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, **R.** *Pray for us*

Let us pray: O God, you inspired Saint Louis Marie with a fervent desire to preach Christ's gospel to your people. By his prayers on our behalf, and under the guidance of the Virgin Mary, may we always be docile to the Spirit, and tireless apostles of your kingdom in the service of our needy brothers and sisters. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

VARIOUS PRAYERS

- **Oh Jesus, Living in Mary**

O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in your servants, in the spirit of holiness, in the fullness of your power, in the perfection of your ways, in the truth of your virtues, in the communion of your mysteries. Rule over every adverse power, in your Spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen.

- **Veni, Creator Spiritus**

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
and in our souls take up Thy rest;
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.
O comforter, to Thee we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
and sweet anointing from above.

Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;
Thou, finger of God's hand we own;
Thou, promise of the Father, Thou
Who dost the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our sense from above,
and make our hearts o'erflow with love;
with patience firm and virtue high
the weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,
and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,
turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow
the Father and the Son to know;
and Thee, through endless times confessed,
of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,
henceforth by all in earth and heaven. Amen.

- **Reciting the Magnificat**

“To thank God for the graces he has given to our Lady, her consecrated ones will frequently say the Magnificat, following the example of Blessed Marie d'Oignies and several other saints. The Magnificat is the only prayer we have which was composed by our Lady, or rather, composed by Jesus in her, for it was he who spoke through her lips. It is the greatest offering of praise that God ever received under the law of grace. On the one hand, it is the most humble hymn of thanksgiving and, on the other, it is the most sublime and exalted.” (TD #255)
Reciting the Magnificat unites us to the whole Church that proclaims it daily in its liturgy and to all the saints who in Heaven and on earth give thanks to God and sing his goodness and his mercy with the same thanksgiving of Mary. (see Redemptoris Mater #35)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.

- **Ave, Maris Stella**

Hail, bright star of ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
Ever sinless Virgin,
Gate of heavenly rest.

Taking that sweet Ave
Which from Gabriel came,
Peace confirm within us,
Changing Eve's name.

Break the sinners' fetters,
make our blindness day,
Chase all evils from us,
for all blessings pray.

Show thyself a Mother,
may the Word divine
born for us thine Infant
hear our prayers through thine.

Virgin all excelling,
mildest of the mild,
free from guilt preserve us
meek and undefiled.

Keep our life all spotless,
make our way secure
till we find in Jesus,
joy for evermore.

Praise to God the Father,
honor to the Son,
in the Holy Spirit,
be the glory one. Amen.

- **The Angelus**

The Church prays the Angelus three times a day—Morning, Noon, and Evening—repeating the greeting of the Angel to Mary and the fact that the Son of God became man, out of love, for our sake.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

R. *And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

Hail Mary...

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord,

R. *Let it be done unto me according to your Word.*

Hail Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh,

R. *And dwelt among us.*

Hail Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts: that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be

brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

- **Regina Caelis**

V. Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

R. *For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.*

V. Has risen, as he said, alleluia.

R. *Pray for us to God, alleluia.*

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. *For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.*

Let us pray. O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

- **Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin Mary Chaplet**

Based on the Marian interpretation of the Book of Revelation, many saints have composed chaplets of 12 stars in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Luis de Montfort recommends that we should pray daily “the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, which is composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys in honor of the twelve glorious privileges of Mary.” (TD #234) St. Luis—in his minor writings—offers the following formula that adorns the Our Fathers and Hail Marys with a litany of invocation which sing the greatness and excellence, the power and goodness of the Mother of God and of her children and servants.

Allow me to praise you, O Holy Virgin,
Give me strength against your enemies.

a) Crown of Excellence

Our Father
Hail Mary

V. Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, who didst bear the Lord, the Creator of the world;

R. *Thou didst give birth to Him Who made thee, and remainest a Virgin forever.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;

R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. O holy and immaculate Virgin, I know not with what praise to extol thee,

R. *since thou didst bear in thy womb the very One Whom the Heavens cannot contain.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;

R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Thou are all fair, O Virgin Mary,

R. *and there is no stain in thee.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;

R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Thy virtues, O Virgin,

R. *surpass the stars in number.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;

R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Glory Be

b) Crown of Power

Our Father

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O Empress of the world!

R. *Bring us with thee to the joys of Heaven.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;

R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O treasure house of the Lord's graces!

R. *Grant us a share in thy riches.*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O Mediatrix between God and man!
R. *Through thee may the Almighty be favorable to us.*
V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee who destroyest heresies and crushest demons!
R. *Be thou our loving guide.*
V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*
Glory Be

c) The Crown of Goodness

Our Father

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O refuge of sinners!
R. *Intercede for us with God.*
V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O Mother of orphans!
R. *Render the Almighty favorable to us.*
V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee, O joy of the just!
R. *Lead us with thee to the joys of Heaven.*
V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*

Hail Mary

V. Glory be to thee who are ever ready to assist us in life and death!
R. *Lead us with thee to the kingdom of Heaven!*

V. Rejoice, O Virgin Mary;
R. *Rejoice a thousand times!*
Glory Be

Let us Pray:

Hail, Mary, Daughter of God the Father;

Hail, Mary, Mother of God the Son;

Hail, Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost;

Hail, Mary, Temple of the most Holy Trinity;

Hail, Mary, my Mistress, my treasure, my joy, Queen of my heart;
my Mother, my life, my sweetness, my dearest hope --- yea, my heart
and my soul!

I am all thine and all that I have is Thine, O Virgin blessed above all
things!

Let thy soul be in me to magnify the Lord; let thy spirit be in me to
rejoice in God.

Set thyself, O faithful Virgin, as a seal upon my heart,
that in thee and through thee I may be found faithful to God.

Receive me, O gracious Virgin, among those whom thou lovest and
teachest, whom thou leadest, nourishest and protectest as thy children.

Grant that for love of thee I may despise all earthly consolations and
ever cling to those of Heaven until, through thee, His faithful spouse,
Jesus Christ thy Son be formed in me for the glory of the Father.

Amen.



ACT OF TOTAL CONSECRATION TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

O ETERNAL and incarnate Wisdom! O sweetest and most adorable Jesus! True God and true man, only Son of the Eternal Father, and of Mary, always virgin!

I adore Thee profoundly in the bosom and splendors of Thy Father during eternity; and I adore Thee also in the virginal bosom of Mary, Thy most worthy Mother, in the time of Thine incarnation.

I give Thee thanks for that Thou hast annihilated Thyself, taking the form of a slave in order to rescue me from the cruel slavery of the devil.

I praise and glorify Thee for that Thou hast been pleased to submit Thyself to Mary, Thy holy Mother, in all things, in order to make me Thy faithful slave through her.

But, alas! Ungrateful and faithless as I have been, I have not kept the promises which I made so solemnly to Thee in my Baptism; I have not fulfilled my obligations; I do not deserve to be called Thy child, nor yet Thy slave; and as there is nothing in me which does not merit Thine anger and Thy repulse, I dare not come by myself before Thy most holy and august Majesty.

It is on this account that I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me for a mediatrix with Thee. It is through her that I hope to obtain of Thee contrition, the pardon of my sins, and the acquisition and preservation of wisdom.

Hail, then, O immaculate Mary, living tabernacle of the Divinity, where the Eternal Wisdom willed to be hidden and to be adored by angels and by men! Hail, O Queen of Heaven and earth, to whose empire everything is subject which is under God.

Hail, O sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails no one. Hear the desires which I have of the Divine Wisdom; and for that end receive the vows and offerings which in my lowliness I present to thee.

I, _____, a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

In the presence of all the heavenly court I choose thee this day for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God in time and in eternity.

Receive, O benignant Virgin, this little offering of my slavery, in honor of, and in union with, that subjection which the Eternal Wisdom deigned to have to thy maternity; in homage to the power which both of you have over this poor sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity has favored thee.

I declare that I wish henceforth, as thy true slave, to seek thy honor and to obey thee in all things.

O admirable Mother, present me to thy dear Son as His eternal slave, so that as He has redeemed me by thee, by thee He may receive me!

O Mother of mercy, grant me the grace to obtain the true Wisdom of God; and for that end receive me among those whom thou lovest and teachest, whom thou ledest, nourishest and protectest as thy children and thy slaves.

O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator and slave of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain, by thine intercession and by thine example, to the fullness of His age on earth and of His glory in Heaven. Amen.



HOW TO LIVE THE TOTUS TUUS

Saint Luis Maria, as a wise pedagogue, warns us that "it is not enough that you consecrate yourself to Mary in slave quality once for your whole life, not even renew the consecration every month or every week ... The difficulty lies in entering into the spirit of this devotion, which will place you in an attitude of absolute availability and slavery towards Mary and, through her, of Jesus Christ ", SM 44. Therefore, the various 'external and internal' practices or means, to achieve this wonderful goal.

These practices or inner attitudes that we mentioned are: do all our actions for Mary, with Mary, in Mary and for Mary to make them better for Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus, See TD #257. For what is sought with this Total Consecration is living with "a total and absolute availability to Mary", as "slaves of love, and through her, of Jesus Christ ", SM 44; 28; VD 55.67.68.72

It is, therefore, a spiritual itinerary, of a spirituality that embraces the whole person and is carried out throughout life.

Through Mary: this is to say, according to the spirit of Mary ... that is the Holy Spirit of God, see VD 258s. It is an attitude of docility and obedience. It is letting ourselves be encouraged by Mary who always helps us to be docile to the Holy Spirit and to act according to the Gospel, to "do what He tells us". It helps to repeat constantly: "I renounce myself and consecrate myself to you my dear Mother," see VD 259. Therefore, before reading the Word of God, let us unite ourselves to the Virgin and ask her for help, so that we accept this Word as she always did, not as a simple human Word, but as the Word of God to be lived. We are also

invited to celebrate the Eucharist and to fully participate in it through communion, in union with the Virgin, so that She will help us to welcome her Son as she did and to make of our life a total gift for the good of our brothers. Work for Mary it is also, to pray always in union with our beloved Mother, "trusting in her intercession and power before his Son", SM 48. Prayer is the key to discernment and docility. St. Luis Maria highly instructs us in the so-called external practices, the Hail Mary, the Chaplet, No 409, and the Holy Rosary, Nros.410ss. Many times these prayers are made very fast and without meditation. We must strive to find the method that helps the most. After having spoken of these and other practices of devotion, St. Louis Mary says that "they constitute wonderful means of sanctification" but "as long as they are made with the proper dispositions", see VD 117.

With Mary: that is, in imitation of Mary, see VD 260. It is to look at Mary as our model and our mold, or better, our modeler. "The essential practice of this devotion is to take Mary as the finished model of your actions," SM 45. What we intend is to be modeled in the image of Mary, model of all virtues and "the first and most perfect disciple of Christ" MC 35. What is sought is "to enter into harmony with the will and dispositions of Mary." SM 46 To do this, you must strive to avoid sin and imitate the virtues of the most holy virgin, and in particular these 10: "your deep humility, her living faith, her blind obedience, her continuous prayer, her universal mortification, her divine purity, her ardent charity, her heroic patience, her angelic sweetness and her divine wisdom." VD 108, see 260." She is. ..the Saint of Saints, where the saints are formed and molded. "VD 218 It is very useful to take each of these virtues for a certain time as a topic of meditation and exercise. St. Louis Mary teaches us, in each mystery of the Rosary, to ask for help to put into practice some virtue, see Nos. 415 ss. This is also what the Council has told us about true cult and true devotion to Mary, see Church, 67.

It is Mary: that is, in an intimate union with Mary in all the activities of our lives, VD 261 ss. "If Mary, which is the tree of life, is well cultivated in ourselves through fidelity to the practices of this devotion, she will give fruit at the opportune time, fruit that is none other than Jesus Christ," VD 218. "Listen well to what I'm about to say: The Saints are molded in Mary... Whoever is cast into this divine mold will be formed very fast and will be molded in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ and him." Vd 219. We must live in Mary, who is: "paradise for the new Adam," "Sanctuary of

Divinity,” “Mansion of the Holy Trinity,” “Inexpugnable Tower,” in which we are shielded from the devil, mundane wisdom, and sin. VD 261; 264. May Mary reign and dwell in our hearts. Explaining this, St. Luis Maria employs an very beautiful and expressive image, considering Mary as the mountain in which God resides and reveals Himself.

All of the practices of devotion or perseverance proposed by St. Luis Maria orient themselves to this mystical union with Mary until we reach full communion of life and virtue with her. Speaking on this, St. Louis Maria tells us: “This consecration, live with fidelity, produces in the soul innumerable fruit.” VD 213-225



APPENDIX

- **Commentary on the formula of total consecration**

In the act of Consecration, we find three parts:

- I. Preparation
- II. Offering
- III. Final Supplication

- I. In the **Preparation**, we first direct our attention to the eternal and incarnate Wisdom, and then to the Virgin Mary

Begin with an invocation, which is a profession of faith in the divine Wisdom:

*O ETERNAL and incarnate Wisdom! O sweetest and most adorable Jesus!
True God and true man, only Son of the Eternal Father, and of Mary,
always virgin!*

Then direct to this divine Person a prayer that is successively of: worship, thanksgiving, and praise, of reparation and of supplication.

Worship:

I adore Thee profoundly in the bosom and splendors of Thy Father during eternity; and I adore Thee also in the virginal bosom of Mary, Thy most worthy Mother, in the time of Thine incarnation.

The worship directs itself to the Person, who is only one in eternity, in time, and in His double identity.

Thanksgiving and Praise:

I give Thee thanks for that Thou hast annihilated Thyself, taking the form of a slave in order to rescue me from the cruel slavery of the devil. I praise and glorify Thee for that Thou hast been pleased to submit Thyself to Mary, Thy holy Mother, in all things, in order to make me Thy faithful slave through her.

Thanks and praise for the mystery of the Incarnation, mystery of emptiness, through which I am liberated from the slavery of the devil, and because of His submission to Mary through which He teaches me to be, through her, His faithful servant.

Reparation:

But, alas! Ungrateful and faithless as I have been, I have not kept the promises which I made so solemnly to Thee in my Baptism; I have not fulfilled my obligations; I do not deserve to be called Thy child, nor yet Thy slave; and as there is nothing in me which does not merit Thine anger and Thy repulse, I dare not come by myself before Thy most holy and august Majesty.

The reparation is presented as a humble confession of our own faults. Sin is saying “no” to God. It is infidelity to the Baptismal Covenant. As the prodigal son, I am not worthy to be called His son, or even His slave. Not even his servant because even if I am faithful, I can hardly call myself a “useless servants.”

Naturally then, surges our last attitude before God, an attitude of humble and fervent prayer to obtain contrition, forgiveness, and amendment.

But not because of our own sake, we that are so unworthy. Instead, it is through the grace of Mary:

Supplication:

It is on this account that I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me for a mediatrix with Thee. It is through her that I hope to obtain of Thee contrition, the pardon of my sins, and the acquisition and preservation of wisdom.

Prayer is the weakness of God and the omnipotence of man. And Mary is omnipotent supplication. This is why, we turn to prayer and the intercession of Mary to ask for forgiveness and acquire and conserve union with Christ, eternal Wisdom.

- II. The **Offering** or Total Donation will be to Jesus through Mary. This is why we salute our Mother who we contemplate with a triple crown:

First, crown of ineffable greatness:

Hail, then, O Immaculate Mary, living tabernacle of the Divinity, where the Eternal Wisdom willed to be hidden and to be adored by angels and by men!

Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant, living and immaculate tabernacle of the Divine; the Holy Mountain where God abides.

Second, Crown of Power:

Hail, O Queen of Heaven and earth, to whose empire everything is subject which is under God.

“The almighty had done great things in me, and all generations will call me Blessed”

Third, the crown of goodness:

Hail, O sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails no one.

She is a refuge for sinners and consolation for the afflicted, for she “is merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.”

This is why, with immense trust, despite our smallness and extreme indigence, we approach Her, to present our total consecration to Jesus Christ, ratifying our commitment to live the Baptismal covenant:

Hear the desires which I have of the Divine Wisdom; and for that end receive the vows and offerings which in my lowliness I present to thee.

We thus arrive at the central and culminating part with the formula of consecration that expresses in a conscious and free way our will of total surrender to the person of Jesus Christ and his work, daily carrying the cross and following him as a faithful missionary disciple.

I, _____, a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

Immediately we give and consecrate ourselves totally to Mary so that through Her, with Her, and in Her we may live the perfect consecration to Jesus Christ.

In the presence of all the heavenly court I choose thee this day for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God in time and in eternity.

The Consecration is total. It is total emptying of self, total donation, total possession, total availability, so that Our Lord and Our Lay may use me for the triumph of God in the world.

III. Final Supplication

The offering has been made. May our lady deign to accept it. It is the final appeal. As if to persuade us of what we have done, we enrich the petition with a triple meaning: honor the submission of the eternal Word to Mary, pay tribute to the power of Jesus and Mary over us, and thank the Blessed Trinity for the ineffable privileges of our Mother and Queen: they are very delicate expressions of Monforte:

Receive, O benignant Virgin, this little offering of my slavery, in honor of, and in union with, that subjection which the Eternal Wisdom deigned to have to thy maternity; in homage to the power which both of you have over this poor sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity has favored thee.

We now add a promise of fidelity, so that our expressions aren't simply nice words, but they may be translated into acts of submission:

I declare that I wish henceforth, as thy true slave, to seek thy honor and to obey thee in all things.

And when we think that we have said it all, we are also reminded that we must turn to Mary, from that moment on Our Queen and Our Lady, so that we may ask for three last insistent petitions:

The first, that we may be acceptable for Christ:

O admirable Mother, present me to thy dear Son as His eternal slave, so that as He has redeemed me by thee, by thee He may receive me!

The second, that she may obtain for us Divine Wisdom, due to our intimate union with the Celestial Queen:

O Mother of mercy, grant me the grace to obtain the true Wisdom of God; and for that end receive me among those whom thou lovest and teachest, whom thou leadest, nourishest and protectest as thy children and thy slaves.

The third and last condenses Montfort's itinerary presented in his many books; that is to say, that we may attain to live in the fullness of the Baptismal Covenant as perfect disciples of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, goal and summit of this consecration:

O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator and slave of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain, by thine intercession and by thine example, to the fullness of His age on earth and of His glory in Heaven. Amen.



MONFORTIAN MESSAGES OF JOHN PAUL II

1. Improved Papal Address on July 20, 1987

On July 20, 1987, on the 40th anniversary of the canonization of Montfort, John Paul II received at Castel Gandolfo the members of the General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary. To them he directed, improvising in French, the following words:

Thank you for your visit. On this memorable day in which the Church and especially the Holy See and the Church of Rome, celebrate with you the anniversary of the sanctification ... of the canonization of your illustrious Founder, St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort in the liturgy that we celebrate this morning. He was a great figure in the history of the Church and especially in the history of the Marian spirituality of the Church. This spirituality is deeply related to the central mysteries of our faith, above all with the mystery of the Holy Trinity, with the mystery of the Incarnation and of the Redemption.

This is how Saint Louis Mary has taught us to know the Virgin through these mysteries. It can also be said that he has reversed the roads, or that he has given these roads a new complement: since it was traditionally thought that it is Mary who goes to Jesus; he has taught us to go to her through Jesus, in these mysteries (Trinitarian mystery, mystery of the Incarnation, mystery of the Redemption). But, evidently, these two paths of our spiritual path complement each other.

It is very valuable to know this Marian spirituality of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. It is very valuable to be able to say with him as you

have said and sung this morning: *Totus tuus ego sum et omnia mea tua sunt; accipio te in mea omnia ... et ego sum servus Mariæ.*" It is a true synthesis of Marian spirituality, as we find it in the Gospel itself, with this line: "*Accipio te in mea omnia*"; This is how the apostle John received the Virgin, under the Cross of Jesus on Calvary.

You have emphasized that the two notes, the missionary note and the Marian note go together. This is the characteristic of his Congregation; It is specific to your congregation, a congregation that takes its inspiration from St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. It is true, and I would say that it is underlined above all in this Encyclical "*Redemptoris Mater*". And at the same time it stands out, at the same time and above all, in the doctrine of Vatican II, in the "*Lumen Gentium*", chapter VIII, Marian chapter of the *Lumen Gentium*: "*Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church.*"

Mary is present in these mysteries as She who precedes, who precedes by faith, who precedes all the people of God. Then this "precedence" is spoken, not only in the sense of its dignity; this "precedence" is spoken of above all because of its activity, its "missionality". She is always on mission; She is always on mission from the Incarnation, but above all from the Redemption, from the moment of Calvary where She was sent in a special way, without a formal mandate; She was sent in the force of these words: "*Behold your Son ... Behold your Mother ...*"

And then, She is from this moment, She becomes, from this moment on, an expression of the Church, of the Church that is missionary by its very nature. Then as such, She precedes, which means that She is always at the heart of this mission of the Church, a saving mission, a redemptive mission, (as) a missionary of evangelization. She is always in the middle, in the center, in the heart of this Church that is always on mission.

For this reason, your missionary congregation and, at the same time, with deeply Marian inspirations, your congregation gives a totally specific expression to this spirituality of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, and, at the same time, of this spirituality that emanates from Vatican II, which my last Encyclical "*Redemptoris Mater*" just wanted to offer a small comment on.

2. Letter of St. John Paul II to the Montfort Religious Family

On the 160 Anniversary of the first publication of the Treatise of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary of St. Louis Maria Grignion de Montfort. Vatican City, December 8, 2003.

A classical text of Marian spirituality

1. A work destined to become a classic of Marian spirituality was published 160 years ago. St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort wrote the *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* at the beginning of the 1700s, but the manuscript remained practically unknown for more than a century. When, almost by chance, it was at last discovered in 1842 and published in 1843, the work was an instant success, proving extraordinarily effective in spreading the "true devotion" to the Most Holy Virgin. I myself, in the years of my youth, found reading this book a great help. "There I found the answers to my questions", for at one point I had feared that if my devotion to Mary "became too great, it might end up compromising the supremacy of the worship owed to Christ" (*Dono e Mistero*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996; English edition: *Gift and Mystery*, Paulines Publications Africa, p. 42). Under the wise guidance of St Louis Marie, I realized that if one lives the mystery of Mary in Christ this risk does not exist. In fact, this Saint's Mariological thought "is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and in the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God" (*ibid.*).

Since she came into being, and especially in her most difficult moments, the Church has contemplated with special intensity an event of the Passion of Jesus Christ that St John mentions: "Standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!'. Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!'. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn 19: 25-27). Throughout its history, the People of God has experienced this gift of the crucified Jesus: the gift of his Mother. Mary Most Holy is truly our Mother who accompanies us on our pilgrimage of faith, hope and charity towards an ever more intense union with Christ, the one Savior and Mediator of salvation (cf. Constitution [*Lumen Gentium*](#), nn. 60, 62).

As is well known, my episcopal coat of arms symbolically illustrates the Gospel text quoted above; the motto *Totus tuus* is inspired by the teaching of St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (cf. *Gift and Mystery*, pp. 42-43; [Rosarium Virginis Mariae](#), n. 15). These two words express total belonging to Jesus through Mary: "*Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*", St Louis Marie wrote, and he translates his words: "I am all yours, and all that I have is yours, O most loving Jesus, through Mary, your most holy Mother" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 233). This Saint's teaching has had a profound influence on the Marian devotion of many of the faithful and on my own life. It is a *lived teaching* of outstanding ascetic and mystical depth, expressed in a lively and passionate style that makes frequent use of images and symbols. However, the considerable development of Marian theology since St Louis Marie's time is largely due to the crucial contribution made by the Second Vatican Council. The Montfort teaching, therefore, which has retained its essential validity should be reread and reinterpreted today in the light of the Council.

In this Letter I would like to share with you, Men and Women Religious of the Montfort Families, a meditation on certain passages from the writings of St Louis Marie that may help us in these difficult times to nourish our faith in the maternal mediation of the Mother of the Lord.

"Ad Iesum per Mariam' To Jesus through Mary

2. St Louis Marie proposes the loving contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation with unusual effectiveness. Authentic Marian devotion is Christocentric. Indeed, as the Second Vatican Council recalled, "Devoutly meditating on her [Mary] and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church reverently penetrates more deeply into the great mystery of the Incarnation" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium](#), n. 65).

The love of God through union with Jesus Christ is the purpose of every genuine devotion, since Christ, as St Louis Marie wrote, "is our only Master who has to teach us; our only Lord on whom we ought to depend; our only Head to whom we must be united; our only Model to whom we should conform ourselves; our only Physician who can heal us; our only Shepherd who can feed us; our only Way who can lead us; our only Truth whom we must believe; our only Life who can animate us; and our only All in all things who can satisfy us" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 61).

3. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a privileged means "of finding Jesus Christ perfectly, of loving him tenderly, of serving him faithfully" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 62). St Louis immediately expands this central desire to "love tenderly" into a passionate prayer to Jesus, imploring him for the grace to participate in the indescribable communion of love that exists between him and his Mother.

Mary's total relativity to Christ and through him, to the Blessed Trinity, is first experienced in the observation: "You never think of Mary without Mary interceding for you with God. You never praise or honor Mary without Mary's praising and honoring God with you. Mary is altogether relative to God; and indeed, I might well call her *the relation to God*. She only exists with reference to God. She is *the echo of God* that says nothing, repeats nothing, but God. If you say 'Mary', she says 'God'. St Elizabeth praised Mary and called her blessed because she had believed. Mary, the faithful echo of God, at once intoned: "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*"; "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Lk 1: 46). What Mary did then, she does daily now. When we praise her, love her, honor her or give anything to her, it is God who is praised, God who is loved, God who is glorified, and it is to God that we give, through Mary and in Mary" (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 225).

Again, in prayer to the Mother of the Lord, St Louis Marie expresses the Trinitarian dimension of his relationship with God: "Hail Mary, beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father! Hail Mary, admirable Mother of the Son! Hail Mary, faithful Spouse of the Holy Spirit!" (*The Secret of Mary*, p. 71). Although this traditional greeting used earlier by St Francis of Assisi (cf. *Fonti Francescane*, 281) contains different levels of analogies, there is not a shadow of doubt that it expresses effectively Our Lady's special participation in the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

4. St Louis Marie contemplates all the mysteries, starting from the *Incarnation* which was brought about at the moment of the Annunciation. Thus, in the *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Mary appears as "the true terrestrial paradise of the New Adam", the "virginal and immaculate earth" of which he was formed (n. 261). She is also the *New Eve*, associated with the *New Adam* in the obedience that atones for the original disobedience of the man and the woman (cf. *ibid.*, n. 53; St Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 21, 10-22, 4). Through this obedience, the Son of God enters the world. The Cross itself is already

mysteriously present at the instant of the Incarnation, at the very moment of Jesus' conception in Mary's womb. Indeed, the *ecce venio* in the Letter to the Hebrews (cf. 10: 5-9) is the primordial act of the Son's obedience to the Father, an acceptance of his redeeming sacrifice already at the time "when Christ came into the world".

"*All our perfection*", St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort writes, "*consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ; and therefore, the most perfect of all devotions is, without any doubt, that which most perfectly conforms, unites and consecrates us to Jesus Christ. Now, Mary being the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms the soul to Our Lord is devotion to his holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more it is consecrated to Jesus*" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 120). In addressing Jesus, St Louis Marie expresses the marvel of the union between the Son and the Mother: "She is so transformed into you by grace that she lives no more, she is as though she were not. It is you only, my Jesus, who lives and reigns in her.... Ah! If we knew the glory and the love which you receive in this admirable creature.... She is so intimately united with you.... She loves you more ardently and glorifies you more perfectly than all the other creatures put together" (*ibid.*, n. 63).

Mary, an eminent member of the Mystical Body and Mother of the Church

5. According to the words of the Second Vatican Council, Mary "is hailed as pre-eminent and as a wholly unique member of the Church, and as her type and outstanding model in faith and charity" ([*Lumen Gentium*](#), n. 53). The Mother of the Redeemer is also uniquely redeemed by him in her Immaculate Conception and has preceded us in that perseverance in faithful and loving attention to the Word of God that leads to blessedness (cf. *ibid.*, n. 58). For this reason too, Mary "is also intimately united to the Church. As St Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type (*typus*) of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is herself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother" (*ibid.*, n. 63). The Council itself contemplates Mary as "*the Mother of the members of Christ*" (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 53, 62), and consequently, Paul VI proclaimed her

as *Mother of the Church*. The doctrine of the Mystical Body that most forcefully expresses Christ's union with the Church is also the biblical foundation of this affirmation. "The head and the members are born of one and the same Mother" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 32), as St Louis Marie reminds us. In this sense, we can say that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the members are united and conformed to Christ the Head, the Son of the Father and of Mary, in such a way that "a true child of the Church must have God for his Father and Mary for his Mother" (*The Secret of Mary*, n. 11).

In Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, we are truly children of the Father, and at the same time, sons and daughters of Mary and of the Church. In a certain way, it is the whole of humanity that is reborn in the virgin birth of Jesus. "These words can be attributed better to the Mother of the Lord than to St Paul of himself: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal 4: 19). Every day I give birth to the children of God until Jesus Christ my Son be formed in them in the fullness of his age" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 33). This doctrine is expressed most beautifully in the prayer: "*O Holy Spirit, give me great devotion to Mary, your faithful spouse; give me great confidence in her maternal heart and an abiding refuge in her mercy, so that by her you may truly form in me Jesus Christ*" (*The Secret of Mary*, p. 81).

One of the loftiest expressions of St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort's spirituality refers to the identification of the faithful with Mary in her love for Jesus and in her service to Jesus. Meditating on St Ambrose's well-known text: "*Let the soul of Mary be in each of us to magnify the Lord, and the spirit of Mary be in each of us to rejoice in God*" (*Expos. in Luc.*, 12, 26: PL 15, 1561), he writes: "A soul is happy indeed when... it is all possessed and overruled by the spirit of Mary, a spirit meek and strong, zealous and prudent, humble and courageous, pure and fruitful" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 258). Mystical identification with Mary is fully directed to Jesus, as he says in the prayer: "Finally, dearly beloved Mother, grant, if it be possible, that I may have no other spirit but yours, to know Jesus and his divine will; that I may have no other soul but yours, to praise and glorify the Lord; that I may have no other heart but yours, to love God with a love as pure and ardent as yours" (*The Secret of Mary*, pp. 71-72).

Holiness, the perfection of charity

6. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [*Lumen Gentium*](#) states: "But while in the Most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5: 27), the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues" (n. 65). Holiness is the *perfection of charity*, of love of God and neighbor that is the object of Jesus' greatest Commandment (cf. Mt 22: 38). It is also the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. I Cor 13: 13). Thus, in his *Canticles* St Louis Marie presents to the faithful in this order the excellence of charity (*Canticle 5*), the light of faith (*Canticle 6*) and the firmness of hope (*Canticle 7*).

In Montfort spirituality, the dynamism of charity is expressed in particular by the symbol of the *slavery of love to Jesus*, after the example and with the motherly help of Mary. It is a matter of full communion in the *kenosis* of Christ, communion lived with Mary, intimately present in the mysteries of the life of her Son. "There is nothing among Christians which makes us more absolutely belong to Jesus Christ and his holy Mother than the slavery of the will, according to the example of Jesus Christ himself, who took on the status of a servant for love of us" - *formam servi accipiens* - "and also according to the example of the holy Virgin who called herself the servant and handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1: 38). The Apostle refers to himself as "the slave of Christ" (*servus Christi*) *as though the title were an honor*. Christians are often so called in the Holy Scriptures" (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 72).

Indeed, the Son of God, who came into the world out of obedience to the Father in the Incarnation (cf. Heb 10: 7), subsequently humbled himself by making himself obedient unto death, and death on the Cross (cf. Phil 2: 7-8). Mary responded to God's will with the total gift of herself, body and soul, forever, from the Annunciation to the Cross and from the Cross to the Assumption. The obedience of Christ and the obedience of Mary are not, of course, symmetrical because of the *ontological difference* between the divine Person of the Son and the human person of Mary. This also explains the resulting exclusivity of the fundamental salvific efficacy of obedience to Christ, from whom his own Mother received the grace to be able to obey God totally and thus collaborate in the mission of her Son.

The *slavery of love* should therefore be interpreted in light of the wonderful exchange between God and humanity in the mystery of the incarnate Word. It is a true exchange of love between God and his creature in the reciprocity of total self-giving. The "spirit [of this devotion] consists in this: that we be interiorly dependent on Mary Most Holy; that we be slaves of Mary, and through her, of Jesus" (*The Secret of Mary*, n. 44). Paradoxically, this "bond of charity", this "slavery of love", endows the human being with full freedom, with that true freedom of the children of God (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 169). It is a question of giving oneself to Jesus without reserve, responding to the Love with which he first loved us. Those who live in this love can say with St Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2: 20).

The "pilgrimage of faith"

7. I wrote in [*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#): "One can never really reach Jesus except by the path of faith" (n. 19). This was the path that Mary followed throughout her earthly life and it is the path of the pilgrim Church until the end of time. The Second Vatican Council placed great emphasis on Mary's faith, mysteriously shared by the Church, shedding light on the journey of Our Lady from the moment of the Annunciation to the moment of the redemptive Passion (cf. Dogmatic Constitution [*Lumen Gentium*](#), nn. 57, 67; Encyclical Letter [*Redemptoris Mater*](#), nn. 25-27).

In the writings of St Louis Marie we find the same accent on the faith lived by the Mother of Jesus in her journey from the Incarnation to the Cross, a faith in which Mary is the model and type of the Church. St Louis Marie expresses this with a range of nuances, when in his letter he expounds on the "marvelous effects" of perfect Marian devotion: "The more, then, that you gain the favor of that august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more will you act by pure faith; a pure faith which will put you above all sensible consolations and extraordinary favors; a lively faith animated by charity, which will enable you to perform all your actions from the motive of pure love; a faith firm and immovable as a rock, through which you will rest quiet and constant in the midst of storms and hurricanes; a faith active and piercing, which like a mysterious skeleton key, will give you entrance into all the mysteries of Jesus, the ultimate goal of man, and into the heart of God himself; a courageous faith, which will enable you to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and

for the salvation of souls; lastly, a faith which will be your blazing torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine wisdom and your omnipotent arms, which you will use to enlighten those who are in the darkness of the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and who have need of the heated gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead through sin, to touch and move by your meek and powerful words the hearts of stone and the cedars of Lebanon, and finally, to resist the devil and all the enemies of salvation" (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 214).

Like St John of the Cross, St Louis Marie insists above all on the purity of faith and its essential and often sorrowful darkness (cf. *The Secret of Mary*, nn. 51-52). Contemplative faith, by giving up tangible or extraordinary things, penetrates the mysterious depths of Christ. Thus, in his prayer, St Louis Marie addresses the Mother of the Lord saying: "I do not ask you for visions, revelations, sensible devotion or spiritual pleasures.... Here below, I wish for nothing other than that which was yours: to believe sincerely without spiritual pleasures" (*ibid.*, p. 72). The Cross is the crowning moment of Mary's faith, as I wrote in the Encyclical [*Redemptoris Mater*](#): "Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in his self-emptying.... This is perhaps the deepest *kenosis* of faith in human history" (n. 18).

A sign of sure hope

8. The Holy Spirit invites Mary to reproduce her own virtues in the elect, extending in them the roots of her "invincible faith" and "firm hope" (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 34). The Second Vatican Council recalled this: "The Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise, she shines forth on earth until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God" (Dogmatic Constitution [*Lumen Gentium*](#), n. 68). This eschatological dimension is contemplated by St Louis Marie especially when he speaks of the "apostles of the latter times" formed by the Blessed Virgin to bring to the Church Christ's victory over the forces of evil (cf. *Treatise on True Devotion*, nn. 49-59). This is in no way a form of "millenarianism", but a deep sense of the eschatological character of the Church linked to the oneness and saving universality of Jesus Christ. The Church awaits the glorious coming of Jesus at the end of time. Like

Mary and with Mary, the saints are in the Church and for the Church to make her holiness shine out and to extend to the very ends of the earth and the end of time the work of Christ, the one Savior.

In the antiphon *Salve Regina*, the Church calls the Mother of God "our Hope". The same term is used by St Louis Marie who took it from a text of St John Damascene, who applies to Mary the biblical symbol of the anchor (cf. *Hom I in Dorm. B.V.M.*, 14: PG 96, 719): ""We fasten our souls"", he says, ""to your hope, as to an abiding anchor". It is to her that the saints who have saved themselves have been the most attached and have done their best to attach others, in order to persevere in virtue. Happy, then, a thousand times happy, are the Christians who are now fastened faithfully and entirely to her, as to a firm anchor!" (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n. 175). Through the devotion to Mary, Jesus himself "enlarges the heart with firm confidence in God, making it look upon him as a Father" (*ibid.*, n. 169).

Together with the Blessed Virgin and with the same maternal heart, the Church prays, hopes and intercedes for the salvation of all men and women. The Dogmatic Constitution [Lumen Gentium](#) concludes with these words: "The entire body of the faithful pours forth urgent supplications to the Mother of God and of men that she, who aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers, may now, exalted as she is above all the angels and saints, intercede before her Son in the fellowship of all the saints, until all families of people, whether they are honored with the title of Christian or whether they still do not know the Savior, may be happily gathered together in peace and harmony into one People of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity" (n. 69).

As I once again make my own this hope which I expressed, along with the other Council Fathers almost 40 years ago, I send to the entire Montfort Family a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 8 December 2003, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

3. The Pope and Mary: Falling in love in complete Nazi occupation

Article: The Pontiff reveals how he discovered and understood the role of the Virgin Mary in his life.

ROME, Oct. 13 (ZENIT.org).- John Paul II made unprecedented confessions this morning about the younger years of his life, during which, in full Nazi rule, as a seminarian, he worked at the Solvay factory in Krakow: there he discovered, the role that Mary has in his life and in that of every Christian.

The pontiff opened his heart to these secrets after welcoming the participants of the VIII International Colloquium of Mariology, organized in Rome. The meeting has served to officially launch the petition to the Pope to declare the title Doctor of the Church to Luis María Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716), one of the classics of Christian spirituality, of whom the Pope has borrowed the motto of his pontificate: "Totus Tuus" ("Totally Yours").

In those tragic circumstances for Poland, Pope Wojtyla evoked: "I read and reread many times and with great spiritual benefit this precious book of blue cover, which had been stained with sodium."

Reading this text, he explained, the young seminarian understood that the presence of Mary in the spiritual life of a Christian is not in competition with the person of Christ, but derives from him and is at his service.

"Then I understood that I could not exclude the Mother of the Lord from my life without disheartening the will of God-Trinity," he clarified, "who wanted to begin and fulfill the great mysteries of the history of salvation with the responsible and faithful collaboration of the humble Servant of Nazareth".

John Paul II stressed, in this way, how Grignon de Monfort invites us to live a spirituality that encourages us to give ourselves completely and consciously to Christ and, through him, to the Holy Spirit and the Father.

Continuing to confide, the Pope explained why he chose as episcopate and pontificate motto the words "Totally yours", an act of surrender to Mary: "By repeating each day" Totus tuus ", and living in harmony with her, one can reach the experience of the Father in the trust and the love that is without limits, and also in the docility to the Holy Spirit and the transformation of oneself according to the image of Christ".

As the Bishop of Luçon, Monsignor François Garnier, recalled in his greeting to John Paul II: during his visit to Vandea, on September 9, 1996, John Paul went to Saint Laurent sur Sevre to pray before the tomb of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Monfort. The influence of this character in his thought had already been clear also in the encyclical "Redemptoris Mater." Monsignor Garnier himself, when greeting the Pope on behalf of the three religious congregations that this saint founded, officially asked for St. Louis to be proclaimed Doctor of the Church.

Doctor of the Church is a title given by the Pope or an ecumenical council to certain saints to recognize them as eminent teachers of the faith for Christians of all times. At the present time, there are 33 doctors, among whom are 3 women (St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa of Lisieux).

At this time, according to the postulator of the official of the cause, Father Battista Cortinovia, revealed to the microphones of "Vatican Radio", the Congregation for the Causes of Saints is consulting the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to make a pronouncement of this importance. The Congregation headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has appointed a commission of consultants who, in a certain period of time, will have to give an answer. If the opinion is positive, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will prepare a "positio", that is, all the necessary documentation to demonstrate the eventual proclamation. At that moment, the Holy Father will be responsible for making the final decision.

Luis María Grignon de Monfort was beatified by Leo XIII and canonized by Pius XII.

4. Address of the Holy Father To The Participants In The 8th Mariological Colloquium

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. I am pleased to welcome you today during the Eighth International Mariological Colloquium on the theme: "*St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort: Trinitarian Spirituality in Communion with Mary*". An affectionate greeting to you all: the organizers, moderators and

participants. I extend special thanks to Bishop François Garnier of Luçon for his cordial words expressing the sentiments you all share.

Today's meeting recalls the one held here in Rome in 1706 between my venerable predecessor Clement XI and the Breton missionary, Grignon de Montfort, who had come to ask the Successor of Peter for light and strength in the apostolate he had undertaken. I also remember with gratitude the pilgrimage to the tomb of this great saint in Saint-Laurent sur-Sèvre, which Providence allowed me to make on 19 September 1996.

For me, St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort is a significant person of reference who has enlightened me at important moments in life. When I was working as a clandestine seminarian at the Solvay factory in Kraków, my spiritual director advised me to meditate on the *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*. Many times and with great spiritual profit I read and reread this precious little ascetical book with the blue, soda-stained cover.

By relating the Mother of Christ to the Trinitarian mystery, Montfort helped me to understand that *the Virgin belongs to the plan of salvation*, by the *Father's* will, as the Mother of the *incarnate Word*, who was conceived by her through the power of the *Holy Spirit*. Mary's every intervention in the work of the regeneration of the faithful is not in competition with Christ, but derives *from* him and is *at* his service. Mary's action in the plan of salvation is always Christocentric, that is, it is directly related to a mediation that takes place in Christ. I then realized that I could not exclude the Mother of the Lord from my life without disregarding the will of God-the-Trinity, who wanted to "begin and complete" the great mysteries of salvation history with the responsible and faithful collaboration of the humble Handmaid of Nazareth.

Now I also thank the Lord for enabling me to experience what you too have had the opportunity to study at this colloquium, i.e., that when the believer accepts Mary into his life in Christ and the Spirit, he is brought into the very heart of the Trinitarian mystery.

2. Dear brothers and sisters, during your symposium you have reflected on Trinitarian spirituality in communion with Mary: an aspect which is characteristic of Montfort's teaching.

He does not, in fact, offer a theology without influence on practical life, nor a Christianity "by proxy" without the personal acceptance of the commitments stemming from Baptism.

On the contrary, he invites us to an intensely lived spirituality; he encourages us to make a free and conscious gift of ourselves to Christ and, through him, to the Holy Spirit and to the Father. In this light, we understand how reference to Mary makes the renewal of our baptismal promises perfect, since Mary is indeed the creature "most conformed to Jesus Christ" (*True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, n. 120).

Yes, the whole Christocentric and Marian spirituality taught by Montfort flows from the Trinity and leads back to it. In this connection, we are struck by his insistence on the action of the three divine Persons in Mary's regard. God the Father "gave his Only-begotten Son to the world only through Mary" and "wishes to have children through Mary until the end of the world" (*ibid.*, nn. 16, 29). God the Son "became man for our salvation but only in Mary and through Mary" and "wishes to form himself and, so to speak, incarnate himself every day in his members through his dear Mother" (*ibid.*, nn. 16, 31). God the Holy Spirit "has communicated his unspeakable gifts to Mary, his faithful Spouse" and "wishes to form elect for himself in her and through her" (*ibid.*, nn. 25, 34).

3. Mary therefore appears as the place of the love and action of the Persons of the Trinity, and Montfort presents her in a relational perspective: "Mary is entirely relative to God. Indeed, I might well call her the relation to God. She exists only with reference to God" (*ibid.*, n. 225). For this reason, the All-Holy One leads us to the Trinity. By repeating "*Totus tuus*" to her every day and living in harmony with her, we can attain an experience of the Father in confidence and boundless love (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 169, 215), docility to the Spirit (cf. *ibid.*, n. 258) and transformation of self into the likeness of Christ (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 218-221).

It sometimes happens that in catechesis and exercises of piety "the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them" remains implicit (Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus*, n. 25). In Grignon de Montfort's vision, however, Trinitarian faith totally pervades his prayers to Mary: "Hail Mary, well-beloved daughter of the eternal

Father, admirable Mother of the Son, most faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit, glorious temple of the Blessed Trinity" (*Methods for Saying the Rosary*, n. 15). Similarly, in the *Prayer for Missionaries*, addressed to the three divine Persons and focused on the last times of the Church, Mary is contemplated as "the mountain of God" (n. 25), the place of holiness that lifts us up to God and transforms us in Christ.

May every Christian make his own the doxology that Montfort puts on Mary's lips in the *Magnificat*: "May our one true God / be adored and blessed! / May the universe resound / and everyone sing: / Glory to the eternal Father, / glory to the adorable Word! / The same glory to the Holy Spirit / who unites them with his love in an unspeakable bond" (*Canticles*, 85, 6).

As I implore for each of you the constant help of the Blessed Virgin, so that you can live your vocation in communion with her, our Mother and model, I cordially give you a special Apostolic Blessing.

5. Message Of Pope John Paul II To The Montfortian Religious Family On The Celebrations Of The 50th Anniversary Of The Canonization Of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon De Montfort

1. The Montfortian Family is about to begin a year set apart for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, which took place in Rome on 20 July 1947. With the Company of Mary, the Brothers of St Gabriel and the Daughters of Wisdom, I am happy to offer thanks to the Lord for the growing influence of this missionary saint whose apostolate was nourished by a life of intense prayer, by an unshakeable faith in the Triune God and by a deep devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redeemer.

Poor among the poor, profoundly integrated into the Church despite the lack of understanding he had to face, St Louis-Marie adopted as his motto these simple words: "God Alone". He sang: "God alone is my tenderness, God alone is my support, God alone is my every good, my life and my wealth" (*Canticle 55*, 11). His love for God was total. It was with God and for God that he went towards other people and walked the roads of the mission. Constantly aware of the presence of Jesus and Mary, his entire being was a witness to the theological virtue of charity which he desired to share with everyone. His deeds and his words had only one aim, to call people to conversion and to motivate them to live for God. His writings

are full of testimony to and praise of the Incarnate Word and also of Mary, “masterpiece of the Most High, miracle of Eternal Wisdom” (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 106).

2. The message that Fr de Montfort has left behind for us is inseparably founded on the meditations of the mystic that he was and the pastoral teaching of an apostle. Basing himself on the great theological currents in vogue at that time, he expressed his personal faith in tune with the culture of his time. By turns poetic and familiarly close to the language of his audience, his style can surprise our contemporaries, but that should not prevent us from being inspired by his fertile intuitions. That is why the work accomplished today by the Montfortian Family is precious: it helps the faithful to grasp the coherence of a theological and spiritual vision that is always oriented towards an intense life of faith and charity. Before all else, St Louis-Marie impresses us by his theocentric spirituality. He has “a taste for God and his truth” (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 13) and knows how to communicate his faith in God, speaking at one and the same time of the majesty and of the gentleness of God, for God is a spring overflowing with love. Father de Montfort does not hesitate to unveil, even to the humblest persons, the mystery of the Trinity which inspires his prayer and reflection on the redemptive Incarnation, the work of the divine Persons. He wants us to grasp the reality of the divine presence in the time of the Church. In a notable way he writes: “The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation, the first coming of Jesus Christ, they adhere to each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church and they will pursue it to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ” (*True Devotion to Mary*, n. 22). In our time, his witness can help us base our Christian existence on faith in the living God, on a warm relationship with God and on a solid ecclesial experience, thanks to the Spirit of the Father and the Son, whose reign continues in the present (cf. *Prayer for Missionaries*, n. 16).

3. The person of Christ dominates the thought of Grignon de Montfort: “Jesus, our Savior, true God and true man, must be the ultimate end of all other devotions” (*True Devotion to Mary*, n. 61). The Incarnation of the Word is for him the absolute central reality: “Eternal and incarnate Wisdom ... I adore you ... dwelling in the splendor of your Father from all eternity and in the virginal womb of Mary, your most worthy Mother, at the time of your Incarnation” (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 223). The ardent celebration of the person of the incarnate Son of God, which

resonates in all Fr de Montfort's teachings, retains even today its inestimable worth, for it represents a balanced vision from the doctrinal point of view, and it leads to adherence with one's entire being to the One who reveals to humanity its true vocation. If only the faithful could heed this exhortation: "Jesus Christ (the Eternal Wisdom) is everything that you can and should wish for. Long for him, seek him, ... that unique and precious pearl" (ibid., n. 9)!

Contemplation of the grandeur of the mystery of Jesus goes hand in hand with the contemplation of the Cross, which Montfort made the principal sign of his missions. Often subjected to harsh trials, he himself knew its weight as testified in a letter he wrote to his sister in which he requested her prayers "to obtain from Jesus the grace for me to carry the roughest and heaviest crosses" (*Letter*, n. 24). Day after day, he practiced the imitation of Christ through what he would call the foolish love of the Cross in which he saw "the triumph of Eternal Wisdom" (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, ch. XIV). Through the sacrifice of Calvary, the Son of God makes himself little and humble to the very extreme; he shares the condition of his brothers and sisters who are subject to suffering and death. Here, Christ manifests his infinite love in an eloquent manner and opens to humanity the way to new life. Louis-Marie, who followed his Lord and "fixed his abode in the Cross" (ibid., n. 180), gives a witness to holiness that his heirs in the Montfortian Family must pass on in their turn, so as to reveal to this world the truth of saving love.

4. In order to know the Eternal Wisdom, uncreated and incarnate, Grignon de Montfort invited people to put their trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is so inseparable from Jesus "that it would be easier to separate light from the sun" (*True Devotion to Mary*, n. 63). He remains an incomparable bard and disciple of the Mother of the Savior whom he honors as the one who so assuredly leads towards Christ: "If then we are establishing sound devotion to Our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to Our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ" (ibid., n. 62). For Mary is the creature chosen by the Father and totally dedicated to her maternal mission. Having entered into union with the Word through her free consent, she is associated in a privileged manner with the Incarnation and the Redemption, from Nazareth to Golgotha and the Upper Room, in absolute faithfulness to the presence of the Holy Spirit. She "found grace

with God for everyone in general and each one in particular” (ibid., n. 164).

St Louis-Marie also calls on us to abandon ourselves entirely to Mary in order to welcome her presence in the very depth of our souls. “Mary becomes all things for the soul that wishes to serve Jesus Christ. She enlightens his mind with her pure faith. She deepens his heart with her humility. She enlarges and inflames his heart with her charity, makes it pure with her purity, makes it noble and great through her motherly care” (*Secret of Mary*, n. 57). Recourse to Mary leads one to give Jesus an ever greater place in one’s life; it is significant, for example, that Montfort invites the faithful to turn to Mary before communion: “Implore Mary to lend you her heart so that you may receive her Son with her dispositions” (*True Devotion to Mary*, n. 266).

In our times when Marian devotion is quite alive but not always sufficiently enlightened, it would be good to recapture Fr de Montfort’s fervor and his correct tone, in order to give the Virgin her rightful place and to learn how to pray to her: “Mother of mercy, grant me the favor of obtaining the true Wisdom of God, and so make me one of those whom you love, teach and guide. ... Virgin most faithful, make me in everything a committed disciple, imitator, and slave of Jesus, your Son, incarnate Wisdom” (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 227). No doubt certain changes in the language seem imperative, but the Montfortian Family must continue its Marian apostolate in the spirit of its founder, in order to help the faithful maintain a living and intimate relationship with her whom the Second Vatican Council honored as a supereminent and absolutely unique member of the Church, recalling that, “As St Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ” ([Lumen gentium](#), n. 63).

5. The Montfortian year draws our attention to the main lines of the spirituality of St Louis-Marie, but it is also most appropriate to recall that he was a missionary of extraordinary range and influence. Just after his ordination he wrote: “I feel a tremendous urge to make Our Lord and his Holy Mother loved, to go in a humble and simple way to teach catechism to the poor”. He lived in complete fidelity to this vocation, which he wished to share with the priests who were to join him. In the Rule of the Missionary Priests of the Company of Mary, he invites the apostolic missionary to preach with simplicity, truthfulness, without fear and with

charity, adding: "His intention must be holy and centered on God alone. God's glory must be his sole preoccupation and he must first practice what he preaches" (n. 62).

Now that the need for a new evangelization has become imperative in most parts of the world, Fr de Montfort's zeal for the Word of God, his solicitude for the very poor, his ability to make himself understood by the simplest folk and to stimulate their piety, his qualities for organizing, his initiatives to sustain fervor by founding spiritual movements and to involve the laity in the service of the poor, all that, with practical adaptations, can inspire the apostles of today. One of the constants in the numerous missions preached by St Louis-Marie himself deserves to be underscored today: he called for the renewal of the promises of Baptism, even making this exercise a prerequisite for absolution and communion. This takes on considerable topical interest, in this first preparatory year for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, which is dedicated precisely to Christ and to the sacrament of Baptism. Montfort understood very well the importance of this sacrament which consecrates us to God and constitutes the community, as well as the need to rediscover, in a firm adherence of faith, the significance of the commitments of Baptism.

A Gospel wayfarer inflamed by the love of Jesus and of his holy Mother, he knew how to touch the hearts of the crowds, and how to make them love the Redeeming Christ, contemplated on the Cross. May he support the efforts of the evangelizers of our times!

6. Dear brothers and sisters of the great Montfortian Family, in this year of prayer and reflection on the precious heritage of St Louis-Marie, I encourage you: make this treasure bear fruit; it must not remain hidden. The teaching of your founder and master coincides with the themes that the whole Church meditates on at the approach of the Great Jubilee; it marks out for us the path of true wisdom that must be laid open to so many young people who search for meaning in their lives and for an art of living.

I welcome your initiatives at diffusing Montfortian spirituality in forms that are suitable to different cultures, thanks to the collaboration of the members of your three institutes. Be also a support and a point of reference for the movements which take their inspiration from the

message of Grignon de Montfort in order to give to Marian devotion an ever surer authenticity. Renew your presence among the poor, your insertion into the pastoral activity of the Church, your availability for evangelization.

As I entrust your religious life and your apostolate to the intercession of St Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort and Blessed Marie-Louis Trichet, I wholeheartedly impart to you, as well as to all those who are close to you whom you serve, the Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 21 June 1997

7. Homily of His Holiness John Paul II in St. Lorenzo

San Lorenzo, France, Thursday September 19, 1996. Celebration of the Vespers of San Luis Maria Grignon de Montfort

Dear Brothers and dear Sisters,

1. On this pilgrimage to the tombs of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort and the Blessed Marie-Louise de Jésus, it is a joy for me to celebrate the liturgical office of the evening with you, consecrated persons from all over the West of France. I thank Monsignor François Garnier, Bishop of Luçon, and the Superiors of the Montfortian Family for the words they addressed to me in your name and also in the name of the diocesan community represented here. I address to all my affectionate greeting.

2. The reading of the Letter to the Romans we have just heard speaks to us of the vocation of humanity in Christ. In Christ we are eternally known and called to become conformed to the image of Him who is "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). In Him, true God and true Man, the Father shows us the meaning of our vocation. Between the eternal knowledge of the man that the Father has in the Word and the appeal he addresses to man in time, there is a close link. Christ knows that his coming into the world and, in particular, his passion, his death and his resurrection must reveal to men their vocation, inscribed by the Father in the mystery of the Incarnation of his Son. This is why Christ, aware of this, at the end of his earthly mission, addresses to the Apostles this exhortation: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you every day, until the end of the world "(Mt 28, 19-20).

3. Century after century, the successors of the Apostles and many disciples have worked to fulfill this mission entrusted to them by the Lord. In your region, Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort was one of the most important. I am pleased to begin my pilgrimage to the land of France under the sign of this noble figure. As you know, I owe a lot to this saint and to his Treatise of true devotion to the Virgin Mary. Today, given that my pastoral visit is, to a large extent, under the sign of baptism, I would first like to underline that, in the spirit of St. Louis-Marie, all spiritual life comes directly from the sacrament of holy baptism, as shown by a significant passage of the Act of consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary, written by Montfort. At the center of this act, there are the following words: "I - at this point we pronounce the name, for example Louis-Marie or Gianpaolo or Carlo - unfaithful sinner, renewal and ratification today in your hands (in the hands of Mary) the promises of my baptism: I renounce forever to Satan, to his pumps and his works, I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross following his example all the days of my life. . . ." (Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, No. 225).

The reference to the promises of baptism is evident. During the baptismal liturgy, we asked each of us: "Give up Satan, all his works and all his seductions?", And then: "Do you believe?". The act of baptism goes hand in hand with the choice of God, the choice of Christ, the choice to live in the grace of the Holy Spirit. This choice, in a sense, is the victory over original sin. The sacramental grace of baptism cancels original sin. However, the man who receives him must renounce sin in order to correspond thus to the grace of justification that is granted him in faith in Christ. In the sacrament of baptism there is a certain return to the beginning, to the origins, when it was necessary to choose good and not evil, salvation and not rejection. If Grignion de Montfort inserts this into the content of his authentic devotion to the Mother of God, he does so because Mary, by divine will, since his Immaculate Conception, has been inscribed in God's plan to overcome sin through the justification received by grace. it comes from Christ. It is a good thing that at the beginning of this pilgrimage that will also bring me to Reims for the fifteenth centenary of the baptism of Clovis, we can consider here from a Marian point of view the essential meaning of the sacrament of baptism.