

# Perfect Devotion to Mary according to St. Montfort

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## 1

**Writing the Treatise on True Devotion to Mary:** Montfort was a great devotee of Mary and he spread this Devotion during his missions and private talks. Then he wrote a number of books to explain Marian Devotion: True Devotion to Mary, Secret of Mary, Secret of the Rosary, a number of Hymns. As Librarian in the Seminary, he read many books on Mary and he has told us, "Having read almost every book that treats of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and having held familiar converse with the most saintly and learned people of recent time, I have never known or heard of a practice of devotion to Our Lady which I am going to speak of." (TD 118)

Montfort's own personal experience of Marian Devotion coupled with his pastoral experience enabled him to choose words and ideas in order to teach others true devotion to Mary. To increase the number of devotees "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) He wrote them as his "heart has dictated." (TD 13) "True Devotion to Mary" is considered by many to be the greatest single book of Marian Spirituality ever written. True Devotion to Mary, is St Louis de Montfort's classic statement on the spiritual way to Jesus Christ through the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wrote this book "mainly for the poor and the simple." (TD 26)

In the canton of St. Eloi on the suburb of La Rochelle, Montfort had a small house known as St. Eloi Hermitage. He spent a good part of the autumn of 1712 here and wrote "The Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary". As he himself wrote, "Just as breathing is a proof that the body is not dead, so the habitual thought of Mary and loving converse with her is a proof that the soul is not spiritually dead in sin" (TD 166), Montfort in 1714, told Fr. Blain that he enjoyed the constant presence of Mary. Blain wrote, "During the talk I had with him he told me that God had granted him a very special grace, which was the continual presence of Jesus and Mary in the depth of his soul." (Blain, p. 340)

After Montfort's death, his disciples made use of the manuscript. During the French Revolution the manuscript was put in a steel box and buried for safety with other books and documents in a field in St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre. Montfort himself had predicted it. "I clearly foresee that raging beasts will come in fury to tear to pieces with their diabolical teeth this little book and the one the Holy Spirit made use of to write it, or they will cause it at least to lie hidden in the darkness and silence of a chest and so prevent it from seeing the light of day." (TD 114)

After the revolution the documents were kept in the library without anyone noticing it. On April 22, 1842, Fr. Rautureau, librarian, discovered this manuscript that attracted his attention. He recognized the handwriting of St. Montfort. Fr. Dalin, the Superior General, confirmed it. The manuscript was incomplete. Many pages at the beginning as well as the end were lost. In 1843, the first French edition appeared. In 1921, a new French edition appeared, divided differently and with a system of progressive numbering. In 1862, Fr. F. W. Faber, a priest of the Oratory, translated the Treatise from French into English and published it in 1863. Soon Church authorities started appreciating the book. This book was translated into over 30 languages and it has become a classic.

**Worldwide influence of the True Devotion to Mary:** In 1902, there were sixty seven editions of TD in eight languages. In 1994, there were about 400 editions in more than thirty languages. The momentum of the book worldwide shows no sign of slowing down. The success can be attributed to the intrinsic value and universal appeal. Further, St. Montfort's teachings on Mary are very much accepted by the Church of today. Vatican II in chapter eight of the Decree on the Church (Lumen Gentium) has been influenced by Montfort's True Devotion to Mary.

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## II

### Basic Reasons for Devotion to Mary

As stated above Montfort understood that Mary's role was a role given by God himself. Montfort's reason for speaking of her was Jesus Christ himself. From TD 1-13, Montfort tells us that Marian devotion is needed so that Jesus may reign on earth. "With the whole Church I acknowledge that Mary, being a mere creature, fashioned by the hands of God, compared to His Infinite Majesty, is less than an atom, or rather is simply nothing ... This great Lord, who is ever independent and self-sufficient, never had and does not have any absolute need of the Blessed Virgin for the accomplishment of his will and the manifestation of his glory... God willed to begin and complete his greatest works by the most Blessed Virgin.. He will never change his plan in future." (TD 14, 15)

1. For St. Montfort, the most basic reason why we should have devotion to Mary is that **God chose to give to Mary a unique role in the mysteries of Incarnation, Redemption and Sanctification**. From TD 14-36, he repeatedly says that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit chose Mary. "God the Father imparted to Mary his fruitfulness as far as a mere creature was capable of receiving it, to enable her to bring forth his Son and all the members of his mystical body." (TD 17) "God the Son came down into her virginal womb as a new Adam into his earthly paradise, to take his delight there and produce hidden wonders of grace." (TD 18) "God the Holy Spirit, who does not produce any divine person, became fruitful through Mary whom he espoused. It was with her, in her and of her that he produced his masterpiece, God-made-man, and that he produces every day until the end of the world the members of the body of this adorable Head. For this reason the more he finds Mary his dear and inseparable spouse in a soul, the more powerful and effective he becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ." (TD 20) "The plan that the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity followed in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, they will follow each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church and they will pursue it to the end time, in the last coming of Jesus Christ." (TD 22)

Fr. Bossard tells us, "TD 22 is itself a small masterwork of profundity, concision, and preciseness. In it, Montfort seeks the light within the mystery of Incarnation that will allow him to affirm that Mary's maternal mission toward us will continue to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ." (Jesus Living in Mary, p. 1217) "The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the World, is acknowledged and honoured as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. Redeemed by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit." (LG 53)

2. As **Mary cooperated with God** and said 'Yes' to Him, she has not only become the Mother of the Redeemer but also our Mother. She is really our Spiritual Mother. "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.” (TD 32) “This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the fulfillment of all the elect.” (LG 62)

“Mary in a true sense is our mother too, because by her free consent (which the grace of God enabled her to give), she conceived her Son for the redemption of the world, and so played a decisive role in the history of salvation, and not just in the private life-story of Jesus.” (Karl Rahner, *Mary Mother of the Lord*, p. 33) “The sublime position which Mary occupies as one redeemed through Christ is closely connected with her motherhood of Christ and of all humankind.” (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, p. 48) “Mary conceived in her womb the Incarnate Word of the Father when she received in her heart the good news of the coming of the Redeemer and the mission entrusted to her. Her faith response, 'Here I am, the Lord's servant,' is faith filled with trust and hope. Her faith is total surrender and trust in God which engender ongoing vigilance for the signs of God's will and bring forth love for the life of the world.” (Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., *Mary and your everyday life*, p. 26)

3. **Mary played her role in the life of Jesus.** Jesus willed to begin his miracles through Mary. “It was by her word that Jesus sanctified St. John the Baptist... At the wedding in Cana he changed water into wine at her humble prayer... He began and continued his miracles through Mary and he will continue them through her until the end of time.” (TD 19) “This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death. It is shown first of all when Mary, arising in haste to go to visit Elizabeth, is greeted by her as blessed because of her belief.” (LG 57) “In the public life of Jesus, Mary makes significant appearances. This is so even at the very beginning, when at the marriage feast of Cana, moved with pity, she brought about by her intercession the beginning of miracles of the Messiah.” (LG 58)

"Jesus' miracle at Cana as a response to his Mother is a prophetic event. Each word and action is rich in meaning and opens us up new horizons. The word of Mary to the servants, a word that seems directed to each of us, deserves our special attention: 'Do whatever he tells you.' This is at the heart of true Marian Devotion. Mary our mother has no greater desire than to draw all our attention, love, and obedience to Jesus. We honour her as we follow him and do whatever he tells us by his word, grace, life and death as well as all the events of his life." (Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., *Mary and your everyday life*, p. 93)

4. **Jesus on the cross gave us his Mother as our Mother.** “Even at Christ’s death Mary had to be present so that he might be united to her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father.” (TD 18) Referring to Jn 19: 25-27, Montfort has said, “Let us, so to speak bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreservedly to her.” (LEW 211) “The divine motherhood occurs, by God’s grace, as a freely willed conception, receiving for the world the grace that the Incarnation brings; it is a true partnership with God’s action for mankind. When Scripture (John 19: 25-27) shows Mary by the cross, under the tree of redemption, as simply the ‘woman’ (the second Eve and the mother of the redeemed), we can see that the function of conceiving redemptive grace, which belongs to her as Christ’s mother, was carried further by her, throughout her whole life, until the ‘hour’ of the redemption.” (Karl Rahner, *Mary Mother of the Lord*, p. 13) “In the fullest sense Mary was the mother both of

Christ crucified and of the Mystical Body which was brought into being by the crucifixion... We, as Christians, are all born of this mutual sacrificial and suffering love of Jesus and his mother.” (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, p. 115)

5. **Mary has a unique role in the Church.** Mary, at the inception of the Church, presided over its birth under the action of the Spirit, as she did at the time of the birth of Jesus. (Ref. Acts 1:14) “By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, by which Mary is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with His singular graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church.” (LG 63) “Mary, the spouse of the Holy Spirit, continuously invites the whole Church and each of us to an intensive life of prayer, to trust in the Lord, to praise and give thanks and thus be faithful to the Covenant. An authentic devotion to Mary goes hand in hand with a confirmed faith in the Holy Spirit and an increasing docility to his grace.” (Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., *Mary and your everyday life*, p. 121) “Mary is still in the world, still at the heart of the Church, with the living presence of someone alive. She may be invisible to the eyes of the body, but she is not absent. She is present, in a real way, however ineffable, still active among us despite her phenomenological imperceptibility. The faithful achieve their relationship with her not only through the memory of her person and her deeds, but by immediate contact with her living, risen person. Only the pure of heart can comprehend how intimate, tender, maternal, and embracing our relationship with our Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, can be.” (Leonardo Boff ofm, *The Maternal face of God*, Collins Sons & Co Ltd, Glasgow, 1979, p. 173)

6. **Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth.** “Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace as Jesus is king by nature and by conquest.” (TD 36) “Taken up to heaven, Mary did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gift of eternal salvation.” (LG 62) Mary has an important role to play in the sanctification of souls. “The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the incarnation, is adhered 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.” (TD 22) The Holy Spirit makes use of Mary to distribute all the graces. “God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses so that she distributes all his gifts to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills.” (TD 25) “By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on the earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into the happiness of their true home. Therefore the B.V. is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix.” (LG 62)

“Mary, as the maternal partner in Christ’s redemptive activity, shared in his power as Lord by virtue of her assumption into heaven. Her resurrection is the ‘constitution in power’ of her motherhood with regard to all men. Her intercession, on our behalf in , cannot be conceived as a pale reflection of her share in the Redemption here on earth. Mary, in heaven, is our mother ‘in power’, just as Jesus, in heaven, is the ‘Son of God in power’, (Rom. 1:4)... In heaven, Mary continues in a glorified manner the maternal task which she began on earth.” (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, p. 118) “Now, which other mediation, in immediate light of the mediation of Christ, has provided the mightiest and most intimate link among human beings? That of the Blessed Virgin Mary. No one has ever been more intimately united to all of humanity than Mary, through her righteousness and her exemption from all sin. Thus, Mary and Jesus must be conceived of as discrete moments in the same mystery of God’s salvific self-communication. God has saved us through the Holy Spirit in that Person’s mission to Mary and through her to the community of saints, in whom the Holy Spirit now dwells until the

consummation of the world." (Leonardo Boff ofm, The Maternal face of God, Collins Sons & Co Ltd, Glasgow, 1979, pp. 180,181)

7. Montfort tells us that **Mary is needed in the formation of the Apostles of the latter times.** According to the belief of the time, Montfort thought that the end of the world was approaching. Hence he has added one more reason to have devotion to Mary, namely, "In these latter times Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, power and grace: in mercy, to bring back and welcome lovingly the poor sinners and wanderers who are to be converted and return to the Catholic Church; in power, to combat the enemies of God... and finally, she must shine forth in grace to inspire and support the valiant soldiers and loyal servants of J.C. who are fighting for his cause." (TD50)

"Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of Almighty God, serving the ministry of redemption... Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert in their preaching: 'The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.' Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her 'the Mother of the living' and still more often they say: 'death through Eve, life through Mary'." (LG 56) Montfort, as well as Vatican II, has enumerated many reasons to show why we should have a true devotion to Mary. Great theologians also do the same.

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### III

#### Basic Principles of Devotion to Mary

1. **True Devotion to Mary is Christocentric.** Montfort has proposed True Devotion to Mary as a means to get united to Christ. "Jesus 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 the end of everything... He alone is everything to us and he alone can satisfy all our desires. We are given no other name under heaven by which we can be saved." (TD 61) "If then we are establishing sound devotion to Our Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to Our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching J.C." (TD 62) "In the first place it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them." (Pope Paul VI, Marialis Cultus, 25) Devotion to Mary is a means and not an end in itself.

"There is but one Mediator as we know from the words of the Apostle, 'for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as redemption for all.' (1 Tim. 2:5-6) The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. For all the salvific influence of the B.V. on men originates, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure." (LG 60) "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. The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary. It knows it through unflinching experience of it and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may the more intimately adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer." (LG 62) "The universal mediation of Christ's mother and ours is not a mediation of a head in relation to the members, but a mediation of a member among members – an exceptional and unique member of the Mystical Body... Her specific influence and mediation of grace with regard to us are also included in her motherhood... The mystery of

Mary, Christ's most beautiful creation, emerges as an organic mystery, based on the fundamental privilege of concrete motherhood freely accepted in faith... If we consider the mystery from this point of view (of faith), we are bound to accept as our basic Mariological principles, that Mary is the new Eve, the prototype of the Church and of every redeemed life." (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, pp. 122, 138, 139)

**2. We belong to Jesus and Mary:** After stating his first principle of Christological absolutism with a force and vehemence which would be difficult to equal, Montfort presents additional reasons for devotion to Mary. "What I say in an absolute sense of our Lord, I say in a relative sense of our Blessed Lady. Jesus, in choosing her as his inseparable associate in his life, death, glory and power in heaven and on earth, has given her by grace in his kingdom all the same rights and privileges and he possesses by nature. 'All that belongs to God by nature belongs to Mary,' say the saints, and, according to them, just as Jesus and Mary have the same will and the same power, they have also the same subjects, servants and slaves." (TD 74) Mary's relative place with respect to Jesus is once again underscored with remarkable theological accuracy.

**3. Mary can help us to rid ourselves of what is evil in us:** False cravings and evil tendencies blur our vision concerning our spiritual goals. Worldly ideas and attractions, inordinate desire for pleasure and thirst for power and worldly ambitions constantly try to block our way in our march toward spiritual perfection. "Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us... We must choose among all the devotions to the B.V. the one which will lead us most surely to this dying to self." (TD 78, 82)

**4. It is good to have Mary as our mediator with Christ:** As we have already seen 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. Montfort coined the phrase *To Jesus Through Mary*. Now we usually say, "To Jesus with Mary". Mary can certainly help us to get united to Christ. "Let us not be afraid to say with St. Bernard that we need a mediator with the Mediator Himself and the divinely honoured Mary is the one most able to fulfill this office of love. Through her, Jesus came to us; through her we should go to Him." (TD 85)

**5. It is difficult to keep safely the graces received from God:** Basing himself on the teachings of Paul and Peter, Montfort tells us that it is very difficult for us to keep the graces and treasures we have received from God. "Yet we, who have this spiritual treasure, are like common clay pots, in order to show that that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us." (2Cor. 4:7) "Be alert, be on the watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8) Our weakness, the temptation from the evil one and the corrupting influence of the world, make it difficult for us to persevere. Let us entrust everything to Mary. (Ref. TD 87f)

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#### IV True Devotion to Mary

**Montfort has defined true devotion to Mary:** Montfort has differentiated two types of devotions to Mary: true devotion to Mary and perfect devotion to Mary. True devotion is compulsory for all Catholics while the perfect devotion is meant for selected people. Montfort tells us, "True Devotion consists in a full appreciation of the privileges and dignity of Our Lady; in expressing our gratitude for her goodness to us; in zealously promoting devotion to her; in

constantly appealing for her help; in being completely dependent on her; and in placing firm reliance and loving confidence in her motherly goodness.” (LEW 215) Vatican II too has given us a definition: “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.” (LG 67)

“An explicit veneration of Mary is a vitally necessary condition for the full flowering and normal adult maturity of Christian life. Its distinctive quality is, however, based on the objective fact of God’s having geared the mystery of Mary-as a singular but real structural principle-to the redemptive mystery of Christ and hence to the essential mystery of our religious life. This implies that a task of great importance for all men was assigned by God to Mary in connection with the vocation of mankind given to us in the person of Christ. Her unique place within the plan of salvation is an appeal made by God to all men. We are bound, in faith and love, to recognize this call and to give our assent to it, because we must, in our constantly growing consciousness of faith, enter into the scheme of salvation in accordance with God’s objective will... The Christian who is explicitly aware of the part allocated to Mary in God’s plan of salvation cannot afford to neglect the Blessed Virgin in his explicit life of faith. If he does so, he will inevitably do a grave injustice to his divine vocation, misinterpret the objective and basic features of the Christian way of life and remain deaf to God’s loving care.” (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, pp. 176,177)

Devotion to Mary existed from the first century onwards. The Gospel narratives reveal to us how the early Christians loved Mary and held her in high esteem. Marian theology and Marian devotion go back to apostolic times and the Gospel passages on Mary originated in the early Christian communities as preached by the Apostles and the disciples. These passages reflect the memory of the primitive community about her. The Annunciation of Our Lord and Mary's fiat reveal to us the unique role given to Mary in the salvation history. "If nothing else but the Annunciation story existed, her unique greatness would be truly seen. The theme of the woman associated with the Messiah reaches here a totally unexpected fulfillment. The ruah (Spirit) of the Old Testament is immeasurably surpassed when, for the first time, he descends on a woman, and the descent is preceded by her consent, sought and given." (Michale O'Carrol CSSp, *Mary, Mother of God*, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Theological Publications of India, p.638)

The infancy narratives "represent a post-Resurrection theology, with Jesus' dignity in terms of his divine sonship and messiahship already well developed. Written between AD 60 and 80, the infancy narratives presuppose Mary's presence at the heart of the community, as we find intimated in Acts 1:14. By the time they were written, Mary had communicated to the apostles both the mysteries of her life and the fruit of her reflection. Luke actually speaks of the secrets she kept in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51). John, after Jesus' death and resurrection, has taken her into his home and associated her to his mission (John 19:27). It is no easy task to distinguish historical event from theological reflection in the Gospels. The Christian community and its evangelists are theologians. Almost everything centres on Jesus. Mary appears as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament." (Leonardo Boff, OFM., *The Maternal Face of God*, p. 110)

During the Visitation, Elizabeth praised Mary saying, "Blessed are you who believed." (Lk 1:45) and thus she became the first person among the generations who will call her blessed.

"To congratulate Mary in this spirit is to profess the system of values which the Messiah later proposed in the beatitudes, the values of poverty and humility (Mt 5). Thus the veneration of Mary as Messianic Mother and believer began in the Christian communities. The Church, overflowing with eschatological joy, venerated Mary... Since Luke literally attributed the Magnificat to Mary, we must assume that the contents of the hymn are consistent with the image of Mary according to tradition known by the evangelist. Therefore, even indirectly, the Magnificat tells us more than just Mary's feelings following the conception. It shows us Mary's features as seen by the primitive post-paschal community." (Fr. Joseph Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, Claretian Publications, 1990, p. 93, 94)

St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred in 107, believed in the virginal conception of Jesus. St. Justin, who was martyred about 165, St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons and martyred about the year 200 and St. Ephrem (+ 372) considered Mary the New Eve and they have left us beautiful passages on her. St. Irenaeus collected the teachings of St. Polycarpe, John's disciple. In his writings he has exalted the divine maternity of Mary. Tertullian (+ 222) considered the virginal conception as a dogma taught by the Church.

St. Paul considered Christ as the second Adam. "But it was only with Justin Martyr, the apologist and philosopher (died ca A.D. 165), that Marian themes and particularly Jesus' virginal conception gained some prominence in theological argument.. Justin was followed by Irenaeus in this symbolic expansion of Mary's significance; and it was Irenaeus (writing ca. A.D. 180) who spelled the basis of this typology in the Pauline analogy of Adam and Christ... For Irenaeus, Mariological themes are linked not only to Christological concerns in the narrow sense but, as the Eve-Mary typology to his total view of salvation history and his theory recapitulation." (Mary in the New Testament, p. 254 ff) The Eastern Church's tradition about the Immaculate Conception of Mary dates back to the fourth century. The Eastern tradition began with St. Ephrem (306-372) wrote in one of his poems: You (Christ) alone and your mother/ are more beautiful than any others;/ For there is no blemish in you/ Nor any stains upon your mother./ Who of my children/ Can compare in beauty to these?"

St. Hilary, who became the Bishop of Poitiers in 350, too, believed in the virginal conception of Jesus. St. Ambrose (+ 397) called Mary the Mother of God and St. Jerome (+ 420) also helped to develop devotion toward Mary in the West. St. Augustine (+ 430) led the Western Church to take a firm positive attitude toward Mary and he insisted upon the holiness of Mary. The Council of Ephesus in 431 fought strenuously for her title as Theotokos, Birth-giver of God. After the Council of Ephesus, the Eastern Church started celebrating the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady. In Jerusalem the celebration of the Dormition (Assumption) of Our Lady on August 15 started by the middle of the fifth century. Towards the year 600, the emperor Maurice of Constantinople ordered that the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady should be celebrated on 15th August throughout the empire. In the Eastern Church, December 26 was celebrated in honour of the Mother of God. In the 8th century, the Byzantine Church composed the beautiful Akathist hymn for the feast of the Annunciation.

1. **“True devotion to Mary 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. **“It is trustful**, that is to say, it fills us with confidence in the B.V., the confidence a child has for its 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. **"True devotion to Mary 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. **"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 temptations of the devil." (TD 109)
5. **"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)

"God the Holy Spirit communicated His unspeakable gifts to Mary, His faithful spouse, and he chose her as the dispensatrix of all He possesses; so that she distributes all His gifts and graces to whom she wills, in the measure she wills, how she wills and when she wills; nor does He give any heavenly gift to anyone which does not pass through her virginal hands." (TD 25)  
"If Jesus Christ, the Head of mankind, is born in her, the predestinate, who are members of this Head, must also, by a necessary consequence, be born in her." (TD 32)  
"When the Holy Spirit finds Mary in a soul, He flies there and enters fully; He communicates Himself to that soul in abundance and to the extent that it makes room for His Spouse." (TD 36)

"The importance Mary had in the earthly life history of redemption has become valid and irrevocable, precisely because she has entered by death into her ultimate glory and perfection. Now none has had a profounder, more comprehensive function, or one more decisive for the whole divine plan, than the Blessed Virgin... God looks upon this eternal Yes of the Blessed Virgin, the Yes on which he willed, in this order of creation, the salvation of us all, quite directly and absolutely and for all to depend." (Karl Rahner, *Mary Mother of the Lord*, pp. 100,101) On November 21, 1964, Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of the solemn promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution, "*Lumen Gentium*", proclaimed the Most Holy Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Church. While speaking in the Council Hall, he underlined certain important theological aspects concerning chapter eight of the same document. "I believe it is opportune to consecrate in this public assembly, a title in honour of the Virgin as suggested by many from different parts of the Catholic world, a title, which is particularly dear to us, because it beautifully synthesizes the privileged place of Mary in the Church, as accepted by the Council. Hence it is for her glory and for our consolation that we proclaim the Most Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Church, that is, of all the people of God, and also of the faithful."

Some Catholics may say that devotion to Mary is optional or even not necessary. Vat II has this answer for them, "This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time, admonishes all the sons and daughters 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 the images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed." (LG 67) Bishop J. Sheen has given the following answer: "It may be objected: 'Our Lord is enough

for me. I have no need of her'. But He needed her, whether we do or not. And, what is more important, Our Blessed Lord gave us His Mother as our Mother." (Fulton J. Sheen, *The World's first love*, p. 54)

**Interior practices of the true devotion to Mary:** There are several interior practices. "Here, in brief, are the principal ones: 1. to honour her as the worthy Mother of God, by the cult of hyperdulia: that is, to esteem and honour her more than all the other saints as the masterpiece of grace and the foremost after Jesus Christ, true God and true Man; 2. to meditate on her virtues, her privileges, and her actions; 3. to contemplate her greatness; 4. to offer to her acts of love, of praise, and of thanksgiving; 5. to invoke her with all our heart; 6. to offer and unite ourselves to her; 7. to perform all our actions with the intention of pleasing her; 8. to begin, continue and finish all our actions through her, in her, with her and for her, in order to do them through Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, our Last End." (TD 115)

**Exterior practices of the true devotion to Mary:** There are several exterior practices among these are the principal ones: "1. to enroll ourselves in her Confraternities and enter her Sodality; 2. to join the religious Congregations founded in her honour; 3. to proclaim her praises; 4. to give alms, to fast and to practice interior and exterior mortifications in her honour; 5. to wear her livery, such as the rosary, the scapular, or the little chain; 6. to recite with attention, devotion either the Rosary, composed of fifteen decades of Hail Marys in honour of the fifteen principal mysteries of Jesus Christ; or else the Chaplet of five decades which is a third of the Rosary...; 7. to sing hymns and have hymns sung in her honour; 8. to make genuflections or reverences to her a certain number of times, while saying, for example, sixty or a hundred times every morning, Ave Maria, Virgo Fidelis, to obtain from God, by her intercession, fidelity to His graces throughout the day; and in the evening, the Ave Maria, Mater Misericordiae, to ask through her pardon of God for sins committed during the day; 9. to take charge of her Confraternities, to decorate her altars, to crown and adorn her statues; 10. to carry her images or to have them carried in procession, and to wear one as a powerful protection against the Evil One; 11. to have her statues made or her name engraved, and placed in churches, or in houses, and on the gates and entries of towns, churches and houses; 12. to consecrate oneself to her in a special and solemn manner." (TD 116)

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## V

### **Perfect Devotion to Mary**

There is a distinction between true devotion to Mary and perfect devotion to Mary. The first is to be practiced by all Catholics, while the second is to be practiced by the one "to whom the Spirit of Jesus Christ will reveal this secret. He, Himself, will lead the faithful soul to it, there to advance from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, from light to light, reaching at last the transformation of self into Jesus Christ, and the plenitude of His age on earth, and His glory in heaven." (TD 119)

St. Montfort in his first book, "The Love of Eternal Wisdom" presents true and tender devotion to Mary as the best means to get united to Jesus Christ. "The greatest means of all, and the most wonderful of all secrets for obtaining and preserving divine Wisdom is a loving and genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin." (LEW 203) This perfect devotion is absolutely Christocentric. Montfort says, "As our whole perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ, it follows that the most perfect of all devotions is clearly the one which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, as Mary is of all creatures the most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that of all devotions, the one that most

consecrates and conforms a soul to Our Lord is the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, His Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing else than a perfect and entire consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach. In other words, it is a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of Baptism." (TD 120)

"This devotion consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. We must give her: 1. our body, with its senses and members; 2. our soul, with all its powers; 3. our material possessions, present, and the future; 4. our interior and spiritual possessions, that is, our merits, virtues and good works past, present and future; in a word, all that we have in the order of nature, of grace, and all that we may possess in the future in the order of nature, of grace and of glory; this we give without any reserve." (TD 121) Perfect devotion "consists in consecrating ourselves entirely to her and to Jesus through her as their slaves. It involves consecrating to her completely and for all eternity our body and soul, our possessions both spiritual and material, the atoning value and the merits of our good actions and our right to dispose of them. In short, it involves the offering of all we have acquired in the past, all we actually possess at the moment, and we will acquire in the future." (LEW 219)

This consecration to Jesus through Mary has a long history. The 4<sup>th</sup> century prayer "Sub tuum praesidium" (We fly to you O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities, but ever deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen) testifies to the childlike tendency of Christians to take refuge under the protection of the Mother of God, from the early times. St. Ildephonsus of Toledo (d 667) is usually considered as the first major representative of the spirituality of "Marian slavery", which developed into Marian Consecration. Fr. Arthur Burton Calkins in his book, "John Paul II's program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment", has pointed out the major stages in the history of this consecration. "St. Ildephonsus of Toledo (d. 667) is usually considered the first major representative of the spirituality of 'Marian slavery' which eventually develops into what is known as Marian Consecration... The next major witness to the development of the tradition is the great Doctor of the Church, St. John of Damascus (d. 749). The last of the great Eastern Fathers of the Church interprets the name of Mary according to Syrian etymology to mean 'lady' or 'mistress'... The Confraternities of the Holy Slavery of Mary germinated in the soil of Spain. On Aug. 2, 1595, Sr. Agnes of St. Paul Alcala de Henares committed herself as a slave of Mary." (Arthur Burton Calkins, *Totus Tuus, John Paul II's Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment*, Academy of the Immaculate, Libertyville, Illinois, 1992, pp. 46, 47, 55)

Cardinal Berulle, the originator the French School of Spirituality, on his return from Spain, wrote the book entitled "Offering to Holy Virgin in a state of dependence and servitude". The formula of consecration he used was quite theocentric and Christocentric. Card. Berulle refers to the consecration by baptism, by which God Himself consecrates us to Him. Montfort inherited this teaching, practiced it, developed it and gave it a form, which is original. He considered this devotion as living fully according to Baptismal Vows, and the renewal of the vows of baptism is incorporated into the consecration formula. (Ref. TD 120) The consecration mentioned by him is a way to actualize, realize and vivify what was promised initially at baptism. On Oct. 31, 1942, Pope Pius XII consecrated mankind to The Immaculate Heart of Mary. On May 13, 1982, Pope John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On May 13, 1982, Pope John Paul II said at Fatima, "Consecrating ourselves to Mary means accepting her help to offer ourselves and the whole mankind to Him who is holy,

infinitely holy; it means accepting her help, by having recourse to her motherly heart, which beneath the Cross was opened to love for every human being, for the whole world, in order to offer the world, the individual human being, mankind as a whole, and all the nations to Him who is infinitely holy.”

Fr. J. Patrick Gaffney, s.m.m., tells us that Mary is the “mysterious milieu”, the atmosphere in which our union with God is readily facilitated. “Mary is the ‘mysterious milieu’, the atmosphere, as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote after reading Montfort, which only enhances, intensifies this union. To withdraw from this atmosphere, this milieu which God has given us, to try to circumvent the quickening catalyst of Mary in salvation history; it is to show disrespect for God. At least implicitly, everyone comes to Jesus through the means He takes to come to us, through Mary.” (Montfort and the Marian Consecration, p. 35)

Many theologians have no problem in stating that we are not only consecrated to Jesus but also to Mary. Fr. Rahner has no difficulty in accepting this consecration to Mary. “We consecrate ourselves to you, holy Virgin and Mother, because we are consecrated to you. Just as we are not only built on the corner-stone Jesus Christ, but also on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, so too our life and salvation is ever dependent on your consent, on your faith and fruit of your womb. So when we say that we wish to be consecrated to you, we are only proclaiming our willingness to be, and to accept in mind and heart and action both interior and exterior, what we really are. By such a consecration, we are only making the attempt to carry out, in our own life-history, the plan of redemption God laid down and in which he has already made his dispositions for us. We come to you, then, because in you our salvation came to be, was conceived by you.” (Karl Rahner, Mary Mother of the Lord, p. 106)

The consecration taught by St. Montfort is unique because of its totality. It is a gift of oneself, body, soul, all possessions including the value of good works. It is a formal personal consecration made by the person concerned. There is not only a renewal of the baptismal vows but there are also an explicit acceptance of the role of Mary in the plan of salvation, a consecration of oneself entirely to Jesus through the hands of Mary and an intercession to Mary to obtain Wisdom of God and to become fully mature with the fullness which Jesus possessed on earth, and with the fullness of his glory in heaven. The consecration can be renewed every year or or every day. Still Montfort warns us, “It is not enough to give ourselves just once as a slave to Jesus through Mary, nor is it enough to renew that consecration once a month or once a week. This alone would make it just a passing devotion and would not raise the soul to the level of holiness which it is capable of reaching... The chief difficulty is to enter into its spirit, which requires an interior dependence on Mary, and effectively becoming her slave and the slave of Jesus through her.” (Secret of Mary, No. 44)

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## VI

### Motives for this Perfect Devotion

**First Motive - By this devotion we give ourselves up entirely to the service of God:** "This devotion makes us give Jesus and Mary, without reserve, all our thoughts, words, actions and sufferings and every moment of our lives." (TD 136) "There is no practice other than this by which we easily rid ourselves of a certain sense of ownership which slips imperceptibly into even our best actions. This special grace our loving Jesus grants us in reward for the heroic and unselfish acting of handing over to him through the hands of Mary the full value of all our good

works." (TD 137) "St. Bernard says, 'Jesus has bought me entirely by giving Himself entirely.' Is it not simple justice and gratitude that we should give Him all we possibly can?" (TD 138)

**Second Motive - By this devotion we imitate the example given us by Jesus Christ and by God Himself; and we practice humility:** "It is just in itself and advantageous to our souls to consecrate ourselves entirely to the Most Blessed Virgin by this practice, in order to belong more perfectly to Jesus Christ... This Infinite Wisdom, who had a boundless desire to glorify God, His Father, and to save mankind, found no shorter or more perfect means to accomplish this than to submit Himself in all things to the Most Blessed Virgin... Oh! How greatly do we glorify God, when, in imitation of Jesus, we submit ourselves to Mary!" (TD 139) Submission to Mary is essential to Montfortian spirituality. "Moreover, this devotion is a practice of deep humility, a virtue which God loves above all the other virtues..., Make use always of the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin, whether it be to appear before Him, to speak to Him, to approach Him, to offer Him something or to unite and consecrate ourselves to Him." (TD 143)

**Third Motive - This devotion obtains for us the favours of Our Lady:** 1. "The Most Blessed Virgin, who is a Mother of gentleness and mercy and who never allows herself to be outdone in love and liberality, seeing that a soul gives itself to her to honour and serve her, stripping itself of all it holds dear in order to adorn her, gives herself completely and in an ineffable manner to him who gives all to her. She causes him to be engulfed in the abyss of her graces; she adorns him with her merits; she upholds him with her power; she enlightens him with her radiance; she inflames him with her love; she communicates to him her virtues, her humility, her faith, her purity, etc.; she makes herself his surety, his supplement, and his very all with Jesus." (TD 144) 2. "Since by this devotion, we give Our Lord by the hands of His holy Mother, all our good works, this loving Mistress cleanses them and beautifies them and makes them acceptable to her Son." (TD146)

**Fourth Motive - This devotion is an excellent means of giving greater glory to God:** "As Our Blessed Lady, to whom we cede the value and merit of our good actions, knows perfectly where God's greater glory is to be found and acts only for that end, a perfect servant of this good Mistress, totally consecrated to her can boldly affirm that the value of all his actions, thoughts and words is used for the greater glory of God." (TD 151)

**Fifth Motive - This devotion leads to union with Our Lord:** 1. "It is an **easy way**; it is the path which Jesus Christ opened in coming to us and in which there lies no obstacle in reaching Him...Here, it is true, we have hard battles to fight and great difficulties to overcome; but this loving Mother and Mistress makes herself so near, so present to her faithful servants, to lighten their darkness, to illuminate them in their doubts, to strengthen them in their fears, to uphold them in battle and in difficulty that truly in comparison with other ways, this virginal path in the quest for Christ is a way of roses and honey." (TD 152)

2. "This devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a **short way** to find Jesus Christ, either because we do not wander, or because, we walk in it with greater joy and facility, and consequently with more promptitude. We advance more in a short period of submission to and dependence on Mary than in whole years of self-love and self-reliance." (TD 155)

3. "This devotion to Our Blessed Lady is a **perfect way** to go to Jesus Christ and unite ourselves to Him, for the divine Mary is the most perfect and the most holy of mere creatures, and because Jesus Christ, who came to us in a perfect manner, chose no other path for His great and wondrous journey." (TD 157)

4. "This devotion to Our Blessed Lady is a **secure way** to go to Jesus and to acquire perfection by uniting us with him because the devotion which I teach is not new." (TD 159) "This devotion is a **secure means** of going to Jesus Christ, because it is characteristic of Our Blessed Lady to lead us securely to Jesus Christ, just as it is characteristic of Jesus Christ to lead

us to the Eternal Father. Let not spiritual persons erroneously believe that Mary is a hindrance to them in attaining divine union." (TD 164)

**Sixth Motive - This devotion gives great interior liberty:** "The practice of this devotion gives great interior liberty - the liberty of the children of God - to those who faithfully practice it... It (a) delivers us from all such scruples and servile fear as would narrow, imprison, and perplex our soul; (b) broadens our heart with holy confidence in God, making us look upon Him as our Father; (c) breathes into us a tender and filial love." (TD 169)

**Seventh Motive - By this devotion we greatly benefit our neighbour:** "By this practice we exercise charity towards our neighbour in a most eminent manner, for we give him, through the hands of Mary, all our most precious possessions, which are the satisfactory and impetratory value of all our good works without excepting the least good thought or the least little suffering. We consent that any satisfaction we have acquired or will acquire until the day of our death should be used, according to the will of Our Blessed Lady, for the conversion of sinners or the relief of the souls in purgatory." (TD 171)

**Eighth Motive - This devotion is an admirable means of perseverance:** "By this devotion, we confide to Mary, the faithful Virgin, all we possess; we choose her as the universal guardian of all our possessions in the order of nature and of grace. It is in her fidelity that we trust, on her strength that we rely, on her mercy and charity that we base ourselves, so that she may guard and increase our virtues and merits despite the devil, the world, and the flesh, who strive to rob us of them." (TD 173) "This is what St. Bernard says in explicit terms to encourage us to adopt this practice: 'When Mary upholds you, you will not fall; when she protects you, you need not fear; when she leads you, you will not weary; when she is favourable to you, you will reach the harbour of salvation.'" (TD 174) "So let faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin say boldly with St. John Damascene: 'With confidence in thee, O Mother of God, I shall be saved; with thy protection, I shall fear nothing; with thy help, I shall fight and disperse all my enemies; for devotion to thee is a weapon of salvation which God gives to those whom He wishes to save.'" (TD 182)

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## VII

### The Biblical Model of Jacob

Montfort saw in the story of Jacob an allegorical figure of all the truths concerning the Blessed Virgin and her children and servants. "Before explaining this beautiful story, let me remind you that, according to the early Fathers and the interpreters of Holy Scripture, Jacob is the type of Our Lord and of souls who are saved, and Esau is the type of souls who are condemned." (TD 185) "Jacob was submissive to his mother in all things. He obeyed her entirely in everything, promptly without delay and lovingly without complaint... He had the utmost confidence in his mother." (TD 193, 194) "The elect have a great love for our Lady and honour her truly as their Mother and Queen. They love her not merely in word but in deed. They honour her not just outwardly, but from the depths of their heart... They are subject and obedient to our Lady, their good Mother, and here they are simply following the example set by our Lord himself, who spent thirty of the thirty-three years he lived on earth glorifying God his Father in perfect and entire submission to his holy Mother. (TD 197, 198) "The elect have great confidence in the goodness and power of the Blessed Virgin, their dear Mother, and incessantly implore her help... Finally, chosen souls keep to the ways of the Blessed Virgin, their loving Mother - that is, they imitate her." (TD 199, 200) Montfort has mentioned in Nos. 201-212 the services that Mary does to her faithful servants:

**1. She loves them.** She loves them because they have consecrated themselves entirely to her. Her love is active and obtains for them the blessings of their heavenly Father. She gives them good counsel.

**2. She provides for them.** She provides them with everything for body and soul. As Mary is the Treasurer of graces of God, she puts aside a good portion to nourish and sustain them.

**3. She leads them.** She directs them according to the will of her Son. She prevents them from taking dangerous steps; she leads them by the hand along the paths of justice; she upholds them when they are about to fall; she raises them when they have fallen; she scolds them like a loving mother when they fail; and sometimes she even lovingly punishes them.

**4. She defends and protects them.** She hides them under her protecting wing as a hen does her chicks. To guard them from the vulture she hovers over them, and accompanies them as an army in battle array.

**5. She intercedes for them.** She intercedes for them with her Son, to appease him with her prayers, to unite them to him most intimately and to preserve that union. She obtains for them the blessings of the Heavenly Father and union with Jesus Christ and keeps them in Jesus Christ and keeps Jesus Christ in them. She guards them, watches over them day and night, lest they lose the grace of God and fall into the snares of their enemies.

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## VIII

### The Effects of Perfect Devotion to Mary

**First Effect - Knowledge and contempt of self:** In the light that the Holy Spirit will give you through Mary, you will know your depravity, your evil nature and your incapability of doing any good which does not flow from God.

**Second Effect - Participation in Mary's Faith:** Mary will share with you that faith which, when she was on earth, was greater than that of all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Saints. Pure faith will be evident in your conduct. A lively faith will enable you to perform your actions only from the motive of pure love; a firm faith will help you to remain steadfast in the midst of storms; a courageous faith will help you to undertake and carry through great things for God and the salvation of souls and a faith which will be your blazing torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine Wisdom and the all-powerful weapon you will use to enlighten those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and need the burning gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead in sin, to move and convert by gentle and convincing word hearts of marble and lastly to resist the devil and all enemies of salvation. (Ref. TD 214)

**Third Effect - The grace of pure love:** Mary will open and enlarge your heart to run in the way of the commandments of her Son with the holy freedom of the children of God and fill it with the pure love of which she holds the treasury. You will look upon Him as your loving Father, whom you will ever try to please and with whom you will converse confidently, as a child with its father. (Ref. TD 215)

**Fourth Effect - Great confidence in God and in Mary:** Mary will fill you with great confidence in God and in herself: 1. because you will no longer approach Jesus Christ by yourself, but always through this loving Mother; 2. because, as you have given her all your merits, graces and satisfactions to dispose of as she pleases, she will impart to you her virtues and clothe you in her merits; 3. because, as you have given yourself entirely to her, body and soul, she, who is liberal with the liberal and more liberal even than the most liberal, will, in her turn, give herself to you in a marvelous but real manner; 4. because, having given her in trust all

the good which is in you, that she may dispose of it or keep it, you will have less confidence in yourself and much more in her, who is your treasury. (Ref. TD 216)

**Fifth Effect - Communication of the soul and spirit of Mary:** The soul of Mary will communicate itself to you to glorify the Lord. When will souls breathe Mary as the body breathe air? When that time comes wondrous things will take place here below, for the Holy Spirit finding His beloved Spouse reproduced in souls will come upon them in abundance, filling them with His gifts, particularly the gift of Wisdom, wherewith to work miracles of grace. (Ref. TD 217)

**Sixth Effect - Transformation of our souls into the image of Jesus Christ in the mould of Mary:** If Mary, who is the tree of life, is well cultivated in our soul by fidelity to the practices of this devotion, she will in due course bear fruit, and her fruit is none other than Jesus Christ. Please note that I say the saints are moulded in Mary. (Ref. TD 218, 219)

**Seventh Effect - The greater glory of Jesus Christ:** By this devotion, faithfully observed, you will give more glory to Jesus Christ in a month than by any other in many years. Here are my reasons: 1. Because, performing all your actions through the Blessed Virgin, you abandon your own intentions and you participate in the sublimity of her intentions which were so pure that she gave greater glory to God by the least of her actions. 2. Because the soul counting as nothing its own thoughts and actions, relying only on the dispositions of Mary in approaching and even speaking to Jesus, shows far more humility than other souls who act of themselves. 3. Because, Mary herself offers the gifts received from the soul to Jesus Christ, who is more glorified than if that soul offered them with its own sinful hands. 4. Because you never think of Mary, without Mary thinking of God in your stead; you never praise or honour Mary without Mary praising and honouring God. (Ref. TD 222-225)

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## IX

### Exterior Practices of Perfect Devotion to Mary

Although this devotion is essentially interior, it also has its exterior practices which are not to be neglected, because external practices, properly performed, help the interior ones.

**1. The Consecration and its preparatory Exercises:** Those who desire to follow the Perfect Devotion should undergo a thirty-three day preparation before making the consecration. The first twelve days must be spent to rid themselves of the spirit of the world, which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ. (Ref. TD 227) Everyday during these twelve days I should examine my conscience to see whether I am led by worldly spirit and attitudes. To avoid sin in my life should become a life goal. Suitable Gospel passages should be meditated upon. Montfort has spoken about the wisdom of the world in numbers 75-83 of The Love of Eternal Wisdom. One must 1. become conscious of the spirit of the world in him which is opposed to the Spirit of Christ 2. find out what in him has the mark of the spirit of the world which has to be corrected and 3. ask of Jesus and Mary to liberate him from it; daily recite the hymn "Come, O Holy Spirit" and the Litany of the Holy Spirit; daily meditate and reflect on one or two passages from the Holy Scripture or from Montfort's writings. This is followed by three weeks.

**During the first week,** those, who like to make the consecration, "should offer up all their prayers and acts of devotion to acquire knowledge of themselves and sorrow for their sins." (TD 228) Daily recite the hymn "Come, O Holy Spirit" or the Litany of the Holy Spirit and the Litany of Montfort. They should enter into this week with humility, serenity, and with a desire to know the truth; it is not a question first of all of looking at their defects but of allowing themselves to be looked at by Jesus and Mary who love them. They should look at their own life-history, at the



progress made, important events, breaking points, decisive turning points. They should look at themselves in the light of Scripture and of Montfortian writings.

This devotion does not work like a magic nor like a miracle. It can be practiced only by those who are eager to "become perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48) and only by those "who do violence can seize it" (Mt 11:12). The great impediment to spiritual growth is laziness. Mr. M. Scott Peck in his book "The road less travelled" has made this remark concerning laziness. "In the struggle to help patients grow, I found that my chief enemy invariably was their laziness. And I became aware in myself of a similar reluctance to extend myself to new areas of thought, responsibility and maturation. One thing I clearly had in common with all mankind was my laziness. It was at this point that the serpent-and-the apple story suddenly made sense." Laziness looks to be a result of original sin.

**During the second week**, the devotees "should endeavour in all their prayers and works to acquire an understanding of the Blessed Virgin and ask the Holy Spirit for this grace." (TD 229) They should recite daily the litanies of the Blessed Virgin and Montfort. The best way to understand Mary is to meditate on the Scriptural passages and scenes on her. They should take time to contemplate her and pray to her. They should study about her role in the salvation history.

**During the third week**, the devotees "will strive to obtain the knowledge of Jesus Christ." (TD 230) Montfort was enamoured by the love of the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom for man. His first book "The Love of Eternal Wisdom" is a long contemplation on Jesus. During this week the devotees should recite daily the litanies of the holy name of Jesus and Montfort. Further, they should meditate upon the mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption. They should meditate mainly upon the passion and death of Christ.

**The Consecration:** "At the end of three weeks, they will go to confession and receive Holy Communion, with the intention of consecrating themselves to Jesus Christ as His slaves, by the hands of Mary. After Holy Communion, for which they should follow the method given later, they will recite the Act of their Consecration which is given at the end of this work; they ought to copy it or have it copied, unless they have a printed copy, and they should sign it on the same day." (TD 231) (Unfortunately the last pages of the manuscript have been lost. But fortunately, the consecration formula is found in the Love of Eternal Wisdom.) "Once a year at least, on the anniversary, they should renew this same consecration, and observe the same practices for three weeks. They might also renew it every month, and even every day, by these few words: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt*. 'I am all thine, and all that I have is thine, O my loving Jesus through Mary, Thy Holy Mother.'" (TD 233) Blessed John Paul II chose "*Tuus Totus*" as his motto. The devotees should do everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary and for Mary.

**2. The Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin:** "If it is not inconvenient, the devotees should recite every day of their lives the Little Crown of the B.V., which is composed of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys in honour of the twelve glorious privileges of Mary." (TD 234)

**3. The Wearing of Little Chains:** "It is very praiseworthy and helpful for those who have become slaves of Jesus and Mary to wear, in token of their slavery of love, a little chain blessed with a special blessing." (TD 236)

**4. Honouring the mystery of Incarnation:** "Loving slaves of Jesus and Mary should hold in high esteem devotion to Jesus, the Word of God, in the great mystery of the Incarnation, March 25<sup>th</sup>, which is the mystery proper to this devotion." (TD 243) "In the salvific design of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation constitutes the superabundant fulfillment of the promise made by God to man after original sin, after that first sin whose effects oppress the whole earthly history of man." (Redemptoris Mater, 11)

**5. Saying the Hail Mary and the Rosary:** “Those who accept this devotion should have a great love for the Hail Mary, or as it is called, the Angelic Salutation.” (TD 249) Montfort had a great devotion to the Rosary and he was known as the Father with a long Rosary. He preached Rosary everywhere, got parishes and groups to recite it daily and wrote the book known as “The Secret of the Most Holy Rosary”. “The Rosary is a priceless treasure which is inspired by God... It is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer by which we honour and learn to imitate the mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary... The Rosary said without the meditation on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would almost be a body without a soul.” (SR 1, 9, 61)

“As a Gospel prayer, centred on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the Angel’s announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist... Without contemplation the Rosary is a body without a soul.” (Pope Paul VI, *Mariialis Cultus* 46, 47) “To vocal prayer we must add mental prayer which enlightens the mind, inflames the heart and enables the soul to hear the voice of Wisdom, to relish His delights and to possess His treasures. I know no better means to establish in ourselves the kingdom of God and to draw Divine Wisdom to our soul than to pray vocally and mentally by saying the Holy Rosary, while meditating on its fifteen mysteries.” (LEW, 193)

Pope John Paul II has explained in his Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, the excellence of most holy Rosary. “The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium... With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.” (Pope John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 1)

**6. The Magnificat:** “To thank God for the graces he has given to our Lady, her consecrated ones will frequently say the Magnificat. (TD 255) It expresses praise and thanksgiving for our redemption and has been in popular use for centuries in the Church and it is very rich in its content.

**7. The Contempt of the world:** "The faithful slaves of Mary must greatly despise, hate and shun this corrupt world." (TD 256)

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## X

### Interior Practices of Perfect Devotion to Mary

Montfort has mentioned some very sanctifying interior practices: "doing everything THROUGH Mary, WITH Mary, IN Mary and FOR Mary, in order to do it more perfectly *through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus.*" (TD 257)

#### **1. Through Mary:**

“We must do everything through Mary, that is, we must obey her always and be led in all things by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God.: (TD 258)”The person who likes to be led by this spirit of Mary:

1. should renounce his own spirit, his views and his own will before doing anything...
2. We should give ourselves up to the spirit of Mary to be moved and directed as she wishes...
3. From time to time during an action and after it, we should renew this same act of offering and of union.” (TD 259)

As St. John did, one should take Mary home, meaning take her as companion and counselor, knowing that she knows better than us the desires of God in our regard. If we learn to

consult and listen to her in everything, then she becomes for us the greatest teacher of the ways of God. Through Mary means, a complete dispossession and a complete abandonment into the hands of our Blessed Mother. “We should cast ourselves into her like a stone thrown into the sea. This is done easily and quickly by a mere thought, a slight movement of the will or just a few words as ‘I renounce myself and give myself to you, my dear Mother.’” (TD 259) Montfort tells all devotees of Mary like in the story of Rebecca and Jacob, to entrust themselves to Mary. “They have great confidence in the goodness and power of the B.V., their dear Mother, and incessantly implore her help. They take her for their pole-star to lead them safely into harbour. They open their hearts to her and tell her their troubles and their needs. They rely on her mercy and kindness to obtain forgiveness of their sins, through her intercession to experience her motherly comfort in their troubles and anxieties. They even cast themselves into her virginal bosom, hide and lose themselves there in a wonderful manner. There they are filled with pure love, they are purified from the least stain of sin, and they find Jesus in all his fullness.” (TD 199)

## **2. With Mary:**

“The essential practice of this devotion is to perform all our actions with Mary. This means, that we must take her as the accomplished model for all we have to do.” (SM 45) “Before undertaking anything, we must forget self and abandon our own views... We must have habitual recourse to Our Lady, becoming one with her and adopting her intentions, even though they are unknown to us.” (SM 46) “In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place.” (TD 260) To live with Mary, it is to look at Mary till one comes to resemble Jesus. To look at Mary is first of all to take her as the model of all our actions and to imitate her virtues. To live with Mary, it is not enough that we look at her, but we should allow her to form us. As one wakes up in the morning it is good to place oneself in an attitude welcome to the Lord who is life. Look at the possible events of day with Mary and renew the consecration to Jesus through Mary.

## **3. In Mary:**

“We must always act in Mary, that is to say, we must gradually acquire the habit of recollecting ourselves interiorly and so form within us an idea of a spiritual image of Mary. She must become, as it were, an oratory for the soul where we offer up our prayers to God without the fear of being ignored.” (SM 47) In all our needs it is to this oratory that we should go confidently, and more than that we must try to live in Mary, the true earthly paradise of the new Adam... We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that within her virginal bosom:

1. We may be nourished with the milk of her grace and her motherly compassion,
2. We may be delivered from all anxiety, fear and scruples.
3. We may be safeguarded from all our enemies...
4. We may be formed in our Lord and our Lord formed in us.” (TD 261, 264)

Montfort tells us that like John we must take Mary home (Jn 19:27) “What then can we do to make our hearts worthy of Eternal Wisdom? Here is the great way, the wonderful secret. Let us, so to speak, bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreserved to her as servants and slaves... It is in her that Eternal Wisdom will come and settle down as on a throne of splendor.” ((LEW 211) It is the question of always living in the presence of Mary; but that does not mean that we are always conscious of it. It only means that at all important moments, at all difficult moments, we see her present within us and seek her counsel and support. Montfort has spoken in TD 166 about the soul breathing Mary as the body breathes air, a continuous process. “My dear friend, when will that happy time come, that age of Mary, when many souls, chosen by Mary and given her by the most High God, will hide themselves completely in the depths of her

soul, becoming living copies of her, loving and glorifying Jesus? That time will dawn only when the devotion I teach is understood and put into practice.” (TD 217)

“Mary in us” and “we in Mary” are topics to which Montfort comes back again and again. He tells us that if Mary is in us, the Holy Spirit will come and dwell in us and transform us into other Christs. In TD 33, 221 and 260, Montfort asks us to cast ourselves into the mould of Mary to be transformed into our Lord. For Montfort this transformation should lead us to live like Jesus, continuously working for the Kingdom of God.

**For Mary:**

“Finally we must do everything for Mary. Since we have given ourselves completely to her service, it is only right that we should do everything for her as if we were her personal servant and slave. This does not mean that we take her for the ultimate end of our service, for Jesus alone is our ultimate end... We should undertake and carry out great things for our noble Queen.” (TD 265) Devotees of Mary are asked to be “ministers of the Lord who, like flaming fire, will enkindle everywhere the fires of divine love.” (TD 56)

According to Montfort true devotees are the apostles of the latter times. “But who will be these servants, these slaves, these children of Mary? They will be a burning fire: ministers of the Lord, who will enkindle everywhere the fires of divine love... They will be thundering clouds, flying through the air at the least breath of the Holy Spirit. Attached to nothing, astonished at nothing, troubled at nothing, they will shower forth the rain of God’s word and of life eternal... Lastly, we know they will be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the steps of his poverty.” (TD 57, 59) “If you don’t take risk for God, you don’t give him anything worthwhile.” (Letter No. 27)

**Supplement:** In 266-273, Montfort tells us how receive Holy Communion with Mary.

**Conclusion**

As Montfort has told us that he was sharing his experience with us (Ref. TD 110), we should try to enter into a similar experience by cultivating a close relationship with the Blessed Virgin. Fr. Lagrange, O.P., tells us, "For Montfort, Marian Devotion is not a mere doctrine of asceticism; but it is a Marian Mysticism."

Blessed John Paul II, in his Encyclical Redemptoris Mater, has said, "In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, who proposed consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live their baptismal commitments." (RM 48) "Montfort told a person in whom he had confidence that Mary was spiritually so much present to him that he was so deeply attached to her heart that he could neither move, nor act except in her, through her and for her." (Biography by Fr. Joseph Grandet, p. 312) Fr. Schillebeeckx, O.P., tells, "The tribute which could be paid to Montfort would be to rid his profound vision from its now out-of-date terminology. "Experience will teach you much more about this devotion than I can tell you... To sum up, Mary becomes all things to the soul that wishes to serve Jesus Christ... Experience alone will teach us the wonders wrought by Mary in the soul." (SM 52, 56)

How could a person experience a relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary? Start asking daily for Mary's help. Piety has to be sustained by convictions. Hence contemplate on the mysteries of Mary as given to Bible. Start reciting a chaplet of the Rosary with attention daily. Read Chapter 8 of Lumen Gentium, Marialis Cultus, Redemptoris Mater, and other Church documents. Read Montfort's book, The True Devotion to Mary. Say the Hail Mary frequently. True Devotion to Mary is not an exercise of piety, but a way of life, a life in Mary. It is a matter which concerns our whole life and it is as constant a need as "breathing" (TD 166).

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