

Bro. Lawrence Joseph, s.g.

St. Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort



Educator of Children and Youth
Founder of Company of Mary, Daughters of Wisdom
and Brothers of St. Gabriel

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Great Mystic and Missionary**



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Great Herald of Mary**



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1673-1716

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(Back wrapper)



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Chapter 1

Louis' Birth, Childhood and Studies



Brittany is a Province in northwestern France. It is distinct from other French regions because of its Celtic heritage. About one-quarter of its population speak Breton, a Celtic language similar to Welsh. In 1532, Brittany was formally incorporated into France.

Rennes is its capital. There was a small town known as Montfort-la-Cane (today known as Montfort-sur-Meu) about 20 kms west of Rennes. It is at the confluence of two small rivers known as Meu and Garun. A middle-class family known as the Grignion family lived there at the street called de la Saulnerie after the salt-makers who lived there in olden days, but in the 17th century some middle-class families lived there. It lived in a stone-fronted house which was constructed probably in 1667. In this lived Mr. Jean-Baptiste Grignion and Mrs. Jeanne Robert, who got married in Rennes on Feb. 10, 1671.

Mr. Jean Baptise Grignion (1647-1716) was both a lawyer and a notary public. The family was known and recognized in the town of Montfort for several generations. His own father, Eustache Grignion, who at one time was the mayor of the town, was the first of a line which called itself "noble". In fact the family was not truly of the nobility of the time. Jean Baptiste owned a property known la Bachelleraie, and hence he was known as "a landed gentleman". This title referred only to this property located at the bottom of the hill on which the town was built. Mr. Jean Baptiste was basically a good Christian; he was impulsive, self-willed, pessimistic and even bitter. As a lawyer practising in a small town, his income was small.

Mrs. Jeanne Robert (1649-1718), "Mistress of Chesnais" was daughter of a local magistrate in Rennes. She had three brothers as priests. She was a meek and pious lady. This couple had 18 children, of whom only ten lived beyond the age of ten. Louis' elder brother died when he was five months old and so Louis was considered the eldest in the family. His two brothers became priests and two sisters nuns. It was really a very Christian family.

There were three churches in Montfort when Louis was born. He was baptized in St. John's church. The second church was St. James church. The church of St. Nicholas was famous

for a miracle that St. Nicholas had worked to protect a maiden in grave danger. Some said a group of rude soldiers had threatened her. Others said a nobleman was the villain. It was told that a flock of ducks came between the maiden and the man or men, who menaced her. The legend is that a duck brought her ducklings every year to the church, went around the altar and left the church after leaving one duckling in the church. Then she and her ducklings disappeared until the next feast of St. Nicholas.



Louis was born at Montfort-la-Cane, now Montfort-sur-Meu, on Jan. 31, 1673. He was baptized the following day in St. John's Church. He was given the name Louis. Later on Mary was added to it. According to a tradition of the time, the mother ceased to suckle the infant and entrusted it to a wet-nurse known as Mother Andrea, who worked on the farm of the Grignion family at La Bachelleraie.



The house where Louis was born

During the second half of 1675, Mr. John bought a farm known as Bois-Marquer, a manor, in the parish of Iffendic, not far from Montfort. This manor gave him the right to have in Iffendic Parish church, a manorial bench with escutcheon and a tombstone under which to bury the members of his family. In 1675, the whole family came to stay in the farm house and child Louis was brought back to his parents.

As a young boy, Louis learned prayers from his mother and his father taught him the three R's. Not only did he do the primary studies, he helped his father in teaching his younger brothers and sisters. Louis taught them religion and prayer. Further he helped his mother and consoled her in her difficulties. Slowly Louis took an orientation quite opposite to that of his father. He loved to be poor and helped the poor as much as he could. He developed a tender devotion to Mary and loved to recite the rosary. The parish priest helped Louis in his studies.

Louis spent ten years of his childhood at Iffendic (1675-84). The parish church was three kms away and he used to frequent this church and renew his baptismal vows at the baptismal font. The register contains many references to the Grignions. On Sept. 17, 1681, Louis attended the baptism of his sister Françoise Therese and his signature can be seen in the register. Louis was fond of his sister, Guyonne Jeanne, born in 1680, who was usually called Louise. He used every method to draw her away from her companions and coaxed her with small presents to recite the rosary. He used to tell her, "You will be very beautiful and everyone will love you, if you love the Good God above everything else."

The church at Iffendic was dedicated to St. Eloi. When Louis became old enough, he was permitted to serve Mass. He took time to pray before the statue of Our Lady. A taste for prayer was, as it were, natural to Louis and he used withdraw

himself to solitary corners of the property to be alone with God and often he prayed the rosary. He always sought Mary's protection in all simplicity and confidence.

In September 1684, Louis entered St. Thomas Becket College, Rennes, run by Jesuits, for his secondary and university studies. Rennes, the Provincial capital, was proud of its Parliament. The Jesuits took charge of the college in 1604. The college did not charge any fees. The Jesuits wanted the students to be happy as well as studious; they wanted them to appreciate the beauties of nature, as well as the beauties of Latin and Greek, rhetoric and logic; they wanted them to become saints. During 1684-86, Louis stayed with his maternal uncle Fr. Alain Robert at the church of St. Saviour. In 1683, Mrs. Robert, his maternal grand-mother, feeling herself old, decided to divide her possessions between her five living children. Thus his mother came to possess a property with a house in Rennes. In 1686, the Grignion family moved to Rennes and Louis' younger brothers Joseph and Gabriel joined St. Thomas Becket College. The whole family started to stay at Rennes and Bois-Marquer became their summer residence.

From 1684-92, Louis was a student of St. Thomas Becket College. The college had about 3000 students. It had a good name and the students received a liberal but profoundly Christian education. Greek, Latin and French were taught as languages. Philosophy and theology and other subjects were also available. The students were trained in public speaking.

From 1688-1690, Louis studied humanities under Fr. Le Camus and rhetoric under Fr. Gilbert. Fr. Descartes was Louis' spiritual director. Through Fr. Camus, his first teacher, Louis became a member of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. This enabled him to attend all the services in honour of Our Lady and all the lectures, sermons, and instructions the Jesuits had prepared for those chosen pupils. It also permitted him to recite

Our Lady's office every day, and to go frequently to Communion. Fr. Gilbert, who taught rhetoric, gave Louis the wish to be a missionary. Fr. Descartes, his spiritual guide, wanted Louis to be more than a good Sodality member. He introduced him to the saintly Fr. Bellier, the almoner of the City's general hospital, and Louis became one of the priest's small band of helpers, visiting the poor, begging clothing and food for them, praying for the dying, and teaching the little ones.

In spite of his activity among the sick and the poor, Louis stayed at the head of his class. He learned to write Latin verse. He learned to paint and to carve statues. He was so good at painting that he sold one of his pictures without the least effort. Hence Louis was able to pay a professional a few francs for lessons in painting.

On his to and fro journey to the college, Louis used to visit one church or another. He frequently prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Miracles and all Virtues in St. Saviour's church or before the statute of Our Lady of Peace in the Carmelite Fathers' chapel or before Our Lady of Good News in the Dominican church. "When the young Grignon was before a picture or statue of Mary, he seemed oblivious of everyone else, in a sort of alienation of the senses, in a sort of trance." (Blain, 13)

Louis was a serious student and stood first in his class. He usually kept to himself and did not have many friends. Yet John Baptist Blain, Claude Poullart des Places and Barrin became his friends. All the three became priests. John Baptist Blain wrote an abridged biography of Louis, Claude founded the Holy Spirit Seminary and Barrin became one of the Vicar Generals of the diocese of Nantes.

Among the students there was one, who was poor, and the other students made fun of him because of his torn clothes. Louis addressed the students, took a collection from them. The collection came up only to half of what was needed to have new clothes. Yet he took that student to a tailor and said, "Here is my brother and yours. I have made a collection for him in my class and got as much as I could in order to have new clothes bought. Here it is, if it is not enough, it will be your concern to make up the balance." The tailor overcome by his sense of charity, did as he was requested. After this incident the students began to treat Louis with much respect.

Fr. Julien Bellier, the Chaplain of the General Hospital, guided Louis in his service to the poor. Through this priest he came in contact with human misery. Louis met the poor in General Hospitals and helped them. The discovery of the poor was perhaps the most decisive event of his adolescence. Often Louis visited St. Yves' Hospital in Rennes. One day, Mrs. Grignon was surprised to meet there, a woman whom she had helped before. To her question, "How did you come here?", the poor woman replied, "It is your son, who brought me here and got me admitted." Towards the close of Louis' studies in Rennes, he came into contact with Fr. Jean Leuduger, a great Briton missionary, who founded a missionary group. He became a model for Louis in missionary activities.

Louis was much devoted to Mary and joined the Sodality of Our Lady. After joining the sodality, he learned to work with others in common projects and found joy in friendship. While studying at Rennes, he had a deep experience of God and he spent much time in prayer and penance. While praying before a statue of Our Lady, he felt certain of being called to priesthood.

From 1590-92, Louis studied Logic and philosophy. While studying Philosophy, he was under the guidance of Fr.

François Prévost s.j., who was very pious and also very zealous for the sanctification of his pupils. He was also in charge of the Sodality for the senior students. At the beginning of the academic year 1692-93, Louis started studying Theology under the guidance of two Jesuits, Frs. Julien Magon and Pierre Baron. "Fr. Baron was a famous professor of Theology who knew the subject thoroughly; under his guidance Louis could have made great progress, but divine Providence meant him to become perfectly versed in the Science of holiness and he was called to Paris." (Blain, 19)

Chapter 2

Seminary studies (1692-1700)

1. Departure for Paris

Miss de Montigny lived in St. Germain Sector of Paris. She belonged to St. Sulpice Parish. She came to Rennes to settle some personal business before the Parliament of Brittany. She stayed with the Grignions. She offered to take Guyonne with her to Paris and to educate her. Further she told Louis about St. Sulpice Seminary. On her return to Paris, Miss de Montigny got some help from a rich lady and came forward to get Louis admitted in St. Sulpice. She wrote to Louis asking him to go over to Paris. Louis as well as the whole family was very happy. His parents got things ready for the journey. Louis refused to accept a horse offered to him for the journey of slightly over 300 kms. He preferred to walk the whole distance. He was extraordinarily strong. He had an athletic physique, a strong character and a vivid imagination. He had also an artistic frame of mind.

St, Sulpice Seminary actually had several seminaries. "The Seminary" itself for those who possessed both health and

money to pay full fees. "The Small Community" was meant for those whose health fragile, while "the Little Seminary" was for those who paid a smaller amount as fees. There were also other institutions run by Sulpician priests for poor students. Sulpician Seminary was started by Fr. Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1657). His aim was to train apostolic priests, more worthy of priesthood and chiefly rooted in the mystery of Christ. He blended well the mystical and missionary dimensions of the "French School of Spirituality" initiated by Cardinal Berulle.

On the day of departure, Louis bid good-bye to his parents and dear ones. His uncle Fr. Alain Robert, his brother Joseph and perhaps his friend John Baptist Blain accompanied him as far as the Cesson Bridge, some 3 km away from Rennes. They embraced each other and bid their final good-byes. This crossing of the bridge was of great significance to Louis as he then gave up his own family and worldly wealth in order to belong to GOD ALONE. He knelt down and made a vow never to possess anything in his life. He then gave away the money he had to a beggar and exchanged his new clothes with the old ones of another beggar. This was to become a permanent rule of his life.

“This trip, being the first, was also a model for so many others to come, which his zeal for souls saw him multiply in the future. He wanted to be apostolic, poor, humbled, accepting pain and fatigue, and abandoned to Divine Providence. It was this last virtue which I admired the most in him when he departed.” (Blain, 23-24) He possessed an absolute confidence in his heavenly Father. As a consequence, he became effectively detached from seeking security in earthly or material goods, in human power or influence. His sense of poverty had a directly theological dimension. It was a simple expression of his faith. One can speak of both his material poverty and his spiritual poverty. Montfort’s attitude toward the poor had its root in the poverty of his own spirit.

Louis walked about 30 kms per day. He passed the winter nights in barns. On some days he had to suffer from freezing rain. He had to beg for food. He experienced the humiliation of being rudely rebuffed by some to whom he stretched his hands to beg. After nearly ten days of walk, he reached Paris completely exhausted. He stayed for a few days in a stable and a charitable stranger fed him. Finally, Louis presented himself to Miss de Montigny. But unfortunately her friend had neither the intention nor the possibility of paying boarding fees of the Sulpician Seminaries.

2. In Fr. De la Barmondier's Hostel (1692-94)

As Louis' benefactress could not get him admitted in St. Sulpice, he was admitted in Fr. De la Barmondier's Hostel. Simple and poor was the lifestyle in this hostel. The atmosphere was very conducive and Louis felt happy. As for his studies he followed the theological course at the famous Sorbonne University. During the terrible Winter of 1693-94, there was a great famine and his benefactress could not pay the hostel fees. "It is 1693, the beginning of a two-year-period destined to be one of the saddest in all the history of seventeenth century France. The nation, exhausted and devastated by the wars of the Sun King, sinks into an economic crisis. The general population, already suffering from a series of bad harvests which in turn bring financial disaster, begins to undergo a time of increased unemployment. Begging becomes for many a way of life. Of seventeen million French citizens, about two million are homeless or starving or both." (Benedetta Papàsogli, Montfort, a prophet for our times, p.64)

Louis came to know firsthand the financial straits of the poor. Fr. Barmondier allowed him to earn money by begging and by keeping watch over dead bodies in St. Sulpice Parish three or four nights per week. During this vigil he spent much time in prayer. He gave four hours to prayer, two hours to

spiritual reading, two hours to sleep and the rest of the time to study his theology notes which he took in Sorbonne. During this period he learned the meaning of total insecurity and that God was his sole support. Keeping for himself only the bare necessities for physical survival, he helped as much as possible the people around him.

Louis spent much time in prayer. For his meditation, he used the book "The Holy Ways of the Cross" by Fr. Henri Marie Boudon. He was very recollected and silent. Further he practiced penance. His companions even made fun of him. On Sept. 18, 1694, Fr. Barmondier died. Then Louis wrote a letter to his uncle Fr. Alain Robert, "I do not know yet how things will go, whether I shall stay or leave, as his will has not yet been made known. Whatever happens I shall not be worried. I have a Father in heaven who will never fail me." (L. 2) Actually, that hostel was closed down; but fortunately, Louis was admitted into Fr. Boucher's Hostel.

3. In Fr. Boucher's Hostel and sickness (1694-95)

Fr. François Boucher had a community for poor students near Montaigu College. The conditions in this community were very poor. The food was atrocious. Fr. Boucher could not hire a cook, and so the students took turns to cook the food. During the winter of 1694, Louis became dangerously ill and he was admitted into a hospital called "Hotel de Dieu". The doctors prescribed bloodletting as a remedy. In the process, Louis was on the point of death. But miraculously he regained health and he was discharged. Madame d'Alègre came forward to pay the greater part of the fees to be paid in order to get him admitted into the Little Seminary of St. Sulpice. The balance amount came from a chaplaincy in Nantes, which was under her control.

4. In the Little Seminary of St. Sulpice (1695-1700)

At long last, early in 1695, Louis' ambition of joining St. Sulpice was fulfilled. When the new academic year 1695-96, started, Louis gave up his studies at the Sorbonne University. Most of the seminarians were sent to this great university, the pride of France to learn theology. Nobody knew why Louis stopped going there. He had already completed the courses required for a bachelor's degree in theology. Louis was not interested in a doctorate in theology and he preferred to study the science of the saints. He preferred the evening courses given by the Sulpicians and to use the library.

Towards the end of 1695, Louis read the Spiritual Letters of a Jesuit priest called Fr. Jean Joseph Surin. Fr. Surin was a teacher of spirituality and mysticism. He also read the book, 'Holy Slavery of the Mother of God' by Fr. Boudon. He began to compile a note-book, which was to enrich gradually when he was a priest. He copied quotations from "the Threefold Crown of the Blessed Virgin Mary" by the Jesuit Fr. Francis Poiré.

4.1. The French School of Spirituality

St. Sulpice followed the French School of Spirituality, initiated by Cardinal Berulle, who placed God at the centre of Christian life. Berullian axiom was theocentric. One has to focus on God and not on self. Never do anything motivated by self-seeking but rather be moved to action by the contemplation of God alone. Berullian asceticism embodied the double movement of total renunciation of self and total clinging to God. These two aspects of the Berullian heritage marked deeply the personal experience of Louis Grignion. Berulle's basic attitude marked his disciples profoundly. Fr. Boudon's motto was "God Alone" and Fr. Jean Jacques Olier, the founder of St. Sulpice Seminary, was in a constant attitude of religion

before the Absolute Lord. Louis Grignion too fixed his eyes on God and his motto too was "God Alone".

Between that Most High God and man who is nothing (Berulle) and even corrupted (Olier and Louis Grignion), a bridge is necessary. The bridge is provided by Incarnation, which realizes the God-Man. Mystery of Incarnation delighted Berulle. Louis Grignion too was captivated by this mystery and in it he saw the important role given to Mary. "Loving slaves of Jesus in Mary should hold in high esteem devotion to Jesus, the Word of God, the great mystery of the Incarnation, March 25th, which is the mystery proper to this devotion, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit." (TD 243)

Marian Devotion occupied a pre-dominant place in the French School of Spirituality. Fr. Olier was very fond of the formula "Jesus living in Mary" and he recognized the unbreakable bond between the Mother and the Son. Berullians acknowledged Christ as the unique mediator, while at the same time considered Mary as mediatrix by the fullness of grace which made her completely one with her Son. This aspect strongly influenced Louis Grignion.

Marian devotion was the great theme towards the end of 17th century. While at the Little Seminary of St. Sulpice, Louis joined an "association of the slaves of Mary". He had read the book, "God Alone or the Holy Slavery of the Mother of God" by Fr. Boudon. The term "the slave of Mary" referred to a state of life in which one gave oneself to Mary without reserve for the sole purpose of belonging uniquely to Jesus alone. Fr. Tronson helped Louis to change the term "slaves of Mary" into "slaves of Jesus in Mary". Louis' discovery of the holy slavery to Jesus in Mary led him use it as the best means to get united to Christ. He enthusiastically made it his own, giving it new dimensions. His devotion to Mary was centred on Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation became very dear to him. This

allowed him to integrate organically his exceptional Marian piety, to bring it to the very heart of his Christian life, and to discover its ultimate implications. It set in place the essential foundations of his spiritual life.

4.2. Wisdom through Mary

Louis' love for Mary was unique and extraordinary. No man of his era was so openly, so completely, so ardently hers. None had such a childlike trust in her. Others had no idea that the principal reason he loved Mary was that she brought him closer to Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom. He wrote many verses to Wisdom.

"1. Divine Wisdom, I love you unto folly.

I am your lover.

You alone in this world I seek,

You alone I desire.

I am a man gone mad with love,

Forever chasing you.

2. Tell me who you are,

For I am half blind.

I can discern only

That you are a secret I must fathom.

Show yourself fully to my soul

Which dies for love of you.

3. Where do you live,

Wisdom Divine?

Must I cross continents or seas

To find you,

Or fly across the skies?

I'm ready to go wherever you are,

Not counting the costs, to possess you."

(Montfort's Hymn No. 126, translated by Eddie Doherty in his biography of Montfort, "Wisdom's Fool".)

For Louis all perfection consisted in getting united to Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom. True devotion to Mary was the best means to attain this union. He spent much time in reading. He had all the books he had ever wanted to read: books about Wisdom, books about Cross, books about the Rosary and books about the slavery to Mary. Fr. Boudon's 'Holy Slavery of the Admirable Mother of God' was among these books. Then there were the writings of Fr. Olivier, Cardinal Berulle, Fr. Condren, Mother Agnes of Jesus, St. John Eudes and St. Bernard. When Louis had absorbed all that was written about slavery, he consecrated himself, solemnly, to Jesus, in Mary and through Mary. He loved to recite the Rosary frequently.

4.3. Louis' Spiritual directors

After Fr. Barmondier, Fr. Bauyn was Louis' spiritual director. Fr. Bauyn died suddenly on March 18, 1696. Then Louis chose Fr. Leschassier as his spiritual director. Fr. Leschassier possessed a balanced equilibrium, with moderation, prudence and poise. The spirit of St. Sulpice was absolutely opposed to singularity. Extremes in mortification were to be avoided; follow the community was the rule to be followed. Louis found it very difficult to conform himself to that established framework. He was much given to silence, prayer and meditation. His spiritual father questioned himself, "Is this seminarian really led by grace? How far is self-love mixed in with his outward show of piety? By what Spirit is Louis being led?" In every Sulpician there was a suspicion that young Louis Marie de Montfort was too good to be true.

Fr. Leschassier recognized in Louis signs of immense spiritual potential. Louis was forbidden all extra asceticism and prayer. He did not receive a single word of encouragement. Fr. Leschassier tested Louis in every possible manner. For sometime, Fr. Leschassier asked Louis to have Fr. Brenier as

his director. "Fr. Brenier used all his resources and applied all his knowledge to the task, yet he failed to shake the constancy of the holy seminarian. While he was being humiliated, he remained as unperturbed as if he had been praised; after the humiliation he came to his holy persecutor as cheerfully as if he had been praised." (Blain, 131) Fr. Bernier's task was not to train Louis but to test him for any symptoms of disobedience or pride; to make sure by discipline, that his apparent sanctity was a sham. It was the young man's virtue that won and Fr. Brenier sent him back to Fr. Leschassier. The latter then seemed to have softened a little towards Louis.

Louis continued all the while to be obedient to the spiritual director. Fr. Leschassier, though he admired Louis, had a doubt as Fr. Blain has expressed in short biography of Louis Grignon, "He is very humble, very poor, very mortified, and very recollected; and yet I find it almost impossible to believe that his guiding spirit is a good one." (Blain, 225) For Louis it was a period of trial and it produced a tendency to mistrust himself.

4.4. Louis' special duties

To distract Louis in his recollectedness, Fr. Fr. Leschassier appointed Louis the Master of Ceremonies, the librarian and a teacher of catechism to some unruly children in one suburban parish. Louis applied himself joyfully and patiently to his responsibility as Master of Ceremonies. He was very methodical. He composed a manual for liturgical functions "setting down and specifying the precise order of every movement required of the various functionaries in the carrying out of their roles." (Blain, 115) Louis brought in perfect order and he was a successful M.C.

Louis was put in charge of the Library. He leafed through books, classified them and prepared a five thick volume catalogue in his own handwriting. He also made use of

this period to read many books especially on the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Another duty in which Louis excelled was as a teacher of catechism. He was asked to teach catechism to the children from the neighbourhood of La Grenouillère, "the most unruly children in all of Paris". (Joseph Grandet, Life of Grignon de Montfort). Louis used simple stories, which captivated the full attention of the children. He was able to touch their young hearts. He became a joyful hero among the urchins of the seventeenth century. He was a talented catechist appreciated by children.

Louis, while in seminary, started compiling with stubborn perseverance a voluminous file of notes for his future preaching. He also composed rhymed catechetical verses, expressing the truths of the faith in long hymns. He produced a large number of hymns. Later he published some of them. Actually 164 of his canticles have come down to us.

4.5. Louis' ordination to priesthood and immediately after

During the summer of 1699, Louis and another seminarian were chosen to represent the Sulpician community at the solemn annual pilgrimage to Our Lay of Chartres. "On arriving at Chartres he hastened to go to the chapel in the crypt where a picture of the Blessed Virgin is kept and honoured, and threw himself at its feet with most heartfelt tenderness and devotion... He spent six to eight hours in meditation, that is, from morning till midday, kneeling motionless completely carried away." (Blain 183 & 184)

Fr. Leschassier invited Fr. Louis to stay at St. Sulpice and work together with the staff for the formation of the seminarians. The latter did not accept the invitation; but he requested Fr. Leschassier to send him to Canada as a

missionary. Fr. Leschassier did not agree to it. "Fr. Leschassier does not allow him to go to Canada for fear that, carried away by his impetuous nature and his zeal, he will lose himself in the vast forests of that country in his quest for the barbarians." (Blain, nos. 199-200) Hence Fr. Louis stayed on for sometime in the seminary itself. Fr. Leveque, the founder of a missionary community known as St. Clement Community, Nantes, came to St. Sulpice. Fr. Leschassier suggested to Fr. Louis to go to that community to be trained for parish missions. At the end of September 1700, Frs. Leveque and Louis set out for Nantes.



Chapter 3

The first half of Fr. Louis' ministry (1700-1708)

1. In St. Clement Community, Nantes (1700-01)

Before leaving Paris, Fr. Louis made another telling gesture; he renounced the annual income attached to the chapel of St. Julien de Concelle, which was his source of financial support during the last five years. He kept only his clerical title to it, which, by law, could not be given to anyone else. After spending the months of October and November in St. Clement Community, Fr. Louis found himself to be a disappointed man. Hence on Dec. 6, 1700, he wrote to Fr. Leschassier:

“My intention was, as yours was too, to prepare for mission-work, especially for teaching catechism to the poor, since this is what attracts me most. But I am not doing that at all and I do not think that I shall ever do it here... With conditions as they are, I find myself, as time goes on, torn by two apparently contradictory feelings. On one hand, I feel a secret attraction for a hidden life in which I can efface myself and combat my natural tendency to show off. On the other hand, 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 in country places and to arouse in sinners a devotion to our Blessed Mother... When I see the needs of the Church I cannot help pleading continually for a small and poor band of good priests to do this work under the banner and protection of the Blessed Virgin.” (L.5) Fr. Louis had clear goals and options. He opted to serve the poor and his goal was to make Jesus and Mary known and loved.

In April 1701, Fr. Louis received an invitation from his sister Sylvia for her vestition in the Abbey of Fontevault. He went there and met the Abbess' sister, Madame de Montespan, who advised him to meet Bishop Girard of Poitiers. As a priest

Fr. Girard was the tutor of Madame de Montespan's children. Madame de Montespan was earlier the mistress of the Sun-King and then she gave up her scandalous life and underwent an authentic transformation.

When Fr. Louis reached Poitiers, as the Bishop was out of station, he went to the Poorhouse there. About this visit, he wrote to Fr. Leschassier, "I took it into my heart however to go the Poorhouse where I could serve the poor physically even if I could not serve them spiritually. I went into the little church to pray and the four hours I spent there waiting for the evening mealtime seemed all too short. However, it seemed so long to some of the poor who saw me kneeling there dressed in clothes very much like their own, that they went off to tell others and they agreed to take up a collection for me." (L. 6)

After meeting the Bishop of Poitiers, Fr. Louis returned to St. Clement Community, Nantes. Soon after his arrival in Nantes, Fr. Louis was given all the rights and privileges of hearing confessions and preaching the word of God. At the beginning of the summer of 1701, he was sent to preach at Grandchamps, a country parish. He spent ten days there, teaching catechism to the children, preaching three times a day to their elders, begging alms and giving them to the poor and distressed, baptizing, confessing, consoling the sick and the dying, etc. The mission was a great success, so much so that he went to give similar missions in the countryside around Nantes. In the end, he wrote to Fr. Leschassier, "I have been working without a break for the last three months in the parishes to which Fr. Leveque and Fr. Des Jonchères sent me. At the moment I am writing to you from the parish of Le Pellerin. God and his holy Mother have condescended to use my ministry to do some good. There is a lot to be done here, as indeed there is everywhere." (L. 9)

Guyonne Jeanne was Fr. Louis' favourite sister. Madame de Montigny had taken her into her care and had arranged for her to be taught to read, write and embroider at a boarding school in Paris. When Madame de Montigny died, Madame de Montespan arranged for her to enter the community of St. Joseph in the Faubourg St. Germain, Paris. There was a likelihood of her having to leave the convent, most probably because she was not from Paris, as the convent accepted only Parisians. At this Fr. Louis wrote her a letter, "Both you and I are children of divine Providence though I am unworthy to be called. It would be better to call you a novice of divine Providence because you are beginning to practice the trust and perfect abandonment which God asks of you. You will be a professed Daughter of Providence only when your abandonment is perfect and your sacrifice complete... You are indeed happy, if you are poor in spirit, abandoned, despised and like refuse cast out from the house of St. Joseph. It is then that you will be truly the servant and spouse of Christ and a truly professed daughter of divine Providence, even if not professed as a religious. What God wants of you, my dear sister, is that you should live each day as it comes, like a bird in the trees, without worrying about tomorrow. Be at peace and trust in divine Providence and the Blessed Virgin, and do not seek anything else but to please God and love him. " (L. 7)

The Bishop of Poitiers wanted to consult Fr. Leschassier before assigning work to Fr. Louis in his diocese. Fr. Leschassier's reply to the Bishop was a testimony of praise in spite of certain reservations. Fr. Leschassier wrote, "I have known Father Grignon for several years. He has informed me about your request to him that he wrote to tell me all that has happened to him in Poitiers. He comes from the Diocese of St. Malo, from a family that is noble, numerous, and exceedingly hard up for money. From early youth he has had to live abandoned to Providence. Though his father and mother are still alive, he has never received any help from them in the

course of almost ten years spent in Paris. God has given him many graces to which he has responded faithfully, for he seems to me and to others who have examined him to have a constant sense of the love of God and a fervent practice of mental prayer, mortification, poverty, and obedience. He has a great deal of zeal for helping the poor and instructing them. He is hard working and capable of bringing things to a successful conclusion. But because his outward behaviour is somewhat eccentric and his manners displease quite a few people, and, furthermore, because he has very high ideals of perfection and plenty of zeal but very little experience, I do not know whether giving him the post is the best solution for the hospital where he is in demand. He has not indicated to me the specific type of work to be entrusted to him in this house. If there are administrators there, he has not given me a single detail about them. So, my Lord Bishop, I content myself with setting down what I know about his disposition, leaving to your own good judgment the final decision in this case."

Towards the end of August 1701, Bishop Girard wrote to Fr. Louis, "Our poor people continue to want you as their priest." By the end of October, Fr. Louis reached Poitiers without a penny in his pocket. As the official appointment was not made, he stayed in the minor seminary. He visited hospitals and prisons. He gathered beggars and children in the streets to teach them religion. At first he used St. Nicholas' chapel. As the number of people increased he chose the shade of the marketplace. He heard confessions at St. Prochaire church and many came to him. He also gave conferences to 13 or 14 students from the colleges and started an association for them. (Ref. L. 10 &11)

2. Chaplain at the Poorhouse of Poitiers (1701-03)

In 1662, an edict of the Sun King imposed on the city the obligation of establishing a refuge for the poor. In 1689, a

Poorhouse was erected in the lowest part of the city. Towards the end of the 17th century, the problems of the poor began to be noticed and to be dealt with effectively. An office composed of prominent citizens was responsible for the administration of the Poorhouse. A group of governesses, middle class women, looked into the organization of the daily work. The poor were assured of a bed, a very small allowance and sometimes even a bit of work. The Poorhouse of Poitiers sheltered about four hundred beggars. A Board presided over by the Bishop was in charge. Some superintendents were in charge of the different departments. A Superior (not a religious), a few governesses, junior staff members looked after the daily running of the institution.



The only source of income was the charitable donations of the general public. Life in the Poorhouse was miserable and food was never sufficient. In November 1701, Fr. Louis joined the Poorhouse as one of its chaplains. He did not accept any salary. He did not eat with the other chaplains. He made

himself one with the poor. He ate the food that they ate. Thus he invented a new way of being among the poor. At the poorhouse, his devotion and sense of organization worked marvels and in time also aroused the hostility of certain malcontents. Every morning, he, along with some beggars, went to the town and collected alms and food. He introduced the custom of distributing food thrice a day instead of the usual once a day.

Fr. Leschassier asked Fr. Louis to choose another spiritual director from Poitiers itself. Thus Fr. Louis chose Fr. De la Tour, a Jesuit. The poor of the Poorhouse felt that they were loved by the new chaplain. Fr. Louis was like a tender mother to them. He expressed the feelings of the poor in a Hymn (No. 18) called "The Cries of the Poor", which he composed.

1. Awake, you rich in this world's goods,
 And listen to our cries;
 We, poor, depend on you for help
 In our great miseries.
We are one Christian family,
 A mite to us accord.

2. Our God has only made you great
 To be our fathers dear,
Our God has furnished you with power
 So you our pleas hear.
In comfort you enjoy yourselves
 With all you can desire,
While you expect us to survive
 On scraps we can acquire.

3. You have fine clothes to keep you warm,
 Sleep on a feathered bed,
But rags protect us from the cold,
 We have to beg for bread.

Men bless you, pay you great respect,
And show you courtesy,
While we are cursed and knocked about
And treated shamefully.

4. They give us nothing when we ask
Save looks of cold disdain;
Theu think it's for the common good
To treat us as insane.
They chase us and lay hands on us
And put us into chains,
They even disallow us poor
To advertise our pains.

Fr. Louis initiated some reforms in the poorhouse in order to bring in some harmony and order. One act of reform was concerning the way of serving in the dining hall, so that there could be a fairer distribution of food. This step produced much order. Yet the Finance Superintendent and the one in charge of the governesses opposed Fr. Louis concerning service in the dining hall. The poor loved Fr. Louis not paying attention to the dignitaries responsible for the Poorhouse. The difficulties came to the surface, and Fr. Louis withdrew himself to the Jesuit house to make an eight day retreat. Fr. De la Tour advised Fr. Louis to withdraw the reform.

After the retreat, Fr. Louis returned to the Poorhouse. Then something most unexpected happened, an epidemic affected the poorhouse as well as the town. Many lost their lives and the Finance Superintendent and the Superior also became victims of the epidemic. Some looked upon this event as a punishment from God. Bishop Girard died suddenly on March 7, 1702 and he was succeeded by Bishop de la Poype.

Fr. Louis introduced some reforms in the spiritual domain also. He started preaching the Word of God to the poor

and many drew benefit from it. Still a few who felt threatened started to oppose him. Fr. Louis wrote to Fr. Leschassier, "Since the death of these two people I have still been subjected to cruel persecution. One of the poor inmates, haughty and full of arrogance, placed himself at the head of a few perverted characters and set himself up in opposition to me, pleading his case with the administrators against me, condemning my behaviour because I spoke my mind openly but always kindly to them, concerning their drunkenness and quarrelling and the scandal they were giving... Yet, to tell you the truth, in spite of all these difficulties that I am briefly outlining to you, God has deigned to work wonderful conversions through me both inside and outside the house. Times set for rising and retiring, for payer together, for Rosary in common, for eating together, for singing hymns, even for mental prayer for those wanting it: all these still subsist in spite of opposition. Since I arrived here it has been like preaching a mission every day. From morning till night I am hearing confession and giving advice to a constant stream of people... I nearly forgot to tell you that I give a talk to 13 or 14 schoolboys every week for an hour. These boys are the elite of their college. The late Bishop approved of this. " (L. 11)

Fr. Louis started the Association of Wisdom for some twenty girls who were physically handicapped. A clever and virtuous blind girl was made the leader. The members of this association daily met in a hall, which Fr. Louis named "The wisdom" for prayer. In this hall, Fr. Louis placed a Cross, on which later on he was to write a summary of his teachings.

Trip to Paris to help Guyonne Louise: Guyonne, Fr. Louis' favourite sister, had to leave the community of St. Joseph. Fr. Louis during the summer of 1702, left for Paris to help her. All his efforts proved a failure. In a farewell visit to the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament, he happened to meet a person of high rank, who provided the dowry needed to admit

Guyonne as a choir nun into the congregation of the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament. She was able to join the novitiate in Rambervilliers towards the end of October 1702.

Back at the Poorhouse of Poitiers: As the new Bishop of Poitiers was urging Fr. Louis to return to the Poorhouse, the latter returned to Poitiers in October 1702 itself. He was appointed its Director. While he continued his good work, some people once again started working against him. Further as noted by Fr. Joseph Grandet, the first biographer of the saint, an unfortunate incident took place. "On a warm day, Fr. Louis was taking a walk near the river. He saw on the banks some youngsters who had come there for a bath and who were insolent with some women who were washing clothes. Filled with zeal, he took out a discipline that he always carried in his pocket and gave two or three strokes to one of those boys in order to teach him how to behave. That boy, angry at the correction, ran to complain to his parents, saying that he was grievously wounded. His mother, in the first flush of anger, went to complain to the Bishop, making him understand that her son was in danger of death. The prelate, without further examination, sent word to Fr. Montfort that he was forbidding him to say Mass."

Fr. Montfort went immediately to Fr. De la Tour, s.j. and told him actually what happened and that he was determined to leave Poitiers. Fr. De la Tour told him not to be hasty and he met the Bishop and asked him to make an inquiry. After full inquiry, the Bishop discovered that the boy had cried for nothing and that he was not even wounded. The Bishop freed Fr. Montfort from his interdict and allowed him to say Mass the next day. Still as Fr. Montfort wrote earlier, "I have no inclination at all to lead an enclosed life" (L. 9), he decided to leave the Poorhouse.

3. The first disciple, Sr. Marie Louise Trichet

Many people used to come to Fr. Louis for confession. Mr. Julien Trichet was an attorney working for the city council. His wife was Françoise Lecoq. They had six children. Their daughter Elizabeth came to Fr. Louis for confession. On her return home, she told her sister Marie Louise Trichet about the saintly priest she met at the Poorhouse. Marie Louise came and met Fr. Louis and then came to him several times afterwards.



Marie Louise Trichet

Marie Louise made a retreat along with others under the guidance of Fr. Louis. She expressed to him her desire to become a religious. Fr. Louis told her, "If you want to be a religious, go and stay in the Poorhouse." In November 1702, after getting a special permission from the new Bishop, she was admitted into the Poorhouse to help the girl who was in charge of the organization for the physically handicapped girls.

On Feb. 2, 1703, Fr. Louis gave her a grey habit and called her Sr. Marie Louise of Jesus. Later Catherine Brunet joined her.

Guyonne Jeanne wrote to Fr. Louis to thank him for getting her admitted in the congregation of the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament. In reply he wrote to her, "My last visit to Paris was not fruitless and the crosses and rejection you suffered in the past were not in vain for the Lord has been merciful to you. You prayed to him and he has heard you. You are now immolated, truly, deeply and for ever. Let no day pass without offering yourself in sacrifice as a victim...De Montfort, priest and slave of Jesus in Mary." (L. 12) Fr. Louis started signing as Fr. De Montfort. Then onwards he came to be known as Fr. Montfort.

4. At the General Hospital of Salpetriere

During the spring of 1703, Montfort had to face some problems within the Poorhouse as well as from outside. Around Easter, he left the Poorhouse of Poitiers, and went to Paris. There he joined the General Hospital of Salpetriere as a volunteer priest. The Hospital had 5000 poor people and twenty-three chaplains. La Salpetriere was a hospital founded by St. Vincent de Paul for beggars in 1656. Montfort helped the poor much. "No one can conceive" wrote Grandet, "how much trouble he took to teach the truths of salvation to those who did not know them, to draw away from sinful habits those who had sunk into them for many years, and to help the good to progress in virtue, to comfort the afflicted and to give to all a high notion of God and hatred for sin."

From Paris, Fr. Louis wrote a letter to Sr. Marie Louise asking her to pray that he might get united to Wisdom, "Keep on praying, even increase your prayers for me; ask for extreme poverty, the weightiest cross, abjection and humiliations. I accept them all if only you will beg God to remain with me and not leave me for a moment because I am so weak. What wealth, what glory, what happiness would be mine if from all this I obtained divine Wisdom, which I long for day and night!" (L. 15)

After four or five months of devoted work at La Salpetriere, Fr. Louis was asked to leave. "One evening" wrote Grandet, "as he was sitting down to eat a piece of bread, he found a short note under his napkin, requesting him to withdraw". Accordingly, he left the place and after much search, took shelter under a staircase of a derelict house on the Pot-de-Fer Street.

5. Montfort's search for Wisdom and the Pot-de-Fer Street experience (1703-04)

Being asked to leave the General Hospital of Salpetriere, Montfort met Fr. Leschassier; but the latter refused to see him. Finally he took shelter under a staircase of a dilapidated house. About this place Fr. Jean Baptiste Blain, the second Biographer wrote, "At that time this great lover of poverty used to take shelter in a small corner of a derelict house, near the Novitiate of the Jesuit Fathers. He kept so well-hidden and so few people knew he was there that I had great difficulty in finding him in a place which looked like the cave of Bethlehem; it was a small recess under a flight of stairs which let in hardly any sun. The only pieces of furniture I could see were an earthen pot and a tumbledown bed fit only for a tramp or a drop-out. This was the kind of lodging he had wherever he went either from choice or necessity; yet God made up for his poverty, his humiliations and sufferings by granting him the grace of communicating with Him so intimately and so frequently that the servant of God spent the greater part of his days and nights in prayer. He even reached the stage where he began to wonder whether he should not discontinue the functions of the priestly ministry, for a time at least, so that he could give himself to his powerful attraction for contemplation." (Blain nos. 220-222)

Montfort's letters written in 1703, reveal to us his search for Wisdom. At the Poorhouse of Poitiers, he started an Association of Wisdom and gave to them a Cross, on which he had written his spirituality of the Cross. On it he wrote, "Deny oneself, carry one's cross to follow Jesus Christ... Love the cross. Desire crosses.." Later he wrote, "Wisdom is Cross and Cross is Wisdom." (LEW 180). From Pot-de-Fer Street, he wrote to Sr. Marie Louise, "I feel that you are still asking God that by crosses, humiliations and poverty I may acquire divine Wisdom. Be brave, my dear daughter, be brave. I am grateful

to you; I feel the effects of your prayers for I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. Both men and demons in this great city of Paris are waging against me a war that I find sweet and welcome. Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name, put me into prison; these are precious gifts, tasty morsels, great and wonderful things. They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which he brings into the lives of those in whom he dwells. When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me? When shall I be sufficiently equipped to serve as a place of rest for Wisdom in a world where he is rejected and without a home? ... So pray, entreat God, plead for me to obtain divine Wisdom. You will obtain it for me; of this I am quite convinced.” (L. 16)

At the Pot-de-Fer Street, Montfort spent a good part of his time in contemplation. He meditated upon the love of the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom for humankind. He meditated upon the Book of Wisdom and on the Gospels, especially on the passion and death of Christ. He was very keen on getting united to Christ, which according to him was the quintessence of perfection. “All perfection consists in our being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus.” (TD 120) A little later, Montfort wrote to his mother, “In my new family -the one I belong to now- I have chosen to be wedded to Wisdom and the Cross for in these I find every good, both earthly and heavenly.” (L. 20)

- Fr. Louis repeatedly prayed to get united to Wisdom,
- "1. Come, O Wisdom, come! Hear this, a beggar's plea
By Mary's womb, by every gush
Of Blood her Jesus shed for me,
Confound me not, nor bid me hush.
 2. Why do you so prolong my painful martyrdom?
For you I languish night and day;

My heart keeps calling to you, "Come!"
My soul grows faint with you away.

3. Open, O longed-for one. I knock here at your door.
Not as an alien fugitive
But as a suitor, heart-sick, sore
Whose only home is where you live."
(Hymn No. 124, composed by Montfort)

Definitely during 1703-04, Montfort had a mystical experience of being united to Jesus Christ. "Invited in 1703 to give several conferences at the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, founded by his friend Fr. Claude Poullart des Places, he presented a commentary on the Book of Wisdom. It appears that it was also during these years, 1703-1704, that he wrote "The Love of Eternal Wisdom", the book that presents the most complete synthesis of Montfort spirituality." (Montfort Dictionary, p. 768)

While Montfort was at the Pot-de-Fer Street, the poor of Poitiers wrote to Fr. Leschassier, "We, 400 poor people, beg you most humbly, for the greatest love and glory of God, to send us back our venerable shepherd, he who loves the poor so much, Fr. Grignon." The Bishop of Poitiers also wrote to him asking him to return to Poitiers.

6. Among the hermits of Mount Valerien:

Before Fr. Louis left Paris, the Archbishop of Paris asked him to bring order and peace to the hermits of Mount Valerien. In 1704, Bro. John directed the hermitage of Mount Valerien. He had governed the community in peace and harmony for many years. But, one day trouble arose among the hermits. Bro. John tried to remedy the evil, but he could not. At this juncture, the Archbishop asked Fr. Montfort to go over to the Hermitage.

Montfort's recollection, his spirit of fervour, his mortification astonished the Brothers. He followed every detail of their rule, attended every exercise and gave them the example of all the most difficult virtues. The Brothers saw him in the chapel between the common spiritual exercises, always on his knees and in prayer. Struck by his great example, moved by God's grace and the unction of his words, won over meekness and humility, the hermits restored among themselves peace and good understanding.

While Montfort was at Mount Valerien, his sister Guyonne-Jeanne, whom he got admitted in a convent in Rambervillers, after recovering from a sickness, made her first profession on Feb. 2, 1704 under the name of Sr. Catherine of St. Bernard. To her Montfort wrote, "Be brave, take courage, enrich yourself and rejoice as you burn yourself out each day like a lamp. The more you give yourself, the more God will give of himself to you." (L. 19)

7. Director of the Poorhouse of Poitiers

On March 23, 1704, Montfort was back at the Poorhouse of Poitiers. He accepted the post of Director, now offered by the Bishop and the civic authorities. He prepared a Rule for the house and got it approved by the Bishop. He looked after the material and spiritual needs of the poor well. From 4 o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock at night, he was always busy helping the poor, cleaning the place, spending time in prayer, and organizing classes for children. He took a special care of the Associates of Wisdom, which he had formed earlier. He strengthened Sisters Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet in their vocation.

Once again some problem arose and therefore after one year of service, Montfort decided to leave the Poorhouse. He consulted the Bishop and the latter advised him to withdraw.

His confessor, Fr. De la Tour also was of the same opinion. He even consulted Sr. Marie Louise, who told him, "You are right, Father, in going away." Montfort told her, "My Daughter, you must stay in the Poorhouse. Even if the establishment of the Daughters of Wisdom were to come off only after ten years from now, God would be pleased and His designs on you would be fulfilled."

8. A Missionary in the diocese of Poitiers (1705-06)

By the middle of 1705, Montfort offered his services to the Bishop of Poitiers to preach missions in the town of Poitiers and its suburbs. The Bishop welcomed the offer and nominated him "Director of the Penitents' House". Thus Montfort was officially appointed Missionary in the Diocese of Poitiers. He chose Montbernage, a poor quarter on the suburb, for his first mission. Here the people were workers: craftsmen, trench-diggers, bakers, fishmongers, etc. He bought a dancing hall, converted it into a chapel and dedicated it to Mary, Queen of All Hearts. He started to preach a mission there. More and more people came for the mission. The poor people of Poitiers knew him and loved him. He was very kind in the confessional. "If I am too lenient with sinners," Louis once said, "I will gladly suffer for it in purgatory. I would rather suffer thus than be harsh with them, or sparing of God's infinite mercy."

The people considered Montfort a saint. He had great influence over them. He organized processions and the recitation of the rosary. At the end of the mission, the people renewed their vows of Baptism, consecrated themselves to Jesus through the hands of Mary. The Cross of the Montbernage Mission was raised just opposite to the Chapel. One Mr. Jacques Goudeau offered himself to look after the Chapel and the Cross. People thereafter assembled together everyday for the recitation of the Rosary. Montfort then

preached at the following churches in Poitiers: St. Simplicien, St. Savin, St. Radegone, St. Catherine and the Resurrection.

Bro. Mathurin Rangeard's vocation: While hearing confessions in the Church of the Penitents, Montfort noticed a young man called Mathurin Rangeard, who wanted to become a Capuchin. Montfort said to him,

“It is God’s Providence that led you here. Would you like to help missionaries in their work? Follow me and thus you will follow your vocation.” He followed Montfort and was known as Bro. Mathurin.

An unfortunate incident: While preaching at the Calvary church, the people brought bad books and pictures to be burned. A heap was made. Someone placed an effigy of the devil at the centre of the heap. A rumour spread that Montfort was going to burn the devil and it reached the ears of one of the Vicar Generals, namely Fr. Villeroi, who did not appreciate Montfort. He came and ordered Montfort to stop the preaching and humiliated him. When he left, Montfort told the people, “we were planning to plant a cross at the entrance of the church. Our superiors forbid us. Let us plant it instead, each one, in the middle of his heart.” Another V.G., Fr. Revol, intervened and temporarily solved the problem.

9. St. Saturnin's Mission

Fr. Montfort preached a mission in St. Saturnin's Suburb. It was a real success. Everything helped towards that result: his immense and sustained charity to the poor, his prolonged prayers in the silence of the night, and the prodigious austerities he practiced. Further he had other assets: solid and moving sermons, a powerful and penetrative voice, marks of sympathy arising from the depth of his heart, and wise

and opportune decisions. Jan. 6, 1706, marked the end of the mission and the mission ended with a beautiful procession.

10. Retreat at St. Catherine's Convent and Interdict

Fr. Montfort began a retreat for the Sisters of St. Catherine of Poitiers. While he was preaching at St. Catherine's Church, the Bishop, who had come back from Paris, ordered Montfort to leave the diocese. This interdict was on account of what had happened at the Calvary mission. When the Bishop came back, he was given a highly coloured account of all the missionary's singularities. Once again Montfort thought of going to foreign countries to preach. But before doing anything, he planned to go to Rome on foot and meet the Pope. Before leaving he wrote an affectionate letter to the people of Montbernage requesting them to remain faithful to the holy practices that he had introduced.

11. Pilgrimage to Rome and audience with the Pope

After asking Bro. Mathurin to await his return, Fr. Montfort along with a Spanish student, started for Rome on foot. They probably crossed the Alps into Italy, and passed through Lombardy into the Marches of Ancona. They begged for their food. Sometimes they had to go hungry. Prayer sustained Montfort on his way. On the way they visited the Marian Shrine at Loretto. Fr. Montfort spent a fortnight there and celebrated Mass daily in the holy chapel, where the Nazareth house of Mary is persevered.

Finally the pilgrims reached Rome. At the first sight of the dome of St. Peter's, Louis took off his shoes, and walked barefoot the last kilometres of his pilgrimage. On May 20, 1706, Montfort celebrated Mass at the church of St. Louis of France.

In Rome, Fr. Giuseppe Maria Tomasi, a Theatine religious, arranged for Montfort an audience with the Pope. Fr. Tomasi was the Pope's confessor and he was a great devotee of Mary. Later he became a Cardinal and today he is a canonized saint, canonized on Oct. 12, 1986.

On June 6, 1706, Montfort had an audience with Pope Clement XI and expressed his desire to work as foreign missionary. The Pope spoke to Montfort in French, and clarified a number of things. He finally said, "You have, Sir, a field large enough to exercise your zeal in France. Do not go elsewhere. Work always with perfect obedience to the Bishops in whose diocese you will be called to work. God, by this means, will bless your works."

The Pope conferred on him the title of "Apostolic Missionary" and blessed his crucifix attaching a plenary indulgence. Montfort started his return journey alone. The Pope told Montfort especially to give a solid teaching in the Christian faith to children and to the common people and to restore the spirit of Christianity by the renewal of the Baptismal promises.

Fr. Montfort thus received an official mandate for ministry in the home missions and for the renewal of the Church. The heat of the summer increased his sufferings and fatigue.

12. Under the protection of Our Lady and St. Michael

Montfort returned to France alone on foot and that too in summer. Late in August 1706, he reached the Abbey of St. Martin of Ligugé, 4 km from Poitiers. Bro. Mathurin met him there. The Bishop heard about his return and asked him to leave the diocese within 24 hours. Montfort and Mathurin immediately left for a nearby diocese. They walked about 30

kms and reached a parish outside the diocese of Poitiers. A kindly priest received them and Fr. Montfort made a retreat of eight days.

As Montfort wanted to place his future mission under the protection Our Lady and St. Michael, he and Bro. Mathurin left for Saumur and Mount St. Michael. First they reached Saumur. The shrine at Saumur was well known and pilgrims from all over Europe came there. In 1454 a man digging in the earth near the town found a small statue of Our Lady of Sorrows holding her Son's body on her knees. Many favours were granted to the people who prayed before this statue and people enthroned this statue in a small chapel. The miracles multiplied with the years. In 1554, a church was built to house it. Cardinal Richlieu enlarged it and so did King Louis XIV. The church was given a great dome.

On reaching Saumur, the pilgrims went into the Church there. Fr. Montfort threw himself at the feet of Our Lady of the Ardilliers. He entrusted fully his new mission as a missionary to his "Good Mother's" protection. He spent a few hours kneeling and praying before Our Lady's statue. After hours of kneeling, the pilgrims sought shelter at the convent of the Sisters of St. Ann of Providence founded by Sr. Jeanne Delanoue.

The Sisters were worried about the uncommon holiness and mortification of the Foundress. The Foundress met Fr. Montfort and explained to him the details of the heroic way to which she felt attracted. Montfort met the Sisters and the Foundress several times and then one day he said to the Foundress, "You are in illusion. You should follow the customs of the house."

However, he added, "I am going to offer Holy Mass for your intention. Come and receive Holy Communion. I hope

that God will give me the necessary lights to judge wisely about your state. So come and see me after Mass to have my final advice." Fr. Montfort offered Mass as promised. After the Mass, he said to Sr. Jeanne Delanoue, "Sister, you may carry on living as you are doing. Yes, it is God's Spirit who inspires you and leads you to this penitent life. So have no fear, henceforth, and follow your inspirations." Today, Sr. Delanoue is a canonized saint, canonized on Oct. 31, 1982.

On their way they came to the Abbey of Fontevrault, where Montfort's sister, Sylvie was a nun. Montfort did not reveal himself, but asked for charity for the sake of the love of God. Sister Gatekeeper informed the Abbess, who wanted to know the identity. As Montfort did not reveal the identity, he was sent away. Later the Gatekeeper spoke about this matter to the Sisters and gave a description of the visitor. Then Sr. Sylvie said, "That's my brother". Then the sisters sent word to Montfort requesting him to return, but the latter refused to do so. Fr. Montfort and Bro. Mathrin continued their journey and reached Angers. They paid a visit to Fr. Brenier, who did not welcome them.

Fr. Louis and Bro. Mathurin continued their journey reached Mount St. Michael on Sept. 28, 1706. Mount St. Michael was a glorious shrine, a marvel animated by the spirit of the Benedictines, a power house of prayer and an inspiration to all of Christendom. The monastery itself is of unbelievable beauty, rising upward from the sea. Louis spent a fortnight there and entrusted his mission to the protection of St. Michael. Today Mount St. Michael is more of a big tourist spot. Some monks live there and celebrate daily Holy Eucharist at noon in the big chapel.

On his return from Mount St. Michael, Montfort came to Rennes. He met Fr. Bellier, who was his guide when he was a student there, and the latter advised him to join Fr. Leuduger

of St. Briec. Once before, while he was a student, Louis had wanted to join this priest and his little band of missionaries. He met also his uncle Fr. Alain Robert. At the latter's advice, he had a meal with his parents, who were then staying in Rennes. In Rennes, Montfort preached in several churches.

Then Fr. Louis along with Bro. Mathurin paid a visit to Montfort, his native place. They actually came to the house, where Mother Andrea was staying with her son-in-law. Bro. Mathurin knocked at the door and sought hospitality for the love of God. The son-in-law did not welcome an unknown tramp. Finally Montfort and Mathurin were welcomed by an old peasant named Pierre Belin. They spent the night in his cottage. The following morning Pierre Belin recognized Fr. Montfort and the news of his presence spread in the town. Mother Andrea came in tears to the door of Pierre Belin and begged Fr. Montfort to accept her invitation to come and stay under her roof, which had refused him entry the evening before. Fr. Montfort treated Mother Andrea kindly and he and Bro. Mathurin had a meal with her.

Montfort came to Dinan. After he had been accepted by the Dinan missionaries, who were getting ready to preach in the town, he went to the Dominican Church to say Mass. One of the religious there was his own brother Joseph, who was ordained in 1698. Montfort recognized the sacristan, who was his brother, and requested him, "My dear brother, kindly give me vestments for Mass, because I would like to celebrate at the altar of Blessed Alain de la Roche." Fr. Joseph did not recognize Montfort and felt hurt being called brother. So he gave Montfort the poorest vestments and two small pieces of candle. After Mass, Montfort thanked his brother and then said, "Would you be so kind, my dear brother, to give me the same vestments to-morrow."

As Montfort was spending time in thanksgiving, Fr. Joseph approached Bro. Mathurin and asked him the name of the celebrant, adding angrily "that he had no manners. I want him to know that I am a Father, that I preach, say Mass and hear confessions." Bro. Mathurin did not reveal the name but told him that he was a stranger in the area. In the afternoon, once again, the sacristan pestered Bro. Mathurin and the latter finally said, "He is called Fr. De Montfort."

- "De Montfort! I do not know that name."

- "Do you know Louis Marie Grignon from Montfort-la-Cane?"

- "But then," replied Fr. Joseph, "he is my own brother."

- "Of course!"

The next day, Fr. Joseph embraced his brother most lovingly and reproached him for hiding his name the previous day.

"What are you grumbling about?" replied Montfort. "I called you my dear brother, and are you not so? Could I give you any better mark of my love?"

After this the sacristan made reparation. He gave him the best vestments and praised his virtue everywhere.

The Dinan missionaries gladly granted Louis' wish to teach catechism to the children. Louis taught the children about Mary. He heard confessions and tended the sick. One evening, going along the streets, he found a poor man covered with ulcers. He took him on his shoulders and went to the Missionaries' House. He knocked at the door and cried out, "Open to Jesus Christ."

He, who came to open the door, was much astonished at the sight. Montfort placed the poor man on his bed and warmed him as much as he could. He spent the night in prayer. He saw Jesus in the poor.

A short distance from Dinan, stood the mansion of La Garaya. Claude, Lord of La Garaya as a youth squandered a

fortune in frivolous activities. He then joined the army and practiced all sorts of games like fencing and hunting. His father died in 1693 and he married in 1701. Becoming the head of a large fortune, he multiplied feasts and hunting parties. A terrible fall from her horse altered the lady's health profoundly. Then the couple had to face a number of misfortunes. These misfortunes led to their conversion. At this juncture Montfort came to Dinan to preach. He met the Lord of La Garaye and his wife. They had already gathered in the outhouses of their mansion a number of sick people and beggars. Montfort was happy to preach a retreat to them.

11. In Fr. Leuduger's Missionary Group (Feb. – Oct. 1707)

Fr. Dom Leuduger (1649-1722) was the Director of the Diocesan Missions of St. Brieuc. As a disciple of Fathers Maunoir and Huby, he exercised a great influence over his Assistants and on people in general. He was not satisfied with mere preaching. He organized the Missions of Brittany according to his masters' principles. The focus was on the parishioners. Catechism classes, hymns, prayers, examination of conscience, and sermons followed one after the other. He had many Assistants, about 20 of them were his regular Assistants. They were seconded by volunteers. Montfort joined the group as a volunteer priest. The mission band of Fr. Leuduger worked in the dioceses of St. Malo and St. Brieuc, evangelizing the parishes of Baulon, Leverger, Medrignac, Montfort-la Cane, La Cheze, Plumieux, St. Brieuc and Moncontour.

In February 1707, Fr. Leuduger invited Fr. Louis to join his mission band in the diocese of St. Brieuc. Fr. Louis preached at La Cheze in Northern Brittany. He taught catechism and took care of the poor. His burning words, heavenly smile, movement with Rosary in hand and his boundless charity for everyone drew the attention of the people.

He was told by many of the natives that, a long time ago, the great St. Vincent Ferrer had looked on the ruins of the ancient chapel of Our Lady of Pity, and had made a prophetic statement. "The chapel will be restored by a man whom the Almighty will bring into the world in due time. He will come as a stranger. He will be insulted and abused. But he will rebuild the chapel."

"I am that man," Louis said. "Let's set to work." He drew up plans, engaged skilled workmen, ordered for statues, directed the transport of materials and supervised the work. The work carried on for several weeks after the mission. The new chapel of Our Lady of Pity had an altar in the Roman style, surrounded by a fine balustrade on which there were eight life size statues. On the altar were three great crosses, having at the foot of the middle one a beautiful statue of Our Lady holding the dead Christ in her arms.

From La Cheze the missionary group moved to Plumieux to preach a mission. After this came the mission at Trinity-Prohoet. On the closing day of the Mission at Trinity-Prohoet, Montfort organized a grand procession from there through Plumieux and La Cheze. The perfect order, the hymns and prayers delighted everyone. Our Lady's statue was borne triumphantly to her new shrine. Our Lady of Pity was placed at the foot of the Cross. Thus Montfort rebuilt the Chapel of Our Lady of Pity.

In order to preserve the fruits of the mission, Montfort started an Association of Virgins, an Association of the Friends of the Cross and a Confraternity of the Rosary. For the success of the missions he spent much time in prayer and did penance. He excelled in helping the poor. To a lady, who wanted to give him money for a new cassock, he said, "My body can do without a new cassock, but Jesus Christ's poor cannot do

without bread.” Along with other priests he preached a mission at Montfort itself.

In August 1707, Fr. Leuduger and his team including Montfort arrived at Moncontour. The upper class of Moncontour were living in wealth and luxury owing to a prosperous cloth trade. Montfort invited people to venerate his crucifix blessed by the Pope. People had to be modestly dressed, avoiding very worldly dress. Montfort took a collection to have Masses offered for the souls in purgatory. This initiate was interpreted badly. It was considered a gross breach of the Mission rules which forbade the Missionaries to seek any help from the people. Fr. Leuduger asked Fr. Montfort to leave the group. There must have been a difference in the way Fr. Leuduger and Fr. Montfort conceived of mission. It was a difference more of spirit than practice. Montfort preferred to preach in the Apostolic way, i.e., in a great spirit of simplicity, poverty, penance, and abandonment to Divine Providence. He did not like funded missions.

12. At the Hermitage of St. Lazare (1707-08)

Montfort was with Fr. Leuduger’s group from Feb.-Oct. 1707. Being asked to leave the group, Montfort found himself without a ministry. He made use of the occasion for retreat, and reflection and for training up his Brothers. With Bros. Mathurin and John, who had by this time joined him, he occupied the hermitage of St. Lazare in the town of Montfort. Once there had been an abbey there, and a hospital for lepers. They were built, according to legend, by Crusaders, sometime in the 14th century. The abbey was partly preserved; but it was unoccupied.

This hermitage was on the boundaries of the forest of Broceliande. In this hermitage was born the first Montfortian community of men. "It is, symbolically, the Cenacle of the

poor, united in pleading for graces from on high, together in handing on the Word; it is the little Church of the Acts of the Apostles, prayerful and mission-oriented." (Montfort, Prophet of our times, p. 316) Montfort with the required permissions settled down with Bros, Mathurin and John in this hermitage of St. Lazare. They worked hard and restored the chapel.

Montfort carved the statue of Our Lady Wisdom and placed it on an altar. Above the main altar he hung the picture of a dove with outstretched wings symbolizing the Holy Spirit. Fr. Montfort and Bros. Mathurin and John led a life of prayer and penance. They relied on God's Providence. Often people provided them with food. One day at noon, they went to the refectory, said the grace, and listened to a reading; but there was no food available. They said the thanksgiving grace and then carried on with their normal routine. At night, as they were about to leave the refectory, a neighbour brought them food.

Soon people started to come to listen to Montfort and he taught them. The Chapel became a centre of piety. And, when the chapel was too small, he preached outside under the trees. After the sermon, a hymn was sung and the Rosary was recited. Some priests invited him to preach in their parishes and he obliged them. In the parish of St. John, where he was baptized, Louis conducted a retreat for unmarried women; and on the last day he led them in procession to the church of St. Nicholas, to honour Our Lady of the Rosary.

Towards the end of 1707, Bishop Desmarets of St. Malo came there and forbade Montfort to exercise his ministry. At that time, the Parish Priest of Breal came in and asked the Bishop to permit Montfort to preach to the youth of his parish. To this the Bishop agreed. Montfort said to the Bishop, "If some other persons addressed themselves to me, would Your

Lordship give me the power to absolve them?" "I grant it to you," replied the Bishop.

Montfort preached a mission in Breal and also to the soldiers there. He established a confraternity among the soldiers, which he called "The Soldiers of St. Michael". Other priests also invited Montfort to preach retreats. The parish priest of Breal wanted Montfort to preach another retreat during the Shrovetide and on Feb. 17, 1708, Montfort wrote to him:

"My dear Father and friend,

I am very sorry that I cannot do what both you and I would desire. I am already booked for three different places on each of these days and I must keep to my commitments. However, I will send Mathurin to you on Tuesday to say the Rosary in public and sing hymns and he will bring sixty little crosses of St. Michael for our soldiers... L. Marie de Montfort, priest." (L.21) Some people did not like the ways of Montfort, went on accusing him to the Bishop. While Fr. Louis was giving a mission in Romillé, the Bishop finally forbade him to preach outside the parish churches of the town of Montfort. This prohibition extended even to the Chapel of St. Lazare. Under this condition Montfort decided to leave the Diocese of St. Malo. Fortunately for him, his friend Fr. Barrin, one of the Vicar Generals of the Diocese of Nantes, invited him to the Diocese of Nantes.

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Chapter 4

Montfort, Missionary in the diocese of Nantes (1708-1710)

1 The earlier missions in the diocese of Nantes

Fr. Louis and Bros. Mathurin and John reached Nantes. Mgr. Gilles de Bauveau was the Bishop of Nantes. Fr. Barrin decided to place Montfort under Fr. Joubart, a renowned Jesuit Missionary who was going to evangelize the Parish of St. Similien at Nantes itself. During the mission Montfort excelled himself in the mission activities. One day, Fr. Louis saw a gambling table that everyday caused disturbances and quarrels, and he knocked it down, stamped on it and broke it into pieces. The soldiers to whom it belonged, attacked him, some pulled his hair, others tore his cloak and got ready to attack him with swords. He asked them how much it cost. "50 francs" they told him. "I would willingly give you," he replied, "50,000 pieces of gold, if I had them and all the blood in my veins, to burn all the gambling tables like that which I have just broken." The soldiers became very furious. But one of them told others, "Let us not strike him. It would bring bad luck to us. Rather, let us take him to the Castle. The Lord King's Lieutenant who gave us that table will do justice to us." Fr. Louis marched in front, a large crowd following and shouting. When they reached the Cathedral, a gentleman, on seeing him, took him away from the hands of the soldiers.

Fr. Barrin took a distinguished Jesuit Father to listen to Fr. Louis' preaching. They were impressed with the unction with which he preached. He was able to touch the hearts of the people. Fr. Barrin henceforth conceived such a high notion of Fr. Louis' holiness that he declared himself his constant protector.

The Mission at Vallet: At the end of the summer of 1708, Fr. Montfort went on his own to give a mission at Vallet, a parish 15 kms away from Natnes. The parish counted 500 souls. As it was the time of vintage the attendance was poor. Montfort had recourse to a new propaganda. He sent Bro. Mathurin through the villages across the vineyards. Bro. Mathurin rang a small bell and sang in his beautiful voice,

"Hey, hey, hey!
The Mission starts today!
If it's Paradise you'd win,
Good friends, come right in."

Success was immediate. That very evening, people flocked from all sides. The whole parish attended the Mission. Fr. Barrin gave some ground to plant a cross at the end of the Mission. People started calling it "Father Montfort's Calvary". Fr. Montfort taught the people how to pray the Rosary. For some time, the people kept up the practice of reciting the Rosary daily. Five years later, coming from Roussay, he headed toward the town. But, learning that the people had relapsed, he refused to go near them. When the people heard this, they felt sorry and restarted the practice. After this Mission, Montfort preached Missions at La Boissiere and at Landemont.

The Mission at La Chevroliere: Fr. Barrin sent Fr. Montfort to La Chevroliere in November 1708. He gave him Fr. Des Bastieres as his Assistant. Fr. Barrin had just transferred some foundation Masses in honour of Our Lady of Shadows from Chevroliere to his own manor. Hence the Parish Priest was not happy and he did not welcome the missionaries. One morning the audience was moved by the missionary's words. The Parish Priest then came in and told the audience, "You are taught only useless things in this Mission. You would do much better to stay at home and earn your own living and that of your

children" Montfort came down from the pulpit and knelt down till the Parish Priest completed his words. When the Parish Priest left, Montfort and the people sang the Te Deum to thank God for the cross. The mission continued and many conversions took place. Planting of crosses and recitation of the rosary became part and parcel of the mission.

The Mission at Vertou: The next mission was at Vertou in Nantes itself. Montfort spent a month there. There everything was smooth and Montfort told his Assistant, "How badly we are here!" "Not at all," replied the latter. "Where could we go to be better off?" "The matter is that we are too well off. Our Mission will bear no fruits. No Cross. What a Cross!"

Towards the end of 1708, there were four Brothers: Mathurin, John, James and Peter. Bro. Peter became very sick.

"Peter," said Fr. Montfort, "where are you ailing?"

- "All over the body."
- "Give me your hand."
- "I cannot."
- "Turn towards me!"
- "Impossible."
- "Do you have any faith?"
- "Alas, dear Father, I would like to have much more."
- "Do you wish to obey me?"
- "With all my heart."

Then Fr. Montfort laid his hand on the sick Brother's head and said, "I order you to get up in one hour's time and to come and serve us at table." Montfort went to the church and carried on with the exercises of the Mission. An hour later, when the priests came for lunch, Bro. Peter was up. To the questions that were asked, he replied cheerfully, "The Lord has cured me." The mission at Vertou ended with a bonfire into which the people threw their bad books.

The Mission at St. Fiacre: In December 1708, Montfort preached a mission at St. Fiacre. The mission went on successfully. In the diocese of Nantes, Montfort developed a personal method of structuring the missions. His spiritual orientation included: 1. living on Providence, dependent on the people; 2. paying a special care to the poor; 3. Mary's place in prayer, notably the practice of the Rosary; 4. Wisdom of the Cross; and above all, 5. renewing the vows and promises of Baptism. He knew how to insert his convictions into his sermons. With him, teaching took on the power of witnessing. He was given the grace to touch souls. Singing Hymns, organizing processions, founding confraternities, etc. added to the effectiveness of the missions.

The Mission at Campbon: On Ash Wednesday, Feb. 13, 1709, Montfort was sent to Campbon to preach a mission there. The church was in a pitiable condition. On dirty walls spread a black mourning band adorned with the crest of the Dukes of Coislin. The floor was obstructed by uneven tombstones. After the mission, Montfort spoke to the people of the neatness needed for God's House. He got the men to take the tombstones to the cemetery and got the floor redone. He removed the crest of the Dukes of Coislin from the walls and got the walls whitewashed. A few days later, the Steward of Pontchateau came with officers to have Montfort arrested for encroaching on the Duke's rights. The Duke was sick and his brother the Bishop of Metz did not object to Montfort's action and the Steward had to withdraw; but he kept a grudge against Montfort.

Some people planned to kill Montfort on the day that he had planned to go to Pontchatueau. Fortunately Fr. Bastieres came to know about the plot and the missionaries postponed their journey and thus saved themselves. In March 1709, Montfort preached a mission at Crossac. There too the church was in a miserable condition. He spoke to the people and got

them convinced of removing the tombstones. They signed a document renouncing their right to bury the departed in the church. The church was then cleaned. Fr. Bastieres left Montfort and the latter felt it a lot.

2. The construction of the Pontchateau Calvary

In April 1709, Montfort, with a new assistant Fr. Gabriel Olivier, started a mission in Pontchateau. It lasted from the middle of April to the first week of May. Montfort had nursed a great plan to build a monumental Calvary on the moor of La Madeleine in Pontchateau. After sounding the local clergy, he announced to the parishioners of Pontchateau his plan. People received the news with enthusiasm and expressed their readiness to cooperate. The plan was simple but grand. Montfort drew three concentric circles. On the inner and topmost circle, three crosses were to be planted and at the foot of Jesus' cross the statues of Mary, John and Mary Magdalene were to be erected. The mud between the second and third circles was to be taken and put on the inner circle to raise it into a hill. Beyond the third circle, 150 fir trees, divided into tens by means of 15 cypresses, were to form a huge rosary.

The news about the construction of the Calvary spread far and wide. People from the surrounding parishes came to work on the Calvary. Montfort encouraged the people by singing,

"Alas, the land where Jesus died
By Turks and foes is occupied.
Hence must we all in our country,
Raise up here a Calvary."

The new Crusaders understood the greatness of their task and began working with religious fervour. On the vast work-yard, a huge crowd were kept busy. On certain days even 500 people were there to work. Some were digging the ground, others loading the carts, while others carried the mud in baskets. All were satisfied with a crust of black bread, which they had

brought in their pockets. Montfort often provided them with a simple meal. Montfort went round the villages in quest of food. People came to his help. Mrs. Jeanne Guigan, a widow, was the Missionary's provider. One day, Fr. Montfort was to have meals at her house. She prepared a plate of soup for him. While looking out of the window, she saw him talking with a beautiful white lady. So she brought a second plate of soup. But Fr. Montfort came in alone.

- "But where is the beautiful lady who was talking to you?:"

- "You saw her?"

- "Yes, I saw her quite well."

- "You are happy, holy woman," replied the Priest. "Remain always worthy to see the Blessed Virgin."

The good heavenly Mother visibly blessed the charitable widow. Her empty pot was getting filled again. The loaves from which she was cutting slices of bread did not decrease. She went on giving platefuls of soup without getting poorer for it. These wonders lasted as long as the works lasted.

The work continued for fifteen months or more. Montfort had organized it so well that he could go away for a week or more, to give missions. The year 1710 was a miserable one for France. Its armies had been shattered and scattered. It still begged for peace; but its enemies demanded an intolerable price. Its people, suffering from famine, were called upon to give the king new recruits and new taxes. In the first week of September 1710 the work was completed. Montfort got suitable statues made. The cross of Christ was 16 feet tall and there was a cross on either side for the good as well as the bad thief. All the statues were big and well proportioned. The cross of Christ towered over the land of the Magdalene, inviting all those within two thousand square kilometres to come and pray.

3. The later missions in the diocese of Nantes

As the work on the Pontchateau Calvary was going on, Montfort preached missions in a number of parishes:

Landemon, St. Saviour, La Boissiere, La Remandiere, Besné, Missillac, Herbignac, Camois, Asserac, St. Donatien and Bougguenais. Fr. Olivier helped him both in the missions and in the construction of the Calvary at Pontchateau. The two chief missions that they preached together were those of St. Donatien and Bougguenais.

The Mission at St. Donatien: In June 1710, Montfort spent himself fully in the suburb of St. Donatien. Practising Christians were many; still drinking taverns and dances did exist. On a Sunday, Montfort visited a public house alone. Young men, who were drunk, were singing, dancing and quarrelling furiously. Montfort knelt down in their midst and said a Hail Mary. Then he got up, snatched their bagpipes and broke them on the ground and knocked down the tables. Some of them resisted. Montfort faced them with Rosary in his hand. They all one by one slowly left the place. The Mission at St. Donatien was a great success. He made 14 standards of white satin, which he made use of at Bougguenais.

The Mission at Bougguenais: The next Mission was at Bougguenais. Montfort's donkey was grazing in a neighbouring meadow. It happened to fall into a well. Montfort was preaching at the pulpit. He stopped his sermon suddenly. "Two men are needed," he cried out, "to go and save my donkey that is drowning." A few parishioners rushed out and saved the donkey. The Mission of Bougguenais ended with a grand procession in which 10,000 people participated. The 14 standards rose above the crowd, one at the head of each group. They bore the chief titles of Our Lord and Our Lady. People prayed and sang.

4. The Pontchateau tragedy

Montfort had obtained permission from the Bishop of Metz to build the Calvary on the Moor of La Madeleine. The

Bishop was the brother of Mr. Pierre de Coislin, the owner of the place. As Mr. Pierre died, the Bishop succeeded to his title. The property was looked after by a Steward. The same steward was not happy with Montfort for removing the Duke's Crest from the wall of the church in Campbon. The Steward was waiting to take revenge on Montfort. He wrote to the Governor of Brittany stating that Montfort was constructing fortresses with moats and underground passages, which could be used by the enemy of the nation as hiding places. An inquiry was made by the Commissioner of Brittany, Mr. Ferrand. Mr. Ferrand came, examined the works and wrote a report confirming the accusation. Montfort did not pay attention to Mr. Ferrand during the visit. The report was sent to Paris and the King ordered that the Calvary should be destroyed. This order was passed on to the Bishop of Nantes. Montfort did not know anything about these proceedings.

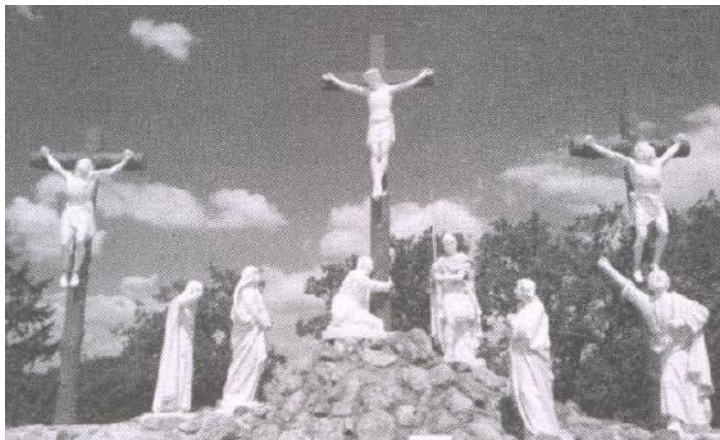
When Montfort came back to Pontchateau from the Mission of Bouguenais in August 1710, the Calvary was up. After the last preparations, a Rosary with large beads was placed on the boundary wall. The gigantic Rosaries, the Marian Chapels, the statues of Mary, John and Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross and that of Jesus Christ on the cross, all summarized the Mystery of Redemption.

By the second week of September 1710, the Calvary was ready for blessing. It was beautiful and grand. Montfort fixed its blessing for Sept. 14, the feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross. The Bishop also gave his consent. Everything was planned. Four famous preachers were appointed. On the eve of the Feast, while the last preparations were going on and while a huge crowd was gathering, a priest arrived at 4.00 p.m. with a letter from the Bishop of Nantes. The Bishop forbade the blessing. Montfort left the crowd there and walked the whole night and reached Nantes by 6. a.m. He met the Bishop; but the latter could not revoke his decision as the order had come from

the King. On the feast day the programme went on at Pontchateau as planned, but without the blessing. Montfort returned only at noon on the 15th. Most of the crowd was still there. He conveyed the message, consoled the people and resigned himself to that awful disappointment.

Montfort went to St. Molf to preach. During the first week of the mission, Fr. Olivier brought a letter from the Bishop addressed to Montfort. On reading it, Montfort wept as the Bishop was forbidding him to preach and hear confessions all over his diocese. Montfort went to the Bishop's House and the Bishop informed him of the royal order to destroy the Calvary. He accepted this great trial with calm serenity. He went to the Jesuits' House and made a retreat. He felt happy at Fr. Bastieres' visit to him.

The reconstruction of the Calvary:



The reconstructed Calvary

In 1747, after taking the necessary steps, Fr. Mulot, the first Superior General, appointed Fr. Audubon for the reconstruction of the Calvary. Actually in 1748, the Governor of Brittany got permission from the King to rebuild the Calvary. The work was

completed and it was reopened in 1758. In 1793, the French Revolutionaries ransacked the Calvary. In 1821, Fr. Fr. Gouray, parish priest of Pontchateau, rebuilt the Calvary. The reconstructed Calvary was blessed by the Bishop of Nantes attended by 10,000 people. In 1865, the Calvary was entrusted to the care of Montfort Fathers.

Today the Pontchateau Calvary is a pilgrimage centre not only for the Diocese of Nantes but also for the whole region. It has become a "Citadel of Faith" in the Western Provinces of France. It has a vast area, where all the Stations of the Cross and all the mysteries of the Rosary are depicted with huge statues. Individuals and groups can go around making the way of the Cross or reciting the Rosary. An atmosphere of silence and recollection is maintained.

5. After the Pontchateau tragedy

The first months following the fatal day in September were among the darkest ever experienced by Montfort, a bleak period of torment for his soul. Like his desert experience in the Pot de Fer Street and his painful dismissal from Poitiers, this trial touched the depths of his soul. He stayed in Cathuy House in Hauts-Pavés Street, which was offered to him as a temporary refuge by Fr. Olivier's mother. During the last quarter of the year, he started a Hospice for the Incurable in a small house taken on lease. Montfort and his helpers rescued the incurables from the indignity of dying in the gutters. Two young women looked after them.

On Nov. 10, 1710, Montfort became a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. In January 1711, Montfort once again came to lime-light There was a devastating flood in the Loire River. Some people got marooned and no one dared to rescue them; but Montfort got a boat, coaxed some people to join him and brought help to the marooned people. Montfort stayed at the Cathuy House till March 1711. * * * * *

Chapter 5
Montfort, Missionary in the dioceses of La
Rochelle and Luçon (1711-1716)

1. The earlier Missions (1711-13)

Mgr. Barrin of Nantes wrote to the Bishops of La Rochelle and Luçon recommending Montfort to their dioceses. Both the bishops were ready to receive him.

Mission at La Garnache: At the beginning of the Lent of 1711, Montfort started a mission at La Garnache in the diocese of Luçon. He preached the mission, rebuilt a chapel and placed in it the statue of our Lady of Victory. He began a new method of feeding the poor. At his request each family adopted a poor person and undertook to look after him or her all throughout the mission.

Fr. Montfort went once during the mission to dine with the Parish Priest. Before dinner, Fr. Montfort withdrew to the garden to say the breviary. The time for dinner came; but Montfort did not come. The Parish Priest sent an altar boy to go and call him. The boy came back reported that the Father was talking with "a beautiful white lady who stood above the ground." Definitely, the Blessed Virgin came to comfort Montfort after the Pontchateau tragedy. The mission at La Garnache was a success. Further Montfort rebuilt a ruined chapel and placed in it the statue of Our Lady of Victory.

After the mission in La Garnache, Fr. Louis came to Nantes and proceeded to St. Hilaire-de-Loulay to preach a mission. But the parish priest, who invited him, cancelled the mission and sent Fr. Louis away. Fr. Louis spent the night in a poor woman's house. The following morning, he went to a convent in Montaigu and offered Mass for the Sisters. Then Fr. Louis and Bro. Mathurin set out for Luçon. On their way they came to La Coutre. Fr. Louis sent Bro. Mathurin to the parish

to ask for some food. Fr. Louis and Bro. Mathurin were given meals with the servants. The Parish Priest asked Fr. Louis, "Why don't you travel on horseback?" Fr. Louis replied, "The Apostles did not usually travel on horseback."

Arriving at Luçon, Fr. Louis went straight to the Seminary directed by the Jesuits to make a retreat. One day, during that retreat, he stayed raised above the ground for half an hour in ecstasy during his Mass. The seminarian who served the Mass reported it to the Superior. After his stay at the seminary, Fr. Louis spent a few days in the Capuchin Friary. He paid a visit to Bishop de Lescure of Luçon, a close friend of the Bishop of La Rochelle. The Bishop received him warmly and invited him to preach in the Cathedral the next day, which was the fifth Sunday after Easter. After explaining the day's gospel shortly, which dealt with prayer in general, Fr. Louis spoke about prayer to Mary especially about the holy Rosary.

Arrival at La Rochelle and mission at Lhoumeau: During the first half of May, Montfort came to La Rochelle and Bishop Etienne de Champflour of La Rochelle received him warmly and granted him all possible faculties. Montfort preached a mission at the Hospital. Then he preached a mission at Lhoumeau, a parish two kilometres from La Rochelle. It was quite a success.

Missions in the town of La Rochelle: After preaching a mission at L'houmeau, Montfort preached three important missions in La Rochelle itself: one for men, one for women and the third one for soldiers. His own brother, Fr. Gabriel Grignon, Fr. Bastieres and several Dominican Fathers were his assistants. Bro. Mathurin and some lay people also helped him. The missions were preached in the church of the Dominicans, an immense edifice. Montfort conducted a series of things with great success. He involved the entire town in the activities of the mission. In the Men's Mission many conversions took place

and many Protestants got converted to Catholicism. This angered the Protestants. Montfort did not enter into controversies; but applied himself to inspire devotion to the holy Rosary and to explain the mysteries which were proposed at the start of each decade. He spoke with such lights and unction on that subject that people were never tired of listening to him. He did not forget the great lessons of morality nor the leading truths of holy Faith. The whole town of La Rochelle was moved. Many made general confessions and conversions were many.

Nearly 3000 women participated in the Women's Mission. Montfort promoted the recitation of the Rosary, the renewal of the baptismal promises and the asking of questions for clarification. The third mission was for soldiers. Montfort's words touched their hearts. They felt sorry for their sins and made good confession. The change effected in them was so remarkable that Mr. de Chamilly, Governor of La Rocheelle, conceived such an esteem for Montfort that he often invited him to his table. It was a moving sight to see Montfort in the streets of La Rochelle, always surrounded by officers and soldiers. When they went to his house to ask for advice, he answered them in a few words: "Be content with your pay. Harm nobody. Be faithful to God and to the King. Obey your commanding officers. In short, be Christian soldiers!"

The final mission ended with an imposing procession. There was a crowd. Soldiers joined this procession. Everything was beautifully planned and executed. The people marched in perfect order. Hymns were sung, band played the music, colourful banners were used and rosaries were recited. The procession was so impressive that a contemporary has left a lively description as well as a meticulous drawing of its overall design. This painting by Mr. Claude Masse is preserved to this day in one of the archives in Paris. Further when Montfort was

planting a cross at St. Nicholas' Gate, people saw crosses in the air.

The conversion of Lady de Mailly: Madame de Mailly was a noble lady who was a Calvinist. She came back from England with the intention of settling down in Paris. She came to La Rochelle to put her business affairs in order. She heard about Montfort and wanted to meet him. A meeting was arranged. Both had long conversations and finally she got converted. He taught her not only doctrine but also the practices of the interior life and of charity. She remained faithful to the recitation of the daily Rosary. When her conversion became public, it caused a great sensation and several Protestants, who were already shaken in their beliefs, got converted. Lady de Mailly daily recited the Rosary till her death in 1749 in Paris where she resided constantly in St. Sulpice Parish after her conversion.

Attempted murder: One day during a mission, Montfort pushed out of the church three men who had come to laugh at God's word. One of them hearing that Montfort was to visit Mr. Adam, the sculptor, one evening, went to tell his friends. They ambushed themselves in a dark and narrow street to kill Montfort as he was going to the sculptor's house. Entering the street, Montfort stopped suddenly, unable to go forward. He felt suddenly a strange shudder in his whole body. He took it as a warning not to proceed further. He took a roundabout way and thus saved himself from his enemies' attack. One of the plotters, after waiting for a long time, went to the entrance of the street. He asked someone there if he had seen Montfort a short while before. He told that Fr. Montfort had just come there, but that he had retraced his steps and gone by another way.

The mystery was cleared by Montfort's companion, some time later. As he was returning to La Rochelle from Nantes, at Poiré, he spent the night in an inn. He was in a lower

room, while some men were in the upper room and he heard what they said. They spoke about Montfort in a very abusive way. One of them said, "One day, we heard that he was to pass through a small street that we knew well. We were there at 7 o'clock that evening waiting for him, but he never came."

Attempt at poisoning Montfort: The Calvinists were furious at the conversions Montfort made. They succeeded in adding poison to the porridge that was given to him after his sermon. Montfort had no sooner drunk it than he felt the results. Antidotes were administered at once and that saved his life; but still his health was altered from that time till his death, as he told his friend, Fr. Blain, when he visited him in 1714.

Mission on the Island of Yeu: In 1712, the Bishop of Luçon sent Montfort to preach a mission on the Island of Yeu. At that time English pirate ships infested the sea-passage between Brittany and the Island of Yeu. As soon as the boat was 12 km from the land, two pirate ships were coming towards the boat. The wind was against the boat and it was favouring the pirate ships. The captain as well as all seamen was terribly afraid. Montfort asked the people to recite the rosary with him. When the rosary was over, Montfort said, "Have no fear, my dear friends, our good Mother, the Blessed Virgin, has heard our prayers; we are out of danger." The seamen did not believe him. Soon after, the wind changed its direction and the ships moved away.

During the mission, Fr. Montfort paid a special attention towards the poor. He called the ladies of the parish, gave them a short talk on the merits of good works, especially of alms deeds. He got a house to prepare meals for the poor. Everyone was invited to contribute according to his or her means. The meals were prepared by pious volunteers. He was present everyday to say the prayers before and after meals and to read to them while they were eating. Before dismissing

them, he reminded them that it was their duty to add holiness to poverty. He sent them to learn catechism or he taught them himself, to dispose them to gain much from the mission. During the mission the daily recitation of the Rosary was introduced and the mission on the whole was a great success.

Mission at Sallertaine: On leaving Yeu Island, Montfort came to Nantes and then to La Garnache. On May 5, 1712, he blessed the chapel of Our Lady of Victory. Then the people of La Garnache accompanied the missionary up to Sallertaine. The opponents of the mission forced the sacristan to give the keys to one of the opponents. After praying at the foot of the Cross, Montfort bid good bye to the people of La Garnache. As he was speaking the doors of the church opened by themselves. Montfort along with a few went to the house of the leader among the opponents. He sprinkled holy water in the front hall of the house. Then he placed his crucifix and a statue of the Blessed Virgin on the mantel piece. He prostrated himself and then he said a short prayer. He told the master of the house, "Well, Sir, you think that I am coming here of my own accord. No; it is not so. It is Jesus and Mary who are sending me. Do you wish to receive me for their sake?"

The man replied, "Yes, willingly. You are welcome."

- "In that case," said the missionary, "come along to the church with me."

- "Yes, we shall," replied the latter. Then and there he followed the Missionary along with his whole family. The next day the church was full for the mission.

In the parish drunkenness, injustice and enmities were prevalent. Montfort instructed the people with kindness. They knew about his penances, long prayer and constant vigils. His hard work every day impressed the people. He succeeded in ending over 50 law-suits and making over 200 reconciliations. He constructed a small Calvary. More than 15,000 people participated in the closing procession.

Mission at St. Christophe-du-Lignerou: On June 11, 1712, the people of Sallertaine accompanied the Missionary till Challans, where the people of St. Christophe came to meet him. On arriving at St. Christophe, a man from the parish rushed to the Missionary and before everybody slapped him in the face. People wanted to punish him; but Montfort stopped them saying, "Let it be, my little children. We shall have him." Actually soon he got converted. Wonders were multiplied. At a Mass where many of the faithful were to receive Holy Communion, the bell rang twice without anyone touching it.

Tangaran and his wife were rich. People complained to Montfort about all their usurious bonds. Tangaran came to meet Montfort and latter told him to burn those bonds. His wife intervened and changed his mind. "What?" said Montfort, "the voice of a woman can prevent you from obeying your conscience?" The woman replied with insults. Montfort told them, "You are both attached to your earthly wealth and despise heavenly treasures. Your children will not succeed in life. They will give you no posterity. You will become very poor and you will not have enough money even to pay for your own funerals."

- "Oh," said the woman, "we will surely have enough to pay for ringing the bells."

- "And I tell you," replied Montfort, "that no bells will be rung at your burial."

The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. Tangaran's son and daughter had no children. They lost all their money and they were in debts. Both died on Maundy Thursday, she in 1730 and he in 1738. Both were buried on Good Friday, the only day when bells are not rung. The mission ended with the planting of a cross.

Return to La Rochelle: In July 1712, Montfort left the diocese of Luçon and came to La Rochelle. Till then he had no house of his own where he could withdraw between his

missions. Now a pious lady gave him one for his life-time. It was a house with a small garden enclosed by walls in the District of St. Eloi on the outskirts of the town. He called it "St. Eloi Hermitage". He had a table, a chair and a candle stick.

The conversion of Miss Bénigne Pagé: An elegant young lady, Miss. Bénigne Pagé, daughter of a government official of the Finance Department, developed an antipathy towards Montfort. One day while Montfort was preaching, she sat on a front pew and stared at Montfort to distract him. She expected to receive to scolding from Montfort, which could be subject of witty remarks in the town. Montfort looked at her with compassion. He continued to speak and she listened to him. The young scoffer who wanted to have a good laugh, and make others laugh with her, was moved by Montfort's words and started to cry openly. After the sermon, Bénigne came to talk to Fr. Montfort. The conversation lasted two hours. A retreat and a general confession completed her transformation. She later entered the monastery of the Poor Clares. On her conversion, Montfort composed Canticle No. 143, starting as follows:

"Glory to the Lord on high!
Bénigne, the world has lost you!
Glory to the Lord on high!
God's grace is all it cost you!
Glory to the Lord on high!"

During the last part of 1712 and during the first part of 1713, Montfort preached missions at St. Vivian, Esnandes, Courçon, Le Beugnon Bressuieres and Argenton-Chateau.

Mission at Esnandes: Situated on the sea-shore, Esnandes was a flourishing village. It was six kms away from La Rochelle. The people had a fairly large trade. The mission started in December 1712. Some rich people did not join the mission. The erection of the Cross was fixed for Dec. 24, 1712. It was a day of fast and abstinence. The ceremony brought in many

people from all along the coast. Some had come only for enjoyment. They gathered in a largest inn, facing the harbour. They made a lot of noise, even broke the law of abstinence by ordering roasted chicken. Montfort went to the inn to stop the scandal. Those people insulted him. He told the inn-keeper that he was wrong in encouraging such scandalous excess. Montfort and his companions knelt down and prayed. On getting up, he said, in prophetic tones to the inn-keeper, "Wretch, you will die miserably and all your family too." Sometime after the mission, the inn-keeper became paralyzed and he began to tremble in all his limbs. His wife, who was addicted to drink, ended her days in shame and misery. Their children died forsaken by everyone.

Mission at Courçon: The devil of discord held full sway there. Not only did the parishioners hate each other, but the Vicar himself was hated by nearly all and he treated them as enemies. Montfort's first talks had no impact on them. He had recourse to his usual weapons: prayer, fasts, penances and discipline up to blood. Then he announced a very important subject and requested everyone to attend. He preached on "forgiveness of injuries and the necessity of reconciliation" with great unction. The Parish Priest interrupted him and came forward to beg pardon of the people. Montfort addressed the audience, "Well, my brothers, here is your shepherd who, in order to remove all ill-feelings between you and him, is taking the first step and begging you to forgive him, and you who have so often failed to give him what you owe to his person and to his sacred character, could you fail to get reconciled with him? ..." From all sides people asked for the shepherd's pardon. Tears flowed abundantly and the old enmity was replaced by expressions of regret, love and esteem. Then the people were requested to get reconciled among themselves. During several days the Missionary did the work of a benevolent Justice of Peace, which left the parish in a climate of Christian peace that lasted.

Mission at Le Beugnon: During the first half of 1713, Montfort preached a mission at Le Beugnon. The people kept pieces of his cross as relics. At Bressuires, the elders handed down to their children Montfort's prophecy, which he made when the Mission Cross was planted. "In order to punish the wicked, God will send a terrible war to these parts... However the war will not spread beyond my Cross."

Mission at La Seguniere: Towards the end of May 1713, Montfort came to La Seguniere to preach a mission there. There was a huge concourse for the opening sermon, and that concourse never thinned. There were many conversions. He spent a month there giving conferences, and instructions and hearing confessions. The whole parish was renewed entirely, fervour replaced laxity, good example pushed out scandals and enlightened piety drove away superstition. Further he started restoring the chapel of Our Lady of All Patience.

A change in Montfort: During the two years from 1711-1713, a change took place in Montfort's life. His robust physique showed signs of fatigue. Deterioration began due to several factors: his ascetical practices, thousands of kilometres covered on foot in all types of weather, more than ten years of frustration and tension, the effect of the poison, etc. Definite symptoms of burn-out began to make their appearance. There was also an evolution in his psychological make up. Experience, contact with people, years of self-mastery leading him gradually in the direction flexibility in his spiritual life, and the psychological suppleness that enabled him to survive in the rigid mould of St. Sulpice. In a prolonged process of gestation, a new man was born each day giving up explosive reactions and outbursts. He became more balanced, and more open and tolerant. He acquired the quality of geniality.

The dioceses of Luçon and La Rochelle became Montfort's principal field of apostolate. He spent the most fruitful years of mature active life within the secondly

mentioned diocese. He set about evangelizing a whole territory, traveling slowly and humbly on foot from one village to another, wherever his preaching was requested. Not a single village was neglected. He entered deeply into the lives of the communities, which received him. His was not a passing visit and he went back to the same villages. His relationship with the crowds, which called him affectionately “the good Father Montfort”, was more personal and human than ever before. He gave to a number of people individual spiritual direction. He became a popular leader capable of animating crowds. He was capable of using a language convincing as well as appealing to ordinary people. He also had the gift of touching the hearts. In short, he became an effective preacher, guide and leader.

2. Visit to Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris (1713)

Fr. Montfort from 1700 onwards had a plan to found a Society of priests. He did not forget his meeting with his friend Fr. Claude Poullart des Places and the latter's promise to give him recruits. Ten years had passed. Fr. Des Places died on Oct. 2, 1709; but his work had grown. In 1713, Fr. Bouic was the Superior of the Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris. In July 1713, Fr. Montfort paid a visit to the Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris. He met the Superior and during the first interview, he informed the Superior of the purpose of his visit. He reminded him of the ties of friendship which he had with Fr. Des Places and of the latter's promise to give him recruits.

The Superior invited Montfort to speak to his Seminarians. Montfort was happy to do that and during the two months that he spent in Paris, he came several times to the Seminary. The Directors of the Seminary met and approved Montfort's plans and renewed their Founder's promise to him. They selected Fr. Caris, the Community Bursar to join Fr. Montfort. Later it was found that it was impossible to find someone to replace Fr. Caris. Knowing the difficulties of the Seminary, Montfort accepted this disappointment. Yet his visit

was not useless as a number of seminarians came forward to join him later on.

On his return journey from Paris, Montfort paid a visit to Srs. Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet. He asked the hospital chaplain to give the religious habit to Sr. Catherine Brunet. Fr. Montfort paid a visit to Mrs. De Bouillet, who was seriously ill. He prayed for her and she recovered. His enemies informed the bishop about his presence and the bishop asked him to leave the diocese within 24 hours.

3. Montfort's further missions

Mission at Mauzé: Mauzé was a small town on the limits of La Rochelle Diocese. Two Fathers from the seminary came to help him. During the mission Fr. Montfort fell ill and yet he continued the mission till the end. Then he was taken to La Rochelle, where he was admitted to the hospital run by the Brothers of Charity. He had high fever. He suffered patiently. As soon as he was well, he was discharged.

Retreats with preparation for death: Montfort preached a retreat at Courçon. That retreat was a series of meditations on death. He gave a vivid representation of the last acts of life. After this retreat, Montfort gave a similar retreat to the Hospitaller Sisters there.

Mission at Vanneau: Vanneau was a parish in the Diocese of Saintes. The mission went on for 18 days. Some people described Montfort as an imposter, an extravagant man and a hypocrite to the Bishop. The bishop sent a letter to Montfort and to his Assistants and withdrew all their priestly powers. Montfort wept. The Parish Priest went and requested the Bishop to lift the interdict. The Bishop extended the powers till end of the mission. The mission was a great success. Fr. Montfort returned to La Rochelle and preached in neighbouring parishes: St. Christophe, Verrines, St. Medard, etc. spreading

everywhere the seed of God's word. He paid much attention to the Christian formation of children.

Mission at Roussay: Roussay was a large parish on the Northern limits of La Rochelle Diocese, near Nantes. Fr. Griffon was a zealous Vicar. At his request Montfort came there in June 1714. Drunkenness was the main vice, causing quarrels, discords, ruin of families, swearing, etc. One day when he was preaching, a number of drunkards were shouting and singing in an inn near to the church. He stopped the sermon and went to the inn. The people there stopped their racket. Montfort knocked down the tables and drove everyone out. Two men resisted; but he pushed them out.

One day, when Montfort was preaching, a scoundrel entered the church and from the middle of audience, he addressed the preacher and abused him in a very bad language. Several people tried to drive out that man, but they could not. Montfort came down from the pulpit, broke through the crowd and threw himself at the feet of the impious man. He spoke to him with such meekness and unction that he finally calmed him down and induced him to go with him to the Providence where he entrusted him to some pious persons who made him repent. Then Montfort continued with the sermon.

While the Cross was lifted up with ropes, the ropes snapped and the heavy cross fell on the people. Only one man was slightly hurt and all thanked God. Montfort established in the parish the habit of saying the Rosary at home. He further restored an ancient chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

Visit to Nantes: After the mission of Roussay, Montfort paid a visit to the hospital for incurable paupers, which he had started just a few years ago. The poor were happy to meet him. He visited also his dear "Friends of the Cross" in the parish of St. Similien. When Montfort was getting ready to go to Rennes, a

Youngman in rags approached him for help. Montfort helped him and thought of making him a catechist. That young man wanted to go home to bid good-bye to his parents. Montfort lent him his mule. As soon as he reached home, he sold the mule and thus cheated Montfort. A few months later, when Montfort came to Rennes, he saw his mule with a merchant. He bought it from him and thus recovered the mule.

Letter to "The Friends of the Cross": Montfort came to Rennes and made a retreat. He composed "The Letter to the Friends of the Cross" while meditating on the sufferings of Jesus.

In Mr. D'Orville's House: Having heard that the virtuous Marquis de Magnane was in the house of Mr. D'Orville, Subdelegate of Intendence, Fr. Montfort went to meet him in order to have a spiritual talk with him. As there were many people present, he took him aside to the garden to speak of his soul. Their private talk was rather short. Several persons being told that Fr. Montfort was there, hurried to the garden to salute him and the conversation became general. Fr. Montfort spoke beautifully for three hours. At 4.00 p.m. Montfort had his lunch and Mr. D'Orville kept company with him. After listening to Montfort, Mr. D'Orville resolved to give himself to God without reserve and promised to say the Rosary every day of his life.

Rejected in the Diocese of Avranches: On 14th evening of August 1714, Montfort came to Avranches. The following morning, he met the Bishop and the latter forbade him to preach and to say Mass. Montfort immediately left for the Diocese of Coutances and reached Villedieu-les-Poeles. The Parish Priest welcomed him and Montfort was happy to say Mass on Assumption Day.

Mission at St. Lo: Bro. Nicholas joined Montfort and along with him, Fr. Montfort reached the commercial town of St. Lo

in the Diocese of Coutances. In an inn in a village near St. Lo, he was refused admission. Then he took shelter at a stone step in front of a building under construction. There was a 20 feet high post to which was attached an arm bearing the inscription "The Cross in the Hand". On that step Fr. Montfort and Bro. Nicholas took rest. It was hard for Montfort to sleep. He took advantage of the silence to meditate on the Cross and he composed a hymn of which the first two stanzas are as follows:

"I have always the Cross in hand,
Of which the power is so divine,
That it gives me full mastery.
I carry it without trouble,
On my brow and in my arms.
I taste its charms within my heart,
While I conquer and overcome
All those who want to do me harm.

I bear my cross right joyfully,
Without sorrow, without worry,
Without complaint to anyone.
I receive it from God's hand,
A God who died makes it my law,
Which is for me a truth of faith,
That Cross contains within itself
Both palm and crown and victory."

Fr. Montfort and Bro. Nicholas came to St. Lo on Aug. 17, 1714. The Parish Priest received them well. With the permission of the Bishop of Coutances, a full Mission was organized in the town. People flocked from every side. Montfort had a prophetic look; his gestures were lively and expressive; his talks were solid and so moving that people got converted even the most hardened sinners. He practiced severe penance. In secret at the order of Montfort, the Brother had to strike the master hard with a discipline several times. The

procession at the end and the planting of the Cross were very impressive. Admirable conversions took place. Daily recitation of the Rosary became a habit among the people of the parish.

4. Montfort's visit to his friend Fr. Blain in Rouen in 1714

From St. Lo in September Montfort came to Rouen to meet his friend Fr. Blain, who was then the Canon of the Cathedral and Director of Christian Schools. He had valuable experience regarding the organization of communities dedicated to the education of the poor. The two friends met after a lapse of ten years. Blain told Montfort about what had heard as regards Montfort's behaviour and manners. He also asked Montfort whether he ever hoped to find people to follow his life, which was so poor, so difficult, and so abandoned to Providence, a life meant for men of rare courage, grace, and virtue. Blain requested Montfort to moderate the rigour of his own life. Montfort as an answer showed Blain a copy of the Gospel and asked him, whether he had any objection to what Jesus had taught and practiced and whether he could show him any way of life more like that of Jesus and his apostles than a life that was poor, mortified and founded upon complete abandonment to Divine Providence. Montfort said that he had no other plan but to follow Jesus and to persevere in that way of life. He added that if God wanted to give him good priests to share his way of life, well and good; but that was up to God and not up to him.

Fr. Blain told Montfort about the latter's odd and extraordinary practices and told him to give them up. Montfort answered that if his behaviour was odd or unusual, that was not at all his intention. If these expressions meant acts of zeal or mortification or charity or other heroically saintly practices which seemed unusual, he was quite content to be odd. Blain asked Montfort to imitate the wisdom of certain saints. Montfort answered him stating that there were different kinds of wisdom as well as different degrees of it. If one's concept of

wisdom was limited to never undertaking anything new for God, nor attempting anything novel for his glory just because of fear of being talked about, the apostles certainly made a big mistake in setting out from Jerusalem. He concluded by saying, "There are several paths to reach God. I leave them to walk in their own way; leave me to walk in mine, and all the more so, because you cannot dispute its advantages."

Montfort revealed to Blain that he was granted the grace of being constantly in the presence of Jesus and Mary. Then they talked about the foundation of schools and about the rules to be followed in the schools. During the second half of October, Fr. Montfort and Bro. Nicholas started their return journey. As they were approaching Nantes, Bro. Nicholas was tired. Montfort with his one hand held him up to enable him to walk the next 15 km. As the Brother was ashamed as people looked on and he said, "What will those people say?" Montfort's answer was, "What will Jesus say?" They took rest at Nantes for a few days. Leaving Bro. Nicholas there, Montfort along with Bro. James went to Pontchateau to bring the Calvary statues to Nantes. He left the statues in the Hospital for the Incurables. Then he went to Rennes and paid a visit to Mr. d'Orville. After an absence of four months Montfort returned to La Rochelle to begin his missions.

5. Montfort, founder of free schools

During the first half of 1714, Montfort had several meetings with the Bishop of La Rochelle concerning free schools. There were already some schools existing but not functioning properly. Montfort got one that was not functioning. The building needed much repairs. According to Fr. Charles Besnard, the third biographer, Montfort appointed a construction team: "Masons, carpenters, roofers, locksmiths, glazers, and other labourers in numbers large enough to warrant Louis' constant supervision, for he gave each one a job to do and made it clear how he wished it to be carried out."

The school started functioning in the autumn of 1714. Montfort looked into all organizational details. Only poor boys were admitted and many such joined the school. Montfort appointed a priest as its director. The teachers were dressed in a black uniform. The boys were arranged in nine benches raised up as an amphitheatre at various levels, so that the students could neither talk nor play without the teacher noticing it. He gave to those benches the names of the nine choirs of angels. There were about 150 students in each class. Reading, writing, arithmetic and catechism were taught. After class, the children returned home in an orderly manner under the supervision of the teachers. Montfort visited the school everyday, whenever he was in La Rochelle. Bro. Philip must have been one of the teachers. Later he was transferred to the school in Nantes as headmaster.

Girls from poor families could not study in public or private schools as the fees were beyond their means. Hence Montfort, after founding a free school for boys, worked at founding one for girls. Montfort asked Srs. Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet to come to La Rochelle towards the end of February 1715. Soon after their arrival, a school for girls was started and the Sisters were put in charge of it.

6. Several short missions

After his return to La Rochelle, Montfort preached missions at Loiré and Le Breuil-Magné. Then he went to the Island of Aix, about 10 kms away from La Rochelle. The island was about 4 kms long and 2 kms wide. Montfort persuaded the officers to cooperate. They cooperated so well that they made all the soldiers attend the mission while they set them the example. The local people too were very eager to attend it. The success surpassed all expectations.

The weather was very cold when Montfort reached St. Laurent-de-la-Prée. Fouras was 2 kms away. Both the parishes

were poor. People at first did not give anything to the missionaries. Montfort had to borrow money from a small merchant to feed his assistants. The people were indifferent. Montfort redoubled his zeal. Slowly a marvelous change came over all the parishioners. Montfort taught them how to approach worthily the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. He repaired the churches. The mission ended with a common procession for both the parishes.

7. Fr. Adrien Vatel becoming the first priest disciple

Fr. Adrien Vatel, a priest from the Diocese of Coutances and a former student of Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris, wanted to be a missionary in the West Indies. He accepted to be the chaplain in the ship. The ship came to La Rochelle and cast anchor. Fr. Vatel made use of the opportunity to consult Bishop Chamflour of La Rochelle, one of the best theologians of the Kingdom, about the validity of the priestly powers granted to him by the Archbishop of Paris. Some Canonists had told him that only the Pope could grant powers valid for all foreign countries. On landing, he was happy to learn that Fr. Montfort was in town. He wanted to meet him to get some hymns which could be sung during the voyage and so he entered the church where Montfort was preaching. Montfort stopped the sermon and said, "There is someone here who is resisting me. I feel the Word of God coming back to me; but he will not escape me."

After the sermon, Fr. Vatel went to meet Fr. Montfort. On seeing him, Montfort exclaimed, "Good! Here is a priest who is breaking his word to me; and now Almighty is sending me another. Sir", he said to his visitor, "You must come with me. We shall work together." Fr. Vatel replied that it was impossible, as he was on his way to the West Indies and that he had booked his passage with a Captain of the Navy who had lent him 100 crowns to buy books and vestments. Fr. Montfort told him, "Let us go and see his Lordship." Montfort listened to Vatel and told him that his powers were invalid. Then they

consulted the Bishop and the latter confirmed Fr. Montfort's views. Further the Bishop gave 100 crowns to Fr. Vatel so that he could return the loan to the Captain. The Captain was angry as he had to get another Chaplain. Finally Fr. Adrien Vatel joined Fr. Montfort as a disciple.

8. Arrival of Srs. Marie Louise & Catherine in La Rochelle

In 1714, Fr. Montfort wrote to Sisters Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet, "Put all your affairs in order and be ready to leave the Poorhouse of Poitiers within six months." At the beginning of 1715, he wrote again and sent it through a messenger. He wrote, "I have spoken several times to the Bishop of La Rochelle about you and about our plans and he thinks you ought to come here and begin the work we want so much... I will send you Bro. John with some money and a horse to accompany you." (L. 27)

It was not easy for Sr. Marie Louise to leave Poitiers. The people in charge of the Poorhouse did not want to relieve her. Her mother also objected to her leaving. Sr. Marie Louise consulted her confessor and made a novena. Her mother gave her permission; but the administrators in the Poorhouse raised all sorts of legal formalities to delay the departure of their irreplaceable bursar. With much tact she got permission from them and also from the Bishop. Then the government officials objected to her departure. Her confessor advised her to leave immediately. Accordingly the two Sisters left Poitiers in the company of Bro. John and reached La Rochelle on March 28, 1715. When the Sisters reached La Rochelle, they had no place to stay. Later they found a place called "Petit Plessis", not far from La Rochelle and Montfort met them there. The free school for girls started functioning under their supervision.

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Chapter Six

Fr. Montfort a spiritual writer

Fr. Montfort was a mystic and a missionary. He was keen on guiding people in spiritual life. To share his experience and to guide people, he wrote a number of letters and also a number of books. The complete works of Montfort have been published first in French and then in English, Italian and Spanish. Several of his books have been translated into nearly 30 languages and have been published many times. A numbering system was introduced to make reference easy. Abbreviations too are used to refer to the works of St. Montfort.

1. Fr. Montfort's Letters

Montfort wrote a number of letters; but only 34 have come down to us. Most of these letters were included in the Biography of Montfort written and published by Fr. Joseph Grandet in 1724. Unfortunately he did not preserve the originals. Still three originals exist: One is preserved by Montfort Fathers in Rome, another by Montfort Fathers in Holland and the third one by Dominican Fathers in Rome. 7 letters each were written to Srs. Marie Louise and Guyonne Jeanne, 6 to Fr. Leschassier, 4 to Fr. Alain Robert, 3 to Sr. Catherine Brunet and the rest are to different people. These letters reveal his character and spirituality.

2. The Love of Eternal Wisdom

While Montfort was staying in utter poverty and misery at the Pot de Fer Street, Paris during 1703-04, he meditated a lot on the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament and also on the mysteries of Christ. Further, at the invitation of his friend Fr. Claude Poullart des Places, he gave conferences at the Seminary of the Holy Spirit on Wisdom. Collecting together the themes developed during the conferences, he wrote for himself and for the whole Church the book, "The Love of

Eternal Wisdom”. Montfort invites people to contemplate Wisdom as Solomon did. “Following the example of this great man Solomon, I am going, in my simple way, to portray Eternal Wisdom before, during and after his Incarnation.” (LEW 9. hereafter only the number is given) “Starting with his very origin, we shall consider Wisdom in eternity, dwelling in his Father’s bosom and object of his Father’s love. Next we shall see him in time, shining forth in the creation of the universe. Then we shall consider him in the deep abasement of his Incarnation and his mortal life; and then we shall see him glorious and triumphant in heaven. Finally we shall propose the means to acquire and keep him.” (14)

To contemplate Eternal Wisdom and his actions before Incarnation, Montfort presents a number of tableaux mainly taken from the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. He quotes a lot from the Book of Wisdom, especially from the Book of Wisdom proper – Part II (Wis. 6:12-16 + 6:22-10:21). To meditate upon the activities of Wisdom, Montfort presents chapter 24 of the Book of Sirach. Montfort finally says, “Divine Wisdom shows himself to be the mother and source of all good and he exhorts all men to give up everything and desire him alone.” (30). To contemplate the beauty of creation Montfort quotes Proverbs 8:30-31. “If the power and gentleness of Eternal Wisdom were so luminously evident in the creation, the beauty and order of creation, they show forth far more brilliantly in the creation of man.” (35)

Montfort invites all to contemplate the Mystery of Incarnation. “Eternal Wisdom proved in a thousand ways his friendship for men and his great desire to bestow his favours on them and to converse with them.” (47) In quoting the entire chapter 10 of the Book of Wisdom, Montfort invites all to meditate upon the actions of Wisdom in the history of humankind. Montfort wants his readers to meditate upon Wis. 8:1-18 to know about the excellence of Wisdom. “Wisdom is

an infinite treasure for men. Those who have utilized this treasure have become God's friends, and praiseworthy for their gifts of knowledge." (62) Montfort paraphrases Prov. 8:1-36 to show the desire of Wisdom for humankind. In N° 69, Montfort quotes Wis. 6:12-15 to show the great desire of Wisdom to communicate herself to humankind.

Montfort then passes on from the OT to NT: "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." (70) Montfort wants us to meditate upon the marvellous effects of Wisdom. He has mainly quoted from chapters 7 and 8 of the Book of Wisdom to explain the effects. "When divine Wisdom enters a soul, he brings all kinds of good things with him and bestows vast riches upon the soul." (90)

According to Montfort the mystery of Incarnation provides us with a large number of tableaux for loving contemplation. In chapters 10, 11 and 12 Montfort invites us to contemplate the gentleness of Jesus in his looks and words, in his actions and in his utterances. In chapter 13 is a contemplation of the passion and death of Christ. In Chapter 14, he gives his theology of the Cross mostly following the theology of St. Paul.

Montfort concludes the book by giving in chapters 15-17, the means to acquire and preserve Wisdom in the soul: 1. ardent desire 2. continuous prayer 3. universal mortification and 4 true devotion to Mary. Chapter 17 presents Montfort's Marian theology. He has defined True Devotion to Mary (215) and Perfect Devotion to Mary (219). Devotion to Mary is a means to acquire and preserve Wisdom in the soul. The book ends with the formula of consecrating oneself to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary.

3. Treatise of the True devotion to Mary

Montfort was a great devotee of Mary and he spread this devotion during his missions and private talks. In the suburb of La Rochelle, a pious lady gifted to Montfort a house with a small garden enclosed by a wall. It was close to the gates of the town in the canton of St. Eloi. It was called as St. Eloi Hermitage. Montfort spent a good part of the autumn of 1712 in this hermitage and wrote "The Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary". In this book he predicted, "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, hereafter only number is used)

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. After the revolution the documents were kept in the library without anyone noticing it until on April 22, 1842, a Montfort father, Fr. Rautureau, the librarian, discovered this manuscript that attracted his attention. He recognized the handwriting of St. Montfort. Fr. Dalin, the Superior General, identified the handwriting as that of Fr. De Montfort.

The first French Edition of the book appeared in 1843. It was well received in the church circles and many editions followed. The first English translation was made by Fr. Faber and the English Edition appeared in 1863. Again the book was much appreciated in the church circles. The book had and has a world-wide appeal. It has been translated into over 30 languages and it has undergone over 300 editions.

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. 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, hereafter only number is used). “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.” (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.” (20)

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.” (32)

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.” (19)

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.” (18) Referring to Jn 19: 25-27, Montfort said, “Let us, so to speak bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreservedly to her.” (LEW 211)

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)

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.” (36) “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.” (22) “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.” (25)

7. Montfort tells us that Mary is needed in the formation of the Apostles of the latter times. “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.” (50)

Some basic truths:

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 Alpha, and the Omega, the beginning and 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.” (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.” (62)

2. We belong to Jesus and 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 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.” (74)

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.” (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.” (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 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. 87ff) The above mentioned aspects provide us with additional reasons to have a true devotion to Mary.

The True Devotion to Mary: Montfort says, “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)

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.” (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.” (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.” (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.” (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 this 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.” (110)

Exterior practices of our devotion to Mary: In Nos.115 and 116, Montfort has given some interior and exterior practices of True Devotion and in the section on Perfect Devotion also he has mentioned some exterior and interior practices. “Although this devotion is essentially an interior one, this does not prevent it from having exterior practices which should not be neglected.” (226)

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.” (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.

The Perfect Devotion to Mary: "Perfect consecration to Jesus is but a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the

Blessed Virgin." (120) "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; our material possessions and what 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." (121) "Do 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." (257) Montfort wants people to make this consecration in all seriousness. He has prescribed a 33 day preparation before making this consecration (227-233). The formula of consecration is given in LEW 223-227.

From 135-182, Montfort explains the motives for this perfect devotion to Mary. Then he presents from 183-212 the story of Rebecca and Jacob as the Biblical figure of this devotion. From 213-225, he has explained the wonderful effects of this devotion.

The Interior Practices of this devotion: Montfort has mentioned some very sanctifying interior practices for those souls who feel called by the Holy Spirit to a high degree of perfection. "They may be expressed in four words, 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.*" (257)

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." (258) " The person who likes to be led by this spirit of Mary:

- a. should renounce his own spirit, his views and his own will before doing anything...
- b. should give himself up to the spirit of Mary to be moved and directed as she wishes...

c. and from time to time during an action and after it, should renew this same act of offering and of union.” (259)

2. With Mary: “In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place.” (260)

3. In Mary: “We should be delighted to remain in Mary. 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.” (264)

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.” (217)

4. 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 servants and slaves. 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.” (265)

4. The Secret of Mary

The Secret of Mary is a presentation in the form of a spiritual letter of the theme developed in the "True Devotion to Mary". The original has not survived. A copy which dates back to the

first half of the 18th century has come down. In 1716, Bro. James became friendly with Joseau, who later became a Brother. Bro. James, who had lived with Montfort, gave some of the writings of Montfort to Bro. Joseau to copy. The internal evidence of the document leaves us without any doubt that it was based on the copy made by Joseau and consequently goes back to the first half of the 18th century. The text was first published in 1868. This book has been translated into over 30 languages and it has seen over 300 editions.

5. The Secret of the Holy Rosary

The Rosary occupied an important place in St. Montfort's spiritual life and in his apostolate. Montfort believed that the Rosary was a wonderful secret way of knowing Mary and through her Jesus. To convince people of the effects of the Rosary, Montfort narrated the marvelous origin of the Rosary and the climate of miracles in which it developed over the centuries. He extensively used the "Mystical Rosary" written by Fr. Antonin Thomas, O.P. Montfort's book is divided into five decades, each containing ten "Roses". The first four decades show generous borrowings from Thomas, but when quoting he tried to return to the common Dominican source, Alain de la Roche. In the fifth decade Montfort explains how to say the Rosary worthily. This book too has been translated into several languages.

Montfort addresses at first his fellow preachers requesting them to "make a practice of the Rosary and taste its fruits... It will not be enough for us to preach this devotion; we must practice it ourselves." (SR 1, 2, hereafter Nos. alone are used) "Poor men and women who are sinners, I, a greater sinner than you, wish to give you this rose, a crimson one, because the precious blood of our Lord has fallen upon it. Please God that it may bring you fragrance into your lives." (3) "If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins, you shall receive a

never-fading crown of glory." (4) "Good and devout souls, who walk in the light of the Holy Spirit, I do not think you will mind my giving you this little mystical rose." (5) "dear little friends, this beautiful rosebud is for you; it is one of the beads of your Rosary, How precious this bead is!" (7) "The Rosary is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer... The Rosary is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer." (9) "It was only in the year 1214, however, that the Church received the Rosary in the present form." (11) "Inspired by the Holy spirit, instructed by the Blessed Virgin as well as by his own experience, St. Dominic preached the Rosary for the rest of his life." (12) "Blessed Alainde la Roche re-established the Confraternity of the Rosary in 1460." (19)

"The Jesuit Brother, Alphonsus Rodriguez, used to say his Rosary with such fervour that he often saw a red rose come out of his mouth at each Our father, and a white rose at each Hail Mary." (25) "Our Lady not only blesses those who preach her Rosary but she highly rewards all those who, by their example, get others to say it." (29) "The Creed is a prayer that has great merit, because faith is the root, foundation and beginning of all Christian virtues." (34) "The Our Father contains all the duties we owe to God, the acts of all the virtues and the petitions for all spiritual and corporal needs." (36)

"The Angelic Salutation or Hail Mary is a most concise summary of all that Catholic theology teaches about the Blessed Virgin." (44) "The Hail Mary, the Rosary, is the prayer and the infallible touchstone by which I can tell those who are led by the Spirit of God from those who are deceived by the devil." (51) "The Rosary said without the meditation on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would almost be a body without a soul." (61) "Now the holy Rosary, recited with meditation on the sacred mysteries, is a sacrifice of praise to God for the great gift of our redemption and a holy reminder of the sufferings, death and glory of Jesus Christ." (69)

"St. Francis de Sales bound himself by vow to say the whole Rosary every day for as long as he lived." (80) "St. Augustine assures us that there is no spiritual exercise more fruitful or more useful than the frequent reflection on the sufferings of our Lord." (88) "The Rosary worked more changes in their hearts than the priest could have done by exhorting and commanding them."(110) "How can we expect God to listen to us if we ourselves do not pay attention to what we are saying?" (119) "When the Rosary is well said, it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and is more meritorious for the soul than any other prayer." (122) "Here are several methods which help you to say the Rosary in a good and holy way, with the meditation on the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries of Jesus and Mary. Choose whichever method pleases you and helps you the most; or you can make up one for yourself, as several holy people have done." (154)

6. Methods for saying the Rosary

Montfort has given five different methods of saying the Rosary.

7. Letter to the Friends of the Cross

Cross occupied an important place in St. Louis Marie's concept of the Christian life. He founded associations of people who, attracted by love of the Cross, had taken to heart the words of our Lord, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me." (Lk. 9:24) He wrote the "Letter to the Friends of Cross" during a visit to Rennes at a time when he was not engaged in active work and was making a retreat. He composed it while meditating on the sufferings of Jesus and had it printed and circulated. The manuscript of the letter has not survived and the earliest existing copy was published in 1839 by Fr. Dalin, the Vicar General of the Company of Mary.

"On the last day of my retreat, I leave the delights of the interior life to develop on paper a few little points on the Cross

with which to pierce your generous hearts. Would to God I could use the blood of my veins rather than the ink of my pen! But, alas, even if blood were required, mine would not be good enough. I pray rather that the Spirit of the living God may be the life, strength, and guiding hand of this letter; that his unction may be my ink, the holy Cross my pen, and your hearts my book." (LFC 1, hereafter only Nos. are given) "Do you listen to the voice of Jesus who, burdened with his Cross, calls out to you, 'Come after me; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark; be brave; I have conquered the world'." (6) "Reflect well on these remarkable words of our Saviour, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow me' (Mt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23)." (12)

"The one among you who knows best how to carry his cross, even though in other things he does not know A from B, is the most learned of all. The great St. Paul returned from the third heaven, where he learned mysteries hidden even from the angels, and he proclaimed that he did not know, nor did he want to know anything but Christ crucified. Rejoice, then, you ordinary Christian, man or woman, without any schooling or intellectual abilities, for if you know how to suffer cheerfully, you know more than a doctor of Sorbonne University who does not know how to suffer as you do." (26)

"The Holy Spirit compares the cross to a fire which removes the rust from the iron by the intensity of its heat." (29) "If you are not willing to suffer gladly like Jesus, or patiently like the penitent thief, then you will have to suffer like the unrepentant thief." (33) "Carry your cross cheerfully and you will be filled with divine love; for only in suffering can we dwell in the pure love of Christ." (34) "You can be sure, my dear Friends of the Cross, that something wonderful is awaiting you, since the Holy Spirit has united you so intimately to that which everyone so carefully avoids." (40)

"Take advantage of little sufferings, even more than of great ones. God considers not so much what we suffer as how we suffer." (49) "My dear Friends of the Cross, make the resolution to suffer any kind of cross without excluding or choosing any: any poverty, injustice, loss, illness, humiliation, contradiction, slander, spiritual dryness, desolation, interior and exterior trials, saying always, 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready'." (54) "Never willingly complain against any person or thing that God may use to afflict you." (59) "Whenever you receive any cross, always welcome it with humility and gratitude." (60)

8. Letter to the People of Montbernage

In 1705, Montfort preached a mission at Montbernage. In 1706, he was asked to leave the Diocese of Poitiers. Before leaving Poitiers for Rome, he wrote a circular letter to the people of the parishes where he had preached a mission. The original manuscript of this letter has disappeared, but we possess an early text given by Fr. Joseph Grandet, who published the biography of Montfort in 1724.

"Dear people of Montbernage, St. Saturnin, St. Simplicien, La Resurrection and others, who profited from the mission which Jesus Christ, my Master, has just given you. Greetings in Jesus and Mary! Not being able to speak to you personally, since holy obedience prevents me, I take the liberty of writing to you on my departure, as a father writing to his children, not to teach you anything new, but to confirm you in the truths I have already taught you." (LPM 1, hereafter only Nos. are given)

"My dear children, you must be living examples to all Poitiers and district. Let no one work on Sundays or Holydays." (4) "I ask my dear women of St. Simplicien who sell fish and meat, and other shopkeepers and retailers, to

continue giving example to the whole town by living what they have learned during the mission." (5) "I am seeking divine Wisdom; help me to find it. I am faced with many enemies... Alone and poor as I am, I would certainly perish were I not supported by Our Lady and the prayers of good people, especially your own... Farewell but not goodbye, for if God spares me, I shall pass this way again." (6)

* **Note:** Rule of the Company of Mary including the Prayer for Missionaries, Rule of the Daughters of Wisdom and the Will are dealt with later on. There are also some smaller works, not mentioned here.

9. The Hymns

Montfort could be called a missionary singer. He composed nearly 200 hymns on a great variety of subjects, hymns which could be sung to tunes of songs already well-known. Popular hymns occupied an important place in parish missions. They were sermons in rhyme and song that poet-preachers composed. Even as a seminarian Montfort composed songs. The mission hymns were for Montfort the extension of his pulpit preaching. In the archives of the Montfort Fathers, four manuscripts of the Canticles of Louis Marie are preserved and they contain 163 hymns. The first collection of hymns was published by Montfort himself in 1711 at La Rochelle; but unfortunately no copy has down to the present day. In 1725 a collection was published. In 1929, Fr. Fradet published the complete edition. Nearly all the hymns have been translated into English; but the Complete Works of Montfort in English gives only a few hymns.

10. The Sermon Notes

This manuscript contains 478 pages. There are three distinct parts in the manuscript. The first part contains a series of sermons entirely composed according to a pre-arranged plan.

The second part, which is the oldest part, contains a considerable number of sermon plans (293) taken from reputable preachers of the time, including Biroat, Laselva, Lorient, Reina and the Jesuit Texier. It also contains several items borrowed from the directors of St. Sulpice, such as Frs. Leschassier, D'Oursel and D'Outrecolles. The subjects treated are in alphabetical order. This is the typical work of a seminarian preparing for the important ministry of preaching. These pages contain numerous extracts from the works of St. John Eudes, St. Francis de Sales and St. Charles Borromeo.

The third part of the book is concerned with a variety of subjects. The last pages of the manuscript are of exceptional interest. They deal with a special feature of Montfort's apostolate: 'The Return of the Mission'. It was his custom, a year after a mission, to return to the parish and preach for a week on the four last things. From page 458-477, he gives a sermon for each day of the week and also treats on the 'Remote Dispositions for a Happy Death', which is found also in a shorter work bearing this title, and which are inserted after the sermons.

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Montfort a painter and a sculptor

Montfort as a student painted boy Jesus playing with boy John the Baptist. He took lessons in painting. Montfort carved statues using wood. Some statues have come down to us.

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Chapter Seven
Montfort, a founder of Religious Congregations

1. Company of Mary, Montfort Fathers

On Dec.06, 1700, Fr. Montfort wrote to his spiritual director, Fr. Leschassier, "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 in country places and to arouse in sinners a devotion to our Blessed Lady. This was the work done by a good priest who died a holy death here recently. He used to go about from parish to parish teaching the people catechism and relying only on what Providence provided for him. I know very well, my dear Father, that I am not worthy to do such honorable work, but when I see the needs of the Church, I cannot help pleading continually for a small and poor band of good priests to do this work under the banner and protection of the Blessed Virgin." (L. 5) His intentions for a foundation were evident.

In August 1702, Montfort met his friend Jean Baptiste Blain and probably expressed the desire to have him as his collaborator. Blain later wrote, "As I felt greatly inclined to imitate him and be his companion, I was the more interested in what concerned him and anxious to know how exactly I should rightly judge him." (Blain No. 224) In 1702 or the following year, Montfort invited his friend Claude Poullart des Places to join him to found a society, but he declined; yet he promised to help Montfort. In 1707, Fr. Claude agreed to supply priests to Montfort. "If God graces me with success, you can count on missionaries. I will prepare them for you, and you will put them to work. In this way you and I will both be satisfied." (Besnard Vol. 1. 278-279) Fr. Claude died in 1709 and yet the Holy Spirit Fathers continued to honour the agreement.

In 1705, Montfort, while hearing confessions in the church of the Penitents in Poitiers, saw Mathurin Rangeard, who expressed his desire to join the Capuchins. Montfort said to him, "It is God's Providence which led you here. Would you like to help Missionaries in the work? Follow me and thus you will follow your vocation." He followed Montfort and helped Missionaries till his death. He was Bro. Mathurin. Between 1707 and 1711, Bros. John, Peter, Nicholas and Philip followed Montfort; between 1711 and 1716, Bros. James, Louis and Gabriel followed him. Later more Brothers joined him and a few of them taught in the schools he founded.

While working in the Diocese of La Rochelle, Montfort started to write the Rule for the Company of Mary. He submitted "his proposal to the judgment and decision of the bishop in the diocese where he resided. The bishop was Etienne de Champflour of La Rochelle, a very enlightened prelate who supported and was in favour of anything that seemed to him to contain the spirit of God. The Bishop was completely sympathetic to Fr. De Montfort's views and he approved his project and promised to do all he could to facilitate the enterprise and assure its success." (Besnard Vol. 1. p. 286) Montfort must have met the Bishop during the summer of 1712. During winter between 1712 and 1713, he worked on the Rule and more or less completed it before he left for Paris in July 1713 to meet the Superiors of the Holy Spirit Seminary. The Rule has three parts: Prayer for Missionaries 2. The Rule and 3. Letter to the Members of the Company of Mary. The three parts formed a coherent whole since their pages were numbered consecutively. Considering them also this trilogy goes together.

1. Prayer for Missionaries

Prayer for Missionaries is truly a literary and vocational masterpiece, created in an ecstatic moment of contemplation in

which all of Montfort's thinking about the Company was clarified. "Remember, Lord, this Congregation, which you have possessed from all eternity. You made it your own from the beginning, when your mind dwelt on it before time began." (PM1, hereafter only Nos. are given) "Give free rein, then, O Lord, to your merciful intent and raise up men of right-hand whom you revealed through the prophetic insight of some of your greatest servants." (2) "Remember the promises you made to us, time and again, through your prophets and through your divine Son, that you would grant our just petitions." (4)

"Lord Jesus, be mindful of your Congregation. Give your Mother this new company so that you may renew all things through her and bring the era of grace to close through Mary just as you began it through her... It is for your Mother's sake that I make this request. It was she who gave you birth and nurtured you. Remembering this, how can you refuse me? Remember whose Son you are and grant my plea. Remember what she means to you and what you mean to her, and fulfil my holy desires. It is no personal favour that I ask, but something which concerns your glory alone, something you can and, I make bold to say, you must grant since not only are you truly God having all power in heaven and on earth, but you are also the most dutiful of sons with an infinite love for your Mother." (6)

"What, then am I asking for? Liberos, men who are free, priests who are free with the freedom that comes from you, detached from everything, without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends as the world and the flesh understand them, without worldly possessions to encumber or distract them, and devoid of all self-interest." (7) "Liberos: free men. Men always available, always ready to obey you when those in authority speak." (10) "Liberos: true servants of the Blessed Virgin who, like a Dominic of old, will range far and wide, with the holy Gospel issuing from their

mouths like a bright and burning flame, and the Rosary in their hands, and bay like your watchdogs, burn like fire and dispel the darkness of the world like a sun." (12) "Otherwise, I would be better dead. Would it not be better for me to be dead, Lord, than to see you offended daily so deliberately and with such impunity? ... I would rather die a thousand deaths than endure such a fate. Send me your help from heaven or let me die.... Yet, my trust in you is so great that I am inspired to cry out like another of your prophets: I will live and proclaim the Lord's mighty works. This I will do until the time comes when I can say with Simeon, 'Now, O Lord, you let your servant depart in peace because my eyes have seen your salvation'." (14)

"Be mindful of this your Congregation, for it is you alone who must, by your grace, make it a living reality." (26) "How is it, then, great God, that although it is so glorious, so satisfying and so profitable to serve you, hardly anyone will support your cause? Scarcely one soldier lines up under your standard! Scarcely anyone fired with zeal for your glory will stand up and cry out, like St. Michael in the midst of his fellow-angels: Who is like God? Let me then raise the cry of alarm: 'The House of God is on fire! Souls are perishing in the flames! The sanctuary itself is ablaze! Help! Help! Good people! Help our brother who is being murdered. Help our children who are being massacred. Help our kind father who is being done to death!' "(28) "Let the Lord arise and let his enemies be scattered... Create this bodyguard of handpicked men who will protect your house, defend your glory and save the souls that are yours." (30)

2. Rule of the Missionary Priests of the Company of Mary

"The priests who enter must be called by God to preach missions in the steps of the apostles who were poor, and not be curates, parish priests, teachers in colleges or seminaries, as so many other good priests are, God having called them to this

good work." (RM 2, hereafter only Nos. are used) "Priests and Brothers alike must not accept even simple benefices and temporal possessions, even those they may inherit." (5) "The members of the Company are to have no money or possessions of their own either openly or in secret." (11) "It is strictly forbidden, either during the mission or after, to ask anyone, directly or indirectly, for money, food or anything else whatsoever. They must rely entirely on divine Providence for all things." (14)

"They will obey their superiors wholeheartedly, without reservation; readily without delay; joyfully without irritation; blindly without raising objections; and holily for God alone." (19) "Whether during the time of their mission or not, the poor are to be the especial objects of their care." (47) "The purpose of these missions is to renew the spirit of Christianity among the faithful." (56) "The preaching of God's word is the most far-reaching, the most effective and also the most difficult ministry of all. The missionaries will, therefore, study and pray unceasingly that they may obtain from God the gift of wisdom so necessary to a true preacher for knowing and relishing the truth and getting others relish it." (60)

"The catechist has the most important function of the whole mission, and the one who is appointed catechist by obedience must do all he can to fulfil his function worthily. It is more difficult to find an accomplished catechist than it is to find a perfect preacher." (79)

3. Letter to the members of the Company of Mary

"Do not be surprised if the world hates you, but know that it began by hating me. If you belonged to the world, it would hold you dear as something of its very own, but because you do not belong to the world, you must endure its hatred, calumnies, insults, contempt and outrages." (LCM 2, hereafter only Nos.

are used) "I am your protector; I hold you in my hands, Little Company, says the Eternal Father. I have graven you on my heart and on the palms of my hands in order to cherish and defend you." (3) "But it is not enough simply to be unafraid. God wants you to hope for great things from Him and to be filled with joy by reason of this hope." (5) "The man who is truly poor in spirit possesses God himself in his heart." (8) "You must truly value this real and effective poverty to which you committed yourself and have a real love for it." (9) "Experience, then, for yourselves the effects of poverty, for instance, 1. the labour it entails in the pulpit or the confessional by which you earn your bread by the sweat of your brow; 2. the humiliation and disdain which are usually shown to poor clerics; 3. other discomforts which poverty brings with it: lack of suitable clothing, of proper food and accommodations, and the fatigue and traveling it imposes." (10) "Let all your longings be centred on eternal things." (11)

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In July 1713, Montfort went to the Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris. Its founder, Fr. Claude Poullart des Places, before his death, had promised to train priests for Montfort. His successors were quite willing to help him. But at that time no one could be spared, and therefore Montfort had to return empty handed. In 1715 the Rule was approved by the Bishop of La Rochelle. Early in 1715, Fr. Adrien Vatel joined Montfort. On June 9, 1715, Montfort and Bros. Nicholas, Philip, Louis and Gabriel made their religious vows for one year at La Séguinière. During the second half of 1715, Fr. René Mulot joined Montfort.

During March 1715, Montfort sent 33 White Penitents from the parish of St. Pompain on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ardilliers in Saumur in order to pray to God to send him good missionaries. Fathers Mulot and Vatel accompanied them. On

their return, Montfort and some Brothers made the same pilgrimage.

On April 01, 1716, Montfort and Bro. Gabriel reached St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre. Later Fr. Mulot and his brother, the Parish Priest of St. Pompain, joined them. The mission there started on April 5th. On April 22nd, Fr. Montfort fell seriously ill. On the 27th, he dictated his Will to Fr. Mulot and signed the document. On April 28th at 8.00 p.m. Montfort expired. The funeral took place on the 29th and he was buried in the Parish Church in front of Our Lady's altar. When Montfort died, the religious societies founded by him were not well established. Fr. Mulot registered Montfort's Will in Nantes and then came to St. Pompain to stay with his brother. Fr. Vatel also came to St. Pompain. In 1717, Bro. James came to St. Laurent to teach the children of the parish. Bro. Mathurin was also in St. Pompain at that time.

In 1720, Sr. Marie Louise established her first community in the Long House in St. Laurent, which was bought by the Marquis of Magnanne and his niece Madame Bouillé. Later on Sisters had to face problems from the parish priest. Sr. Marie Louise suggested to Madame Bouillé the possibility of getting Fr. Rene Mulot as their superior. Both of them met the Bishop of La Rochelle and the latter asked Fr. Mulot to take charge of directing the Daughters of Wisdom. Madame Bouille and her uncle bought the Holm-Oak House and gifted it to the Fathers and Brothers. On 29th June 1722, Fathers and Brothers came to settle down in St. Laurent.

After a retreat, Fr. Mulot was elected Superior General. All except two, made their vows in his hands, as per the Rule prepared by Montfort. Bro. Joseau too made his vows and from 1722-1752, he looked after the parish school for boys. In 1722, there were five priests and four Brothers. The Brothers lived in utter poverty and slept on folding cots. Fr. Mulot later sent two

Brothers to La Rochelle to work in the school started by Montfort. As the Sisters needed a bigger campus, in 1723, the Fathers and Brothers came to stay at the Long House, while the Sisters moved to the Holm-Oak House.

A chapel in the Long House was called the Holy Spirit Chapel. Already in 1715 and 1716 Fr. De Montfort called the community by this name and he himself signed "Missionary of the Holy Spirit". In 1728, Fr. Mulot rewrote the original Rule of 1713 written by St. Montfort. He mainly suppressed from its articles the article precluding the education of the youth, since this was the apostolate of the Brothers. The Fathers carried on preaching missions in the Montfortian tradition. In 1749, Fr. Mulot died being affected by tetanus while preaching a mission.

In 1773, Fr. Besnard had to replace the 1713 Rules with Statutes for an Association of Missionary Priests and the religious vows had to be given up to get the government approval. On July 14, 1789, the French Revolution broke out. During the Revolution 4 Fathers, 6 Brothers and 33 Sisters were assassinated. On July 12, 1790, National Clergy was formed. The Company of Mary refused to accept this Constitution. On Jan. 31, 1794, the Republican soldiers pillaged the Holy Spirit House. On Feb. 11, 1795, the Assembly proclaimed liberty of worship. On Dec. 15, 1799, the Revolution was over. In 1800, there were nine Fathers and two Brothers. Then two more Brothers joined.

In 1816 missions were restarted. From 1821-41, Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was the Superior General. The Brief of Praise of Pope Leo XII in 1825 opened the way for the Congregation to be recognized as an Institute of Pontifical Right. In 1832, a new Constitution effected. The religious vows were re-introduced and on Feb. 5, 1835, the Fathers had their first profession.

The discovery of the Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin had a great impact on the congregation. On Nov. 14, 1853, Pope Pius IX granted the congregation papal approval. The congregation went back to its original name Missionary Priests of the Company of Mary. The title "Company of the Holy Spirit" came to an end. On Feb. 03, 1872, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith approved the Constitution of the congregation. On Jan. 22, 1888, Montfort was beatified. On March 18, 1903, the Parliament rejected the request for authorization to continue as religious congregation.

Before the anti-clerical laws came into existence, the congregation opened its mission in Haiti in 1871. Later the anti-clerical laws led to the congregation to expand its mission to Holland (1881) and Canada (1883). Other expansions took place: Malawi (1901), England (1891), United States (1903), Madagascar (1932), Zaire (1933), Indonesia (1938) and many others. Constitutions were recast in 1904 and also in 1949. Montfort was canonized on July 20, 1947. Post Vatican II period has given a strong impetus to the renewal of the Institute. The Sacred Congregation and Secular Institutes approved the updated Constitutions as well as Montfort's Triptych.

In 2010, there were 850 members in the Congregation working in the following countries: France, Holland, Great Britain and Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Canada, U.S.A., Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Bahamas, Nicaragua, Haiti, Malawi, Madagascar, Zambia, Congo, Kenya, Uganda, India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Papua New Guinea.

2. The Daughters of Wisdom, Montfort Sisters

Montfort, while working as a Chaplain in the Poorhouse of Poitiers, formed a group of physically handicapped women. He gathered them in a room and taught them meditation, self-renunciation and consecration to Jesus through Mary. A large cross hanging on the wall had written on it a summary of his teaching. On the door of the room was inscribed "Wisdom". This group functioned from November 1702 to March 1703.

Miss Marie Louise Trichet from a respectful middle class family of Poitiers came and sought Fr. Montfort's advice in the confessional. In 1702, when Fr. Louis had gone to Paris, Marie Louise entered as a lay novice with the Canonesses of St. Augustine at Chatellerault. She became ill and her mother took her home. Fr. Louis came back to Poitiers and Marie Louise wanted his help to enter another convent. Montfort said, "Come and live in the Poorhouse." It was not easy for her to enter the Poorhouse as she was not poor. She got a special permission from the Bishop and entered the Poorhouse as an assistant to the woman who was in charge handicapped women. She ate the same food as the poor, did the same menial works, took care of the sick, cleaned the rooms and washed the linen. One day Fr. Montfort told her, "I believe the time has come to give you a religious habit." On Feb. 02, 1703, he gave her the religious habit. She was called Sr. Marie Louise of Jesus.

Fr. Montfort in 1705, left the Poorhouse for good. After 8 years, he came to Poitiers and had a long chat with Sr. Marie Louise. Catherine Brunet, a governess already working there with the poor expressed her desire to join. Later the Chaplain of the Poorhouse at Fr. Montfort's request, gave her the religious habit. She was called Sister of the Conception. At the invitation of Fr. Montfort as well as that of the Bishop of La Rochelle, both the Sisters after overcoming many objections from the Poorhouse authorities left Poitiers and reached La Rochelle on

March 28, 1715. Sisters Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet took charge of the school for girls. Fr. Montfort wrote the Primitive Rule and it was approved by Mgr. Etienne de Champflour, Bishop of La Rochelle on Aug. 15, 1715. On Aug. 22, 1715, Srs. Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet pronounced their religious vows in the chapel of the Sisters of Providence in La Rochelle.

Primitive Rule of the Daughters of Wisdom

Montfort got inspiration from St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent de Paul and Fr. Tronson of St. Sulpice Seminary, Paris. "The interior aim of the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom is the acquisition of Divine Wisdom. The exterior aim is threefold, in keeping with the talents of its members: 1. the instruction of children in charitable schools, both in the town and in country places; 2. the proper care of the poor, whether in hospitals or not, sick or not, incurable or not; 3. the conducting of retreat houses to which the Sisters may be called." (RW 1, hereafter only Nos. are used)

"Poor and rich alike are received, provided their intentions are good and their vocation sincere, that is, if they are docile and poor in spirit." (8) "They have nothing they may call their own, not even a penny, a habit, an office book, piece of furniture or article of devotion; everything is in common, and after profession the community is obliged to give them whatever food, care and clothing they need."(24) "Holy obedience, practices with all possible perfection, is the special virtue that should characterize the Daughters of Wisdom." (46) "At their profession the Daughters of Wisdom make a simple vow of chastity for one year, and every year they renew it with the other vows if they decide to do so." (66)

"Beware of people tainted with worldliness, enemies of poverty and the cross of Jesus Christ." (92) "Be strictly on your

guard against worldliness in religious life, which is prevalent in most religious institutes." (97) "Pure charity is, as has been said, the aim of the Institute of the Daughters of Wisdom, whether they are engaged, according to their talents and the call of holy obedience, in conducting charitable schools in towns and country places, in administering hospitals, in directing retreat houses, or in caring for and nursing poor incurable people." (99) "Each one concerns herself with her own work and does not take upon herself the supervision of another's." (120) "When you pray, nourish your soul as much as possible on pure faith, without depending on visible and exterior things." (136) "They look upon the Blessed Virgin as the Superior and Mother of the whole Congregation. To honour her, they recite the holy Rosary daily; they feed a poor person every day; they fast, in so far as their health permits, one day a week, ordinarily on Saturday." (139) "Do not neglect little mortifications, which are often more meritorious than great ones and are less apt to give rise to vanity." (174)

"The purpose of the schools of charity is to instruct and promote their spiritual welfare, a task performed out of pure charity with no self-seeking, but only for the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls and one's own spiritual progress." (281) "The Superior should do her best to observe faithfully the rules and constitutions without making herself in any way different from others." (312) The Rule has 320 articles.

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Towards the end of 1715, Marie Valteau and Marie Régnier joined the two Sisters as novices. Around Easter 1716, Fr. Montfort wrote to Sr. Marie Louise, "If I were to look at these setbacks from a human standpoint, I would be tempted, like the foolish people of this corrupt world, to complain and be anxious and worried, but that is not how I look at things. Let me tell you that I expect more serious setbacks, more painful ones to test your faith and confidence. We will then found our community of the Daughters of Wisdom, not on quicksand of

gold and silver which the devil is always using to adorn his house, nor indeed on the strength and influence of any human being, for no matter how holy and powerful may be he will always be no more than a wisp of straw. We want to found our Congregation on the Wisdom of the Cross of Calvary." (L. 34)

Fr. Montfort died most unexpectedly on April 28, 1716 at St. Laurent and on the 29th he was buried in the parish church. Now the responsibility of the foundation fell on Sr. Marie Louise. In 1718, Mrs. Trichet came to La Rochelle and promising to find a suitable place to start the novitiate, took Sisters Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet to the Poorhouse in Poitiers. In Poitiers too Sr. Marie Louise could not start a novitiate. Finally Mr. Jacques Goudeau, who was looking after the chapel in Montbernage suggested to her to start her convent in St. Laurent. He knew Madame de Bouillé and her uncle the Marquis of Magnanne. It was suggested that she and her uncle could buy land in St. Laurent. They bought a dilapidated old inn called the Long House. Further, they secured permission from the Bishop of La Rochelle and the consent of the inhabitants. A deed was signed and the property was given to Sr. Marie Louise. The people at the Poorhouse of Poitiers did not want the Sisters to leave and hence they had to struggle a lot.

On 20th June 1720, Sr. Marie Louise reached St. Laurent. Poverty welcomed her as the Long House was in a state of neglect. She set to work to improve the conditions. One Mr. René Joseau and his friends came to help her. They cultivated the garden, and made furniture and food was bought. Within two weeks the other Sisters from Poitiers reached St. Laurent. Later on the Sisters had to face problems from the parish priest. Sr. Marie Louise suggested to Madame Bouillé the possibility of getting Fr. René Mulot as their superior. Both of them met the Bishop of La Rochelle and the latter asked Fr. Mulot to take charge of directing the Daughters of Wisdom.

On 7th April 1721, The Holm-Oak House and the garden called “Les Hulle” were bought by Madame Bouillé “in the name of the Brothers, who are to teach small boys of the parish”. On 29th June 1722, Fathers and Brothers came to settle down in St. Laurent. After a retreat, Fr. Mulot was elected Superior General. Fathers and Brothers made their vows in his hands. The Long House property was not big enough for the Sisters and hence in 1723, the Sisters moved to the Holm-Oak House and the Fathers and Brothers occupied the Long House.

Sr. Marie Louise as the co-Foundress of the Daughters of Wisdom and as Superior General developed the congregation. In 1750, she, at the age of 66, visited all her communities to strengthen the Sisters. Till 1758, she founded 37 convents in France. In 1758, she presented to the Sisters the manuscript of the Constitutions which was later completed and approved in 1760. In December 1758, she had a fall in a poorly lit corridor which caused a serious dislocation of the right shoulder. She died on April 28, 1759, exactly forty three years after the death of Fr. Montfort. She was buried in the parish church next to the Founder. When she died, 175 Sisters had made Profession, 122 Sisters were living and there were 37 communities. She was beatified on May 16, 1993.

In 1789, there were 335 Sisters in 75 communities. The Civil Laws passed by the National assembly in 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the obligation of the oath of allegiance, imposed first on teachers and later on medical personnel, led to the expulsion from their convents of religious who refused to conform and with the confiscation of their properties. The subsequent Law of 1792 abolished all religious Congregations in France. During the French Revolution 33 Sisters lost their life.

After the Revolution, the Congregation flourished especially through the leadership of Fr. Gabriel Deshayes, who was the Superior General of the Company of Mary as well as that of the Daughters of Wisdom. On Dec. 28, 1841, Fr. Deshayes died and at his death there were 1668 Sisters in nearly 130 communities. Fr. Deshayes introduced the Sisters to the education of visually impaired and of the hearing impaired.

The Anti-clerical Laws in France at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Daughters of Wisdom found themselves expelled from 250 schools and institutions. One way of circumventing the law was laicization. Daughters of Wisdom did not opt for it. As a result hundreds of Sisters were expelled from the institutions. Many Sisters left for other countries. In 1900, the Daughters of wisdom were already established in Belgium, Holland, Italy, England, Canada and Haiti. From 1902 to 1912 foundations followed in rapid succession beyond all expectation in United States, Colombia and Malawi. On July 20, 1947, Montfort was canonized. In 1950, the Generalate was transferred to Rome. In the 1960s there were 5,000 Sisters in 400 establishments and 10 novitiates.

After receiving approval in several dioceses in France, the Congregation was granted pontifical status by the decree of Pope Pius IX on November 14, 1853. After Vatican II, the Constitutions were updated. There were also painful departures as far as Sisters were concerned. In 1985, the Sacred Congregation for Religious approved the Rule of Life on the feast of the Queenship of Mary.. At present the provinces of the Western world suffer from lack of vocations. But new life is emerging in the developing countries. The Montfort charism continues to radiate.

In 2010, there were 1651 Sisters working in the following countries: Belgium, Canada, Colombia, USA,

France, England, Ireland, Haiti, India, Italy, Madagascar, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Malawi, Holland, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, DR of Congo and Indonesia.

3. Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel

In 1705, Bro. Mathurin Rangeard joined Fr. Montfort, between 1707 and 1711, Bros. John, Peter, Nicholas and Philip and between 1711 and 1716, Bros. James, Louis and Gabriel. A few of them helped the missionaries during the mission and a few of them taught in the schools Montfort founded.

In 1713, Fr. Montfort wrote the Rule for the Company of Mary and it was approved by the Bishop of La Rochelle. The Company of Mary mainly composed missionary priests, but it had also some Brothers. The Brothers helped the Fathers during the Missions and some of them taught in schools. On June 09, 1715, Fr. Montfort and Bros. Nicholas, Philip, Louis and Gabriel made their religious profession at La Séguinière. Fr. Montfort started charitable schools.

Fr. Montfort, while preaching a mission in St. Laurent and on April 22, 1716 fell seriously ill. On April 27, he dictated his Will to Fr. René Mulot and signed it. He died on April 28th at 8.00 p.m.

The Will

“I, the undersigned, the greatest of sinners, will that my body be buried in the cemetery and my heart under the step of the altar of the Blessed Virgin. I confide to His Lordship the Bishop of La Rochelle and to Fr. Mulot my small pieces of furniture and my mission books, to be preserved for the four Brothers who joined me in a life of obedience and poverty; namely, Brother Nicholas of Poitiers, Brother Philip of Nantes, Bro. Louis of La Rochelle, and Brother Gabriel, who is at

present with me, for as long as they continue to renew their annual vows, and for the use of those whom divine Providence will call into the same community of the Holy Spirit. I give all the statues of the Calvary and the cross to the house of the Sisters of the Incurables at Nantes. I have no private money belonging to me, but there are 135 pounds belonging to Nicholas of Poitiers to pay for his keep after he has finished his stay with us.

Fr. Mulot will give the following monies from the common fund: ten crowns to James, if he decides to leave; ten crowns to John, if he also decides to leave; ten crowns to Mathurin, if he decides to leave and not renew the vows of poverty and obedience. If there is anything remaining in the purse, Fr. Mulot will use it like a good father for the Brothers and for himself. As the house at La Rochelle is reverting to its natural heirs, there will only be left for the community of the Holy Spirit the house at Vouvant, which was given to me by Madame de la Brulerie by an agreement, the conditions of which Fr. Mulot must fulfil; and the two pieces of land given by the Lieutenant of Vouvant's wife, and a small house given by a good lady of rank. If there is any possibility of building there, it should be put at the disposal of the Brothers of the community of the Holy Spirit to conduct charitable schools.

I give three of my banners to our Lady Patience at La Séguinière, and the other four to Our Lady of Victories at La Garnache, and to every parish of Aunis where the Rosary is still being said I give one of the banners of the holy Rosary. I give to Fr. Bouris the six volumes of sermons of La Volpillière, and to Fr. Clisson the four volumes of the "Catechism for Country People". If there is anything owing to the printer, he can be paid from the fund. Should there be anything over, Fr. Vatel must be given what belongs to him, if His Lordship decides that this is right.

This is my Last Will, and I make Fr. Mulot my executor giving him full right to dispose as it seems good to him of the

chasubles, chalice and other church and mission articles, for the benefit of the community of the Holy Spirit.

Written during the mission at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, this 27th day of the month of April, one thousand seven hundred and sixteen. All the pieces of furniture at present at Nantes are for the use of the Brothers who run the school, as long as the school remains there.

Sd/- Louis Marie de Montfort Grignon

From Montfort's Last Will, it is very clear that the Brothers and the community of the Holy Spirit were uppermost in his mind just before his death. Actually the Brothers were the ones, who lived close to him. Mr. Gaëtan Bernoville, in his Biography of Montfort says, "In length of time as well as in depth of service it is Brothers Mathurin and John, Jacques and Nicholas, Philip, Louis and Gabriel and other unknown to us, who were the full associates of Montfort's Missionary epic. They bore the thorns in their flesh, trials in their soul. They shared its deadly dangers. Whether they cooked or kept the shop, set the order of processions or sang hymns, walked miles and miles with their master or taught Catechism and schools according to his spirit, they were the volunteers of the great spiritual combat, the poor, the mortified ones, the humble of heart on whom rained mockeries and insults, often getting their food and lodging only from Providence, sometimes thrown away from presbyteries with their master and spending the night in the open air at the foot of some Calvary, their head resting on the last granite step, in short such as Montfort wanted them, lifted up by his own enthusiasm and hopes, espousing his deceptions and failures, learning from him how to bless them, taught by him the whole day long discovering through him the message of Jesus with greater light as days went on. With him they experienced the fervour of the crowds who were carried away by his words, with him they wept on the ruins of Pontchateau. It is they who informed Fr. Bastières about so many small or great events which form the best part of

his memoirs. They were his truest companions in good and evil fortune, in the storms and lulls of life, in time and in eternity.”

Montfort, in his journey and during his Missions, was accompanied by only one or two Brothers. Therefore the other Brothers had some other work. If Montfort gathered round him, so early in his career, so many helpers it shows clearly his intention of founding a congregation of Brothers destined to the Missions or to the charitable schools. Later on some of them made their religious profession. There were only four professed Brothers when Montfort died, but all, whether they had vows or not, lived their religious life from the day they joined themselves to him. That is to say, they practiced obedience, poverty and chastity. They had, if not a real religious rule, at least a rule of life and a regular time-table and a set of customs. We do not have the text.

Montfort's Last Will has mentioned about the Brothers of the Holy Spirit to conduct charitable schools. Further we know, from the Last Will that at least one Brother was teaching in Nantes. Since 1716, one Brother looked after the Parish School at St. Laurent. In 1728, Fr. Mulot, Superior General, to better harmonize the community of the Holy Spirit rewrote the Rule of 1713; he mainly suppressed from it the articles precluding the education of the youth, since this was the apostolate of the Brothers. At Montfort's death, Brothers were in St. Laurent, La Rochelle and Nantes involved in education. Later on only one kept on teaching in the parish school in St. Laurent: Bros. James (1716-19), Joseau (1722-52), Pierre (1752-70), Hilaire (1770-80), and Aulaire (1780-91). After the French Revolution Bros. Hilaire and Pierre survived the French Revolution, Bro. Elie was in charge of the parish school from 1801-1822.

On Jan. 17, 1821, Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was elected Superior General. When he came to stay at St. Laurent in 1821,

there were only four Brothers, of whom one was teaching at St. Laurent. Fr. Deshayes had started an institute of teaching Brothers, which got amalgamated with a similar one started by Fr. La Mennais. Later on this amalgamated institute came to known as the Brothers of Ploërmel.

Fr. Deshayes sent novices Augustin and Pierre Marie and five postulants from Auray to St. Laurent to join the Holy Spirit Community. In September 1821, Fr. Deshayes came to stay in St. Laurent. As he wanted to start many schools, he recruited many young men and started a Novitiate in St. Laurent. In 1823, Fr. Deshayes wrote a Directory for the conduct of the Brothers. The Rule of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary was no longer suitable to the new situation of the Brothers. Besides, as legal approval for teaching in schools was obligatory, he got an official recognition from the government as the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit, and the Brothers were allowed to teach in five Provinces. As a consequence of this, the Brothers of the Holy Spirit became a legal body distinct from the Company of Mary, while still retaining the unity as a religious congregation with the same Superior General. On September 24, 1824, 42 Brothers including Bros Augustin and Simeon had their first profession of the three vows.

Fr. Deshayes felt the need to start schools, in order to provide Christian education to poor children in their own parishes. He started or took charge of a number of schools. He sent Brothers or even novices, after entering into an agreement with the parish priest concerned. In 1822, he started two schools, in 1824 twelve, etc. From 1836 onwards Fr. Deshayes started founding schools in the South of France. 1838 saw the foundation of St. Gabriel's Boarding school in St. Laurent. Altogether 76 schools were started between the years 1822 and 1841, out of which 47 were still in existence in 1841. One of the greatest achievements of Father Deshayes was the founding

of schools for the deaf and schools for the blind. In 1827, Brothers took charge of the Boys' Section in the Chartreuse Institution for the deaf in Auray. In 1837, Fr. Deshayes started another Centre at Rouillé and later at Orléans. In 1839, he started the fourth school in Lille.

At the end of the 1825 retreat after consulting each member of the group Fr. Deshayes appointed Bro. Augustin as the overall director and Bro. Simeon as his deputy. In 1830, he published the Rule governing the conduct of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit. On October 15, 1835, the teaching Brothers (with a few who were doing manual work) numbering 33 came to stay in Supiot House. One priest made the suggestion that this house could better be named St. Gabriel's House and Fr. Deshayes agreed to it. In 1835 there were Brothers, novices and postulants, all together 132, 57 of whom continued to stay in the Holy Spirit House while 75 were attached to St. Gabriel's House, 33 of them had their residence there and 42 were teaching in various schools.

In 1834, Fr. Deshayes confidentially told Brothers Augustin and Simeon about an alternative Rule he made to the 1830 Rule and discussed the wording with them. He worked for three years at improving it. He signed the altered Rule on January 7, 1837, and had it approved by the Bishop of Luçon on April 9, 1838. However, he kept the whole thing a secret. In this Rule at the insistence of Bro. Augustin, an article was included, «The Brothers choose from their own number a Superior who is to govern the Congregation; he will be helped by one or two Assistants according as the Congregation increases in number».

On December 28, 1841, Fr. Gabriel Deshayes died in St. Laurent. Many came for the funeral. Fr. Angebault, the Vicar General of Nantes, many priests from the dioceses of Luçon, Nantes, Poitiers and Angers led the funeral procession,

followed by the members of the Montfortian congregations, the Superior of the Sisters of St. Gildas, boarders, students, orphans and a large number of friends and faithful. After the solemn blessing, the body was taken to the tomb at the end of the cemetery of the Daughters of Wisdom, actually the XIV station of the Way for the Cross, where Fr. Deshayes himself had desired to be buried, and there Fr. Deshayes was buried on 29th December 1841.

After Fr. Deshayes' death, Bro. Augustin took the lead in administering St. Gabriel's House. The First General Assembly of the Brothers took place in September 1842 and on 21 September 1842, Bro. Augustin was elected Superior General. His Assistants were Bros. Simeon and Abel. This was the moment when the Institute got separated from the Company of Mary. The Institute was then called the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit.

In 1849, Bro. Augustin applied to the Government for approval of the Institute for the whole of France under the name of Brothers of St. Gabriel. In 1852, Bro. Simeon was elected Superior General. On March 03, 1853, the Institute was approved as Brothers of St. Gabriel. At the beginning of 1856, there were 480 members including Brothers, novices and postulants and 94 communities. In 1874, the General Chapter completed a new Rule and on July 3, 1874, the Bishop approved the Rule. The result was a small book of 72 pages and 224 articles. This Rule was in force from 1874-1969.

On 15 September 1888, six Brothers under the leadership of Bro. Louis Bertrand left for Canada to start a mission there and on 25th September, they arrived at Montreal. They took charge of St. Francis Xavier Orphanage.

The Republicans wanted to remove the control of schools from the clergy in order to reduce the influence of the

Church. Mr. Jules Ferry, step by step, brought in laws. In 1879, law excluded from teaching members of non-authorized congregations. The law of July 1901 demanded all congregations to ask for authorization from the government. The authorization was denied for St. Gabriel. The law of July 7, 1904 forbade education of any type by congregations. The 13th General Chapter took place in April 1903. It decided upon a passive resistance regarding the anti-clerical laws. Every Brother in France (i.e., nearly 1,000 out of 1,089) would be given a letter of secularization, declaring him free of his vows in order to protect him from legal action and yet all the Brothers were expected to stay, if possible, at their posts and carry on the task of Christian education. All the scholastics, novices, postulants and juniors were sent home.

Anti-clerical laws led the Congregation to expand its mission: 1900: Belgium, Gabon, Djibouti, Abyssinia 1901: Thailand 1903: England, Italy, Spain, India and Madagascar. In 1903, the Central Administration shifted itself from France to Belgium. On Feb. 19, 1910, the Institute obtained Apostolic Approbation and thus became a Papal Congregation.

In 1939, 49 Brothers and their chaplain were massacred during the Civil War in Spain. On April 08, 1942, in France the law suppressing religious congregations was repealed and later the Central Administration was shifted from Belgium to France. In 1962, it was shifted to Rome. In 1965, there were 1,790 Brothers in the Institute. In 1969, there was a special General Chapter to update the Rule after Vatican II. The work was completed in 1971 and the Resulting Rule of Life and Constitutions came into force. The Institute decided to ordain some Brothers as priests to serve the needs of the institute. On April 28, 1986, the Rule was approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious.

At the end of 2010, there were 1149 Brothers working in the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central Africa, Colombia, Congo, England, Fiji, France, Gabon, India, Italy, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Congo, Republic of Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand and Tonga.

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Chapter Eight

The last part of Montfort's life and his death

1. Mission at Taugon-la-Ronde: Fr. Montfort preached this mission in this parish in the midst of marshes and it proved to be a great success. In order to sanctify souls and to remove the occasions of sin, he founded two Associations: the White Penitents and the Company of Virgins. He gathered the men who were impressed by his sermons. He gave them instructions to withdraw them from liquor shops, from debauch and the habit of using swear-words. He gave them Rules to follow and prayers to say, to secure their conversion and perseverance. On Sundays and feast-days they were asked to meet in a chapel and say their special prayers between the services. On some special feasts they were asked to come to church in a white alb.

To the Company of Virgins too Montfort gave a Rule, exercises of piety and a form of life suited to their condition. Their only distinction was great piety and modesty. On some feast days they were asked to come to church dressed in white with a veil as symbol of purity. They gathered in a separate chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. They made the vow not to marry for one year. They were on probation for some time before being admitted to make their vow. After the end of their year's vow, they were quite free to renew it or to withdraw. They could also be removed if their conduct was not satisfactory.

2. The Mission at St. Amand-sur-Sèvre: On April 1715, this mission started. Fr. During this mission Fr. Vatel and two other missionaries assisted Montfort. Every morning, many sick people came to him. He welcomed them with kindness and took them to an altar on which he had placed a statue of the Child Jesus. He read the Gospel for them. Those who were

cured offered a loaf of bread to the Child Jesus. Montfort fought against superstitions. Some families were accused of having devilish spells. He spoke against these false accusations and people came forward retract publicly their calumnious accusations. Real conversion took place in the parish.

3. Short rest at La Séguinière: Fr. Montfort felt extremely tired. He thought of taking some rest. With one of his assistants and some Brothers, he left for La Séguinière. Sisters of Bishop De Beauveau of Nantes invited him to their place. He stayed with them for nearly 10 days. Still he preached several sermons in the church at La Séguinière.

4. Religious Profession: After taking rest Fr. Montfort preached to his Brothers in La Séguinière itself. The retreat got over on Pentecost day, i.e. June 9, 1715, and on that day Montfort and Bros. Nicholas, Philip, Louis and Gabriel made their vows of Poverty and Obedience for one year. They made their profession in front of the statue of Our Lady all Patience (carved by Montfort).

5. Mission at Mervent: The parish church at Mervent was in a bad condition and it badly needed a major repair. After the sermon, he received contributions by way of money or material from the people for the repair. The mission was a success and Fr. Montfort managed to repair the church.

6. The Grotto of Mervent: In June 1715, Montfort preached a mission at Mervent. The village of Mervent was isolated in the midst of deep forests. Someone told Montfort about the forest of Vouvant, which was close by. He was taken there in order to find out a proper place to meditate in silence and solitude, so that the great truths, which he was preaching to others, might penetrate into himself. In fact, he found there a very quiet place. He decided to build a hermitage and set to work. People in large numbers came to help him. He dug into a rock and

prepared a place big enough for a bed, a table and a chair. This place came to be known as the Grotto of Mervent. Montfort loved contemplation and on the days of the mission he spent four hours in contemplation. On the other days he spent more time in prayer. During the sixteen years of his priestly ministry, he spent altogether a fourth of it in personal retreats and recollection. He is considered as one of the mystics of the 17th century.

7. Mission at Fontenay-le-Comte: On Aug. 25, 1715, Montfort started the mission at Fontenay-le-Comte. As the church was small, he wanted to preach separate missions, one for women only and the other for men only. Montfort started the mission for women. There was a garrison in the town. The captain, who expected his troop to be transferred before the men's mission, obtained permission for his soldiers to attend the women's mission. Montfort agreed willingly and nearly all attended with exemplary piety, morning and evening for a fortnight.

One afternoon, the captain came to the church and stood there in a disrespectful manner with his hat on his head, taking snuff and laughing. Montfort asked him to leave; but the latter refused to do so. As he tried to attack Montfort, Montfort knelt down to beg God's pardon. Some women tried to protect Montfort and to push captain out. Then he became very angry and struck Montfort twice on the stomach. Then captain asked his men to get out of the church. Then the captain and his soldiers left the church. Then Montfort preached a sermon to the women, at the end of which the women accompanied the missionaries till the Providence, where they were staying. Then mission carried on without the soldiers attending it. Then he preached the mission for men. He founded an Association of Virgins for women and an Association of White Penitents for men. He also established the daily recitation of the Rosary and

erected a Calvary. After the mission, Montfort preached a retreat to the Sisters of Notre Dame.

8. Vocation of Fr. René Mulot: While Montfort was preaching a retreat to the Sisters of Notre Dame, Fr. René Mulot, the brother of the parish priest of St. Pompain, came to request Montfort to preach a mission in his brother's parish. He was sickly and was taking rest staying with his brother. Montfort expressed his inability to do so; but Fr. René went on pleading. Finally Montfort said, "If you can help me in the mission at Vouvant, I shall preach a mission at St. Pompain." In spite of his ill health, Fr. René agreed to do so. A week later, the Mission at Vouvant started and Fr. René Mulot helped Montfort. During the mission Fr. René was cured of his illness and he accepted the invitation of Montfort to follow him.

9. Mission at Vouvant: A week after the mission at Fontenay, Montfort started the Mission at Vouvant. He was already known as a man mighty in words and deeds. Here he also proved to be a man of wisdom. Fathers Vatel and Mulot helped him. A girl possessed by devil was brought to him. He said some of the prescribed prayers and then his Assistants questioned her; but she refused to answer them. Montfort gave her some advice and sent her away. She seemed to read the secrets of hearts and through her words, she revealed the pitiable condition of a number of people. They repented and reformed their life.

There were some scandals in the parish. Montfort tried to stop them discretely. As his efforts failed, he admonished the culprits publicly. They attacked him publicly and insulted him. They tried to bring law-suit against him. Montfort accepted all these patiently. He prayed a lot and asked the people to pray. He ended the mission after repairing the church. Then Fr. Mulot took him to St. Pompain.

At Vouvant one lady gave Montfort a house and the wife of the Lieutenant of Vouvant gave him two pieces of land to start a free school there and another lady a small house for the Brothers who would be running the school.

10. The mission at St. Pompain: In December-January, Montfort preached the mission at St. Pompain. The local Lord's steward was on bad terms with the Parish Priest and with another person. Their enmity was great. Even the Bishop could not settle it. Montfort implored the Blessed Virgin's intercession by the recitation of the Rosary. One day, after a sermon at which the steward was present, he knelt down to announce the mysteries of the Rosary that was recited by the people in two choirs. When the Rosary was over, Montfort came down from the pulpit and went to the steward and embraced him, said how happy he was to see him attending the mission so assiduously and setting a good example to all the parishioners. Then he added, "Well, Sir, could it be said that Jesus Christ will also win a victory over the hatred in your heart? Will you not be willing to forgive the two persons whom you know?" The answer could not be heard, but soon after, the steward held a special dinner to which he invited the vicar and his other enemy. That was the beginning of their reconciliation which lasted all throughout their live. During the mission at St. Pompain, Montfort's father expired on Jan. 21, 1716. Montfort could not attend the funeral.

11. The mission at Villiers-en-Plaine: The mission was held in February 1716. There were three sermons every day, one before dawn, the second at three in the afternoon and the third at sunset. His sermons were very evangelical and apostolic. There was a public examination of conscience, which he guided from the pulpit. He showed great meekness. He was always perfectly self-possessed.

12. Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ardilliers, Saumur: After the mission at Villiers, Montfort returned to St. Pompain. During the first week of Lent, he sent 33 White Penitents from there on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ardilliers, Saumur in order to pray to God to send him good missionaries. Frs. Mulot and Vatel accompanied them. All went on foot, bare footed, singing hymns and reciting the Rosary and other prayers. They followed the rules made by Montfort. The pilgrimage lasted seven days.

On their return, Montfort and some Brothers made the same pilgrimage. After fulfilling his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and entrusting to her care his soul, his body, his designs, his Missionaries, his Brothers and his Daughters of Wisdom, Montfort went to visit the Sisters of Providence whom he held in high esteem. Then he left for St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

13. The mission at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre: Montfort's last mission was preached at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre. On April 1, 1716, Montfort and Bro. Gabriel reached the place. Fr. René Mulot and his brother, the parish priest of St. Pompain, joined them later. The mission started on April 5th. It went on well and Montfort got a Calvary ready for blessing. He was informed that Bishop Champflour would be visiting the parish on the 22nd. He got the parish ready to receive the Bishop and planned out everything well. The Bishop came on the appointed day and he was given a grand reception. Montfort was then tired and he had high fever. In the afternoon, he preached a sermon on the kindness of Jesus. Acute pleurisy set in and after the sermon he went to bed never to rise again.

14. Montfort's sickness and death: On April 22, 1716, Montfort was seriously ill and he was forced to take complete rest. Medicines had no effects and his health got deteriorated. Fr. Mulot forced Montfort to lie on a mattress instead of on straw. Montfort made his confession and received the

sacrament of the sick. On the 27th, he dictated his Will to Fr. Mulot and then signed the document.

By 4.00 p.m. on April 28, people came in large numbers to see Fr. Montfort alive for the last time and to receive his blessing. Montfort at first refused to give the blessing protesting that he was not worthy. Fr. Mulot suggested to him, "Bless them, Father, with your crucifix and it will be Jesus, who blesses them." Montfort accepted the suggestion and blessed the people with all his heart. People were weeping and to show them the Christian meaning of life and death, he sang one of the hymns that he had composed:

"Let us go, my friends, so dear,
Up to heav'n with footstep sure;
Whatever things are worth down here,
On high their value is far more."

Montfort held fast in one hand the crucifix blessed by the Pope and in the other the small statue of Our Lady that he always carried with him. He looked at the two images with tender love and kissed them in turn invoking the names of Jesus and Mary. Then he had a few moments of deep peace and silence. Suddenly he roused himself from his torpor crying out, "It is in vain that you attack me. I am between Jesus and Mary. Thanks be to God and to Mary! I am at the end of my life. Henceforth, I will sin no more." Then at 8.00 p.m., on Tuesday, April 28, 1716, Montfort surrendered his soul to his Creator.

The news of Montfort's death spread far and wide. The funeral was fixed for the 29th. The mission at St. Laurent was still going on. In the forenoon of the 29th, the Calvary was to be blessed. Under the emotions of the previous days, and worn out by his ministry in the confessional, Fr. Mulot, at the beginning of the ceremony, in the midst of impressive silence, said, "My Brothers, today, we have two crosses to plant, first this material Cross that you see and the secondly, the burial of Fr. Montfort

that we must do today.” The funeral service took place in the afternoon. People came from all around even from Nantes. More than 10,000 people were present. The body had to be carried early to the church in order to satisfy the piety of the people. The burial service took place amidst general gloom and before a numerous clergy who wanted to show their veneration toward Fr. Montfort. He was buried in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin on the left side of church. When the coffin was lowered into the grave the whole sorrowful crowd was weeping openly and during several days, people used to say with much grief, “Holy Father Montfort is dead!”

15. After Montfort’s death:

When Fr. Montfort died, he had 4 Brothers with vows, 3 Brothers without religious vows, 3 Sisters with vows, 3 Sisters without vows and 2 Fathers without vows, of whom, Fr. Mulot was made the executor of Montfort’s Will and Testament. On June 6, 1716, Fr. Mulot registered Montfort’s Will with the notary in Nantes. He must have given up the properties in Vouvant. In Sept. 1716, he came to St. Pompain to stay with his brother priest. He brought with him Montfort’s vestments, chalice, etc. Fr. Vatel too was there at St. Pompain. As the friends of Montfort in Nantes wanted to construct a better tomb for Montfort, on Nov. 12, 1717, Montfort’s body was exhumed and placed in a new tomb and two epitaphs were engraved and the longer one reads as follows:

"What do you see here, traveller?
An extinguished torch,
A man consumed by the fire of charity,
Who made himself all things to all men,
Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.
If you enquire about his life, none was purer;
About his penance, none more austere;
About his zeal, none more burning;
About his devotion to Mary,

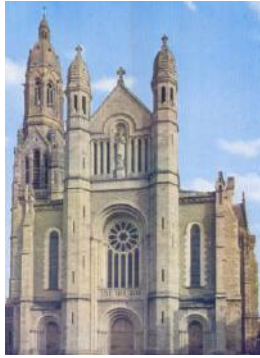
None resembled Saint Bernard so closely.
Priest of Christ, his life retraced Christ's life.
His words preached Christ everywhere.
Indefatigable, he rested only in the tomb.
He was the Father of the poor,
The Defender of the orphans,
The converter of sinners.
His glorious death was the echo of his life.
As he had lived, so he ended his life.
Ripe for God, he took his flight to Heaven.
He died in the year of the Lord 1716,
43 years of age."

Bro. James came to St. Laurent latest by 1717. Bro. Mathurin came to St. Pompain in June 1718. Bro. Louis, who was in La Rochelle was replaced by Bro. Philip and Bro. Louis went to Nantes. Bro. Philip tried to become a Lazarist and finally died on Oct. 8, 1716. Bro. Louis died in Nantes on Jan. 3, 1731. Bro. Nicholas came to Nantes and died there on May 4, 1730. Bro. Mathurin always helped the missionaries and he died in St. Laurent on July 22, 1760. Of the other Brothers no records are available.

Frs. Mulot and Vatel, after Montfort's death, came to St. Pompain. In 1718, they started preaching missions. By the 1718, there were five Sisters in La Rochelle. In the winter of 1718, Madame Trichet came to La Rochelle. As the Poorhouse of Poitiers wanted to have the Sisters and as there was the possibility of starting a novitiate there, Sisters Marie Louise, Catherine Brunet and Joseph left for Poitiers leaving the rest in La Rochelle.

At Poitiers, Sr. Marie Louise found herself not able to found the novitiate. Madame Bouillé and her uncle bought a property in St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre and gifted it to Sr. Marie Louise. Finally, in 1720, Sr. Marie Louise established her first

convent in St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre. The Parish Priest of St. Laurent started to show coldness towards the Sisters. Another property was bought on April 7, 1721 by Madame Bouillé and her uncle and it was gifted to Fathers and Brothers. Fr. Jacques le Vallois, a new comer, was the first one to occupy this house. On June 29, 1722, other priests and Brothers came to occupy the house. After some days of rest, they had a retreat and at the end of it, they elected Fr. Mulot as their superior. They made their religious vows in his hands.



St. Montfort's Basilica and St.Laurent-sur-Sèvre,
the Cradle of the Montfortian Congregations

Chapter 9

Montfort's glorification and his influence in the Church

Montfort was beatified on January 22, 1888 and canonized on July 20, 1947. His book, the Treatise of the True Devotion to Mary had and has a great impact of the on the Church.

Pope Leo XIII was concerned about secular attempts to destroy the faith in Christ. He dedicated the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But in his analysis (based on Montfort's writings) any re-Christianization was not possible without the Blessed Virgin Mary, so in ten encyclicals on the rosary he promulgated Marian devotion. In his encyclical on the fiftieth anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, he stressed her role in the redemption of humanity, mentioning Mary as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, in the spirit and words of Louis de Montfort. Pope Leo XIII then beatified him in 1888, and, as a special honour selected for Montfort's beatification the very day of his own Golden Jubilee as a priest.

Pope Pius X's key Marian encyclical *Ad Diem Illum* was issued in 1904 in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It gave Pius X the opportunity to urge Marian devotion in his second encyclical, and relied heavily on the views expressed in Montfort's book *True Devotion to Mary*. In fact the language of both writings was strikingly similar, which was not surprising, since Saint Pius X highly esteemed *True Devotion* and granted an Apostolic Blessing to all who read it. Echoing Montfort, he wrote: "There is no surer or easier way than Mary in uniting all men with Christ."

Pope Pius XII was often called the most Marian Pope. He was impressed by Montfort's motto *God Alone* and when he canonized Montfort on July 20, 1947, he said: "God Alone was everything to him. Remain faithful to the precious

heritage, which this great saint left you. It is a glorious inheritance, worthy, that you continue to sacrifice your strength and your life, as you have done until today."

Pope John Paul II once recalled how as a young seminarian he "read and reread many times and with great spiritual profit" a work of de Montfort and that: "Then I understood that I could not exclude the Lord's Mother from my life without neglecting the will of God-Trinity" According to his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, the Pontiff's personal motto "Totus Tuus" was inspired by St. Louis' doctrine on the excellence of Marian devotion and total consecration, which he quoted:

"Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ." (TD 120)

On July 20, 1996, while inserting the feast of St. Montfort in the universal calendar, the Congregation for Divine Cult said, "In seminaries and novitiates around the world, there are priests, there are men and women consecrated to God, not forgetting the lay faithful, who are formed in the Marian doctrine of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort... This is why the sovereign pontiff, John Paul II, taking into consideration how many of the writings and examples of St. Louis Marie have fostered and continue to foster the true Marian devotion of pastors, of religious, of all faithful, not only in doctrine but also in the practice of Christian life, has decreed that the name of St. Louis Marie be added to the Universal Roman Calendar and

that his feast may be celebrated each year on 28 April as an optional memoria."

The thoughts, writings, and example of St. Louis de Montfort, an example of the French school of spirituality, were also singled out by Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* as a distinctive witness of Marian spirituality in the Catholic tradition. (ref. No. 48) On June 21, 1997, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Montfort's canonization Pope John Paul II wrote a long letter to the Superior Generals of three Montfortian congregations and in it he said, "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 unshakable faith in the Triune God and by a deep devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redeemer... The person of Christ dominates the thought of Grignon de Montfort: 'Jesus, our Saviour, true God and true man, must be the ultimate end of all our other devotions.' (TD 61) The Incarnation of the Word is for him the absolute central reality: 'Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, I adore you dwelling in the splendour of your Father from all eternity and in the virginal womb of Mary, your most worthy Mother, at the time of your Incarnation.' (LEW 223) The ardent celebration of the person of the incarnate Son of God, which resonates in all of 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.' (LEW 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."



Blessed John Paul II on Sept. 19, 1996 paid a visit to St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre and prayed at the tombs of St. Montfort and Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus.

The Legion Of Mary

On the eve of Our Lady's Nativity 1921, Mr. Frank Duff started the Legion of Mary and it began from one meeting with 15 girls and a priest in Dublin, Ireland. Duff wanted an apostolate with and for Mary according to St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The Legionaries should practice the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin as taught by St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. The Legion soon spread around the world. The Legion of Mary is the largest apostolic organization of lay people in the Church, with more than 3 million "active" members plus 10 million auxiliary members in almost every country. "The Legion of Mary presents the true face of the Catholic Church," said Pope John XXIII.

The Foyers de Charité

The Foyers de Charité were started by a lay woman Marthe Robin and a priest, Fr. Finet. Marthe Robin died on Feb. 6, 1981. Two days before she died, she renewed her Montfortian consecration. She had lived in the continuous presence of the Blessed Virgin. Her paramount concern was to bring people to live in close union with the Mother of God, who had asked her to spread the knowledge of Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, the Secret of Mary and the Treatise on the True Devotion. Fr. Finet first met her in 1936 when he was giving talks on the Treatise to nuns of the Cenacle in Lyon. In 1981, he wrote, "As founder of the Foyers de Charité and now in charge of 57 of them all over the world, with the prospect of more being set up soon, I take the liberty of adding my testimony because every one of our Foyers de Charité draws inspiration from the Marian teaching of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. Our teaching is largely based on the Marian doctrine set out in the Treatise on the True Devotion and all our retreats are rounded off with the consecration to Jesus through Mary, with Mary, for Mary and in Mary."

Montfort, Vatican II and the Popes on Mother Mary

There is close parallel between the Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary and the Chapter 8 of Lumen Gentium. Montfort's Marian doctrine is accepted by the Church and true devotion is encouraged by the Church. Montfort has not become outdated.

St. Montfort's Marian teaching	Vat. II and the recent Popes
<p>1. "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)</p>	<p>1. "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." (LG 53)</p>
<p>2. "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)</p>	<p>2. "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)</p>
<p>3. "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)</p>	<p>3. "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" (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)</p>

<p>4. "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)</p>	<p>4. "The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood in keeping with the divine plan." (LG 58)</p>
<p>5. "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)</p>	<p>5. "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)</p>
<p>6. "Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace as Jesus is king by nature and by conquest.." (TD 36)</p>	<p>6. "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)</p>
<p>7. "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)</p>	<p>7. "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)</p>

<p>8. "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)</p>	<p>8. "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, ... 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)</p>
<p>9. "Jesus must be the ultimate end of all our other devotions; otherwise they would be false and misleading. He is Alpha, and the Omega, the beginning and 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)</p>	<p>9. "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 unfailing experience of it, & 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)</p>

<p>10. "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)</p>	<p>10. "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)</p>
<p>11. "The Rosary said without the meditation on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would almost be a body without a soul." (SR 61)</p>	<p>11. "Without contemplation the Rosary is a body without a soul." (Pope Paul VI, Marialis Cultus 47)</p>
<p>12. "Since the Rosary is composed, principally and in substance, of the prayer of Christ and the angelic salutation, that is, the Our Father and the Hail Mary, it is without doubt the first prayer and the principal devotion of the faithful and has been in use all through the centuries, from the time of the apostles and disciples to the present." (SR 10)</p>	<p>12. "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)</p>

<p>13. "When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it. He give himself generously to that soul according to the place it has given to his spouse. One of the main reasons why the Holy Spirit does not now work striking wonders in souls is that he fails to find in them a sufficiently close union with his faithful and inseparable spouse." (TD 36)</p>	<p>13. "It is our task to exhort everyone, especially those in the pastoral ministry and also theologians, to meditate more deeply on the working of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation, and to ensure that Christian spiritual writings give due prominence to his life-giving action. Such a study will bring out in particular the hidden relationship the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, and show the influence they exert on the Church. From a more profound meditation on the truths of faith will flow a more vital piety." (Paul VI, MC 27)</p>
<p>14. "These are fifteen pictures whose every detail must rule and inspire our lives. They are fifteen flaming torches to guide our steps throughout this earthly life; fifteen shining mirrors to help us to know Jesus and Mary, to know ourselves and to light the fire of their love in our hearts; fifteen fiery furnaces to consume us completely in their heavenly flames." (SR 61)</p>	<p>14. Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to 'read' Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message... The Rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on the confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. She is 'all-powerful by grace'." (Pope John Paul II, Rosarium Virginis Mariae, 14, 16)</p>

Chronology - St. Louis Mary de Montfort

31-01-1673	Birth at Montfort, baptism the following day in St. John's Church
1673-1675	Stay with Mother Andrea
1675-1684	At Bois-Marquer in Iffendic
1684-1686	Stay with uncle and study at St. Thomas Becket College, Rennes
1686-1692	Stay with his parents and study in Rennes
End of 1692	Leaving for Paris for Seminary studies
1692-1694	Stay at Fr. Barmondier's Hostel and study in Sorbonne University
1694	Stay at Fr. Boucher's Hostel, sickness towards the end of the year
1695-1700	In the Little Seminary of St. Sulpice
1699	Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Chartres
05-06-1700	Ordination and stay at St. Sulpice Seminary
Sept. 1700	Joined St. Clement's Community, Nantes
April 1701	Visit to Fontevrault and meeting Madame de Montespan, Visit to Poitiers, meeting Bishop Girard and return to Nantes & Missions there
Nov. 1701	Appointed Chaplain at the Poorhouse of Poitiers
02-02-1703	Vestition of Sr. Marie Louise Trichet
April 1703	Leaving Poitiers and work at Salpetriere, Paris
Sept. 1703	Leaving Salpetriere and stay under a staircase on the Pot-de-Fer Street. Writing the first book "The Love of Eternal Wisdom".
09-03-1704	The poor of Poitiers requesting for Montfort's return & also the Bishop's letter
April 1704	Back at the Poorhouse of Poitiers as its director
May 1705	Leaving the Poorhouse for good and preaching in Poitiers. Recruiting Bro. Mathurin
1706	Mission in the Calvary Church and order from the Bishop to leave the diocese.

Lent 1706	Pilgrimage to Rome
06-06-1706	Audience with Pope Clement XI
Aug. – Sept	Return to France, pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ardilliers and to Mount St. Michael
Oct 06–Feb 07	Stay in Rennes, missions at Dinan, St. Suliac, and Becherel
Feb. - Oct. 1707	Joining Fr. Leuduger’s Group, missions in the dioceses of St. Malo & St. Brieuc
Oct. 1707- June: 1708	Stay at the Hermitage of St. Lazare, teaching in and around Montfort-sur-Meu
June 1708	Bishop asking Montfort not to preach
1708-1710	Missionary in the Diocese of Nantes
1708	Missions at St. Similien, Valet, La Chevroliere, Vertou, St. Fiacre
1709	Missions at Campbon, & Pontchateau, commencement of the work on the Calvary
1710	Missions at St. Danatien, Bouguenais
13-09-1710	Interdict on blessing the Calvary
Oct. 1710-11	Forbidden to exercise ministry, stay at Cathuy House, Hospital for the Incurables and helping flood victims
Lent 1711	Leaving Nantes and preaching in the diocese of Luçon, La Garnache
1711-1716	Missionary in the dioceses of Luçon and La Rochelle
May 11, 1711	Starting missions in the diocese of La Rochelle, Lhoumeau, La Rochelle, etc
1712	Missions at the Island of Yeu, Sallertaine, St. Christophe, St. Vivien, Esnandes
1713	Missions at Courçon, Beugnon, Bressuire, Argenton, La Seguinere. Trip to Holy Spirit Seminary, Paris, return, mission at Mauzé.
1714	Missions at Roussay, Villedieu, St. Lo, meeting Fr. Blain at Rouen. Return to La Rochelle via Nantes and Rennes, mission at the island of Aix

Sept. 1714	Starting Free School for boys at La Rochelle
Feb. 1715	Recruiting Fr. Vatel, mission at Taugon-la-Ronde
28-03-1715	Arrival of Srs. Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet in La Rochelle and starting a free school for girls.
09-06-1715	Religious Profession of Montfort & 4 Brothers
22-08-1715	Religious profession of Srs. Marie Louise and Catherine Brunet
Oct. 1715	Vocation of Fr. René Mulot
1715	Missions at St. Amand, Mervent, Fontenay, Vouvant, St. Pompain
1716	Mission at Villiers-en-Plaine, sending 33 White Penitents from St. Pompain to Our Lady of Ardilliers, Saumur.
01-04-1716	Arrival at St. Laurent-sur-Sevre, starting the mission on April 5 th
22-04-1716	Reception to Bishop, Montfort became dangerously ill
27-04-1716	Montfort dictated his Will and signed it.
28-04-1716	Death of Montfort at 8.00 p.m.
29-4-1716	Funeral and burial
1838	Declared "Venerable" by Pope Gregory XVI
1869	His virtues proclaimed heroic by Pope Pius IX
22-01-1888	Beatified by Pope Leo XIII
20-07-1947	Canonized Pope Pius XII.
20-07-1996	Feast inserted in the universal calendar.

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