

Inside the Legion of Mary – On Legionary Devotion

True Devotion to Mary

By Father Francis J. Peffley

There is a section on page 37 of the handbook which says that every legionary should undertake St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion to Mary. This is not an obligation of membership but the book suggests that each member consider studying and learning the True Devotion with the hope that the consecration will eventually be made. De Montfort's spirituality is Christ-centered, Marian spirituality, and comes from his book entitled, *True Devotion to Mary*. De Montfort lived in France from 1673 to 1716. During the short 43 years of his life he wrote several outstanding books that have influenced the lives of many saintly people, especially some in our own time.

His book on the True Devotion to Mary has a unique history. De Montfort predicted it would be so hated by the devil that attempts would be made to destroy it, or at least to secure that it would not be made known. For 126 years after his death the only copy of the book had been lost, buried in an old trunk. When it was found, it was discovered that the book had been mutilated, with the first eighty pages torn out. Even without the entire manuscript it has become a spiritual classic on complete and true devotion to Our Lady. This de Montfort spirituality can be summed up in three words: Consecration, Dependence, and Union.

Consecration

This consecration is total – everything is given over to Our Lady: our body, our soul, our material and spiritual possessions, our past, our present, our future – everything we are, everything we have and own, on both the material and spiritual levels. This would include our home, family, work, our prayers, indulgences, graces – everything is entrusted to her, who in turn gives it all to Christ. De Montfort calls this a holy *slavery* of love. We are no more our own person; just as Our Lady called herself a handmaid (or slave) of the Lord, so we allow her full control of our lives. De Montfort's True Devotion begins with a formal act of consecration and he recommends preparing for thirty-three days beforehand, ending on one of Our Lady's feast days. The booklet, *Thirty-three Day Preparation for Total Consecration* is available from Montfort Publications, Bay Shore, NY. It consists of a four week program of preparation. In the first week the focus is on separation from the spirit of the world, then three weeks gaining a knowledge of self, of Mary and of Christ, and a renewal of the Baptismal Vows.

Dependence

One of the consecration goals in de Montfort's spirituality is dependence; trying to live life with total trust in our Blessed Mother, just as Jesus was totally dependent on her for the nine months in her womb, and throughout his youth. Doing this, we are in imitation of him. Just as he gave himself to her when becoming man, so now we give ourselves to her in each and every phase and sequence of life, trusting and depending on her for everything. De Montfort's slogan was "Through, With, In and For" Jesus through Mary.

Union

After making the consecration we are encouraged to develop the habit of thinking with Mary's thoughts, speaking with Mary's words, loving with Mary's heart – trying to become a living copy of Mary. The purpose of this practice of living in union with her is to deepen and secure our union with Jesus Christ. Since she was the person closest to Christ and one with him, in our imitation and union with her we will be imitating and becoming one with him. Once the consecration is made, everything is subject to Our Lady's good pleasure. When praying for a specific intention, or for family or friends, it must be realized that those prayers may be applied by Our Lady to somebody else, although, having given ourselves to her she would have our interests at heart. It is a real sacrifice, a kind of martyrdom, to have given up our power of selective prayer, but trusting her, we want only what she intends. Some people have asked how it will be at the judgment seat of God, when we stand there empty-handed. The answer is Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, Earth and Purgatory will be present at the judgment too, and if we belong to her, if we are her property and possession, she will not hesitate to claim us for her own.

The Effects of the Consecration

The effects of the True Devotion are listed in the handbook. There is a deepening of the interior life and sealing of it with a special character of unselfishness and purity of intention. There is a sense of guidance and a sense of being watched over and protected by Our Lady. A joyful certainty rests in the heart, that our life is being used by Almighty God for his best intentions. There comes a supernatural outlook on things, a definite courage and a firmer faith. Graces come that are out of the ordinary. It will make the consecrated one a mainstay in any enterprise, one who will receive a tenderness and a wisdom which kept strength in its proper place. And above all there comes sweet humility which protects all the other virtues. What is given to Our Lady returns a hundredfold. And lastly, there is the blessing of being included in the community of those saints and holy ones whose spirituality centered on de Montfort's True Devotion spirituality: Sts. Therese the Little Flower, Pius X, Maximilian Kolbe, and our contemporary holy ones: Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, Frank Duff, Edel Quinn and Alfie Lambe.