

ALLOCUTIO April 2015 - Fr. Justin Ford, Senatus Spiritual Director



In Part 1, Chapter 2 of *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, St Louis de Montfort speaks about the marks of false devotion to Mary, and then the marks of authentic devotion. In recent months we considered the seven kinds of *false* devotion. Today we look at the five marks of *authentic* devotion. True devotion, St Louis tells us, is **interior, trustful, holy, constant and disinterested**.

(1) First, **'interior'** devotion to Mary. St Louis tells us, '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.' If we're going to foster the interior nature of our devotion we have to reflect on the reasons we should have such love for her and the reasons we hold her in such high esteem. The heart to a great extent follows the mind.

(2) Second, authentic devotion is **trustful**. This is the devotion of a child for its loving mother. A child goes to its mother in every need in complete simplicity and affection. So St Louis lists the different needs in which we come to her, and the list really covers everything. 'In every need of body and soul... We implore our Mother's help always, everywhere and for everything... to be enlightened in our doubts, to be put back on the right path when we go astray, to be protected when we are tempted, to be strengthened when we are weakening, to be lifted up when we fall into sin, to be encouraged when we are losing heart, to be rid of our scruples, to be consoled in the trials, crosses and disappointments of life.'

So in any kind of trial, imagine yourself as a little child running to its mother, expecting that she'll be able to fix the problem immediately. The child doesn't ask how, but just knows that everything will be taken care of.

(3) Third, true devotion to our Lady is **holy**. 'It leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary.' And St Louis lists ten principal virtues of Our Lady for us to imitate: 'deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness, and heavenly wisdom.'

(4) Fourth, true devotion to Our Lady is **constant**. We don't give up our devotional practices too easily. 'Thus a person truly devoted to our Blessed Lady is not changeable, fretful, scrupulous or timid.'

'We do not say however that such a person never sins or that his sensible feelings of devotion never change. When he has fallen, he stretches out his hand to his Blessed Mother and rises again. If he loses all taste and feeling for devotion, he is not at all upset because a good and faithful servant of Mary is guided in his life by faith in Jesus and Mary, and not by feelings.'

This is because faith is about believing what we can't see for ourselves. 'We walk by faith and not by sight.' Now, when we do have 'good feelings' in our devotions, in a way we *are* seeing for ourselves. Such consolations are gifts from God – yet faith that doesn't *depend* upon them is a much purer and more simple trust in God.

(5) Fifth, true devotion to Our Lady is **disinterested** – that is, not focused on primarily on our own interests. It inspires us to seek God in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves. So we don't serve Mary for our own well-being primarily, even our eternal well-being, 'but simply and solely because she has the right to be served and God alone in her.

Now, we are meant to have a rightful self-love, and of course a love for those around us. We do want the well-being of ourselves and others – well-being both in this world and above all in the next. And of course we ask for these things in fervent prayer. But our love for both self and others is all the purer, the more that all our love is motivated by our love of God above all. That's what we say in the act of love: 'My God, I love you with my whole heart and soul and strength and mind, because of your infinite perfection and goodness, and *for your sake* I love my neighbour as myself.' And in particular, we especially love Mary because she's the one who reflects God most perfectly.

We love Mary 'not so much because she is good to [us] or because [we] expect something from her, but simply because she is lovable.' And that means we serve her with equal faithfulness when our soul feels weary and dry as when our prayers are filled with peace and consolation. We're not doing it for our own pleasure. So often we measure the value of our prayers by the feelings we have when we pray, but that's very misleading. The more precious prayer is so often that one done with no great feelings at all. Precisely when we persevere in spite of dryness and weariness, that shows we're not doing it just for our own pleasure.

So: devotion that is interior, trustful, holy, constant and disinterested. Maybe when we reflect on all that, it seems so far past our present way of devotion. But the answer to that, is simply to start without delay on this path as best we can. Take these marks of authentic devotion and commit them to heart and to memory. And above all, start practising a more authentic devotion precisely by constantly and trustfully asking Our Lady to obtain for us this very grace. She knows how pleasing the authentic devotion is to God, so it's a prayer that will most certainly be answered.
