

## ALLOCUTIO, SENATUS, 2 AUGUST 2015

In this month of August dedicated especially to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we return to St Louis de Montfort's 'True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin'. Having finished the first half of the book, 'True Devotion to Our Lady in General', we now turn to the second half, 'The Perfect Devotion to Our Lady'.

St Louis lays down the very heart of this 'perfect devotion' in the following words (also quoted by St John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, thus giving them approbation from the Magisterium itself):

'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.'

St Louis then goes on to explain exactly what this means. He says: 'This devotion consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. It requires us to give: (1) Our body with its senses and members; (2) our soul with its faculties; (3) Our present material possessions and all we shall acquire in the future; (4) Our interior and spiritual possessions, that is, our merits, virtues and good actions of the past, the present and the future.'

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

One part of this is simply resolving to do, with his grace, the will of God in all things as best we can: with our acts of body and soul, with our material possessions. Being conformed to Our Lady – imitating her in everything, entrusting ourselves to her in everything – leads us more perfectly on the path of doing God's will.

Thus far it might not sound very different to the general aim of Christian perfection and holiness. But something very distinctive about the Total Consecration is our gift to Mary of all our *spiritual* possessions. So firstly, the merits of our good works. Now strictly speaking, our merits for our loving actions done by the grace of Christ cannot be transferred to anyone else. Thus we give them to Our Lady *for her safe-keeping*. Nothing too difficult about that!

But then we come to the things we do to make up for our own sins: in theological language, the 'satisfaction' we make for sin. The penances we do, the indulgences we gain – we give them all to Mary to use as she wills. Before, we reserved the right to apply them for our own benefit. But now, we entrust them to Our Lady with the confidence that she will use them so much better for God's glory and for the needs of souls – in the confidence that she will cleanse them of our imperfections and self-love, and that they will have all the more spiritual power for the whole world. But notice, we *have* made a sacrifice. Before we made the total consecration, we could determine that those penances, satisfactions and indulgences would definitely, in strict justice, reduce our own 'debt owing' in purgatory. We give that up. So – there is a definite sacrifice involved.

The Legion handbook comments wisely (pp. 39-40): 'Some persons appear to reduce their spiritual life very simply to a matter of selfish gain or loss. These are disconcerted by the suggestion that they should abandon their treasures even to the Mother of our souls. Such as the following is heard: "If I give everything to Mary, will I not at the hour of my departure from this life stand empty-handed before my Judge, and therefore

perhaps have to go for a vast time into purgatory?" To this, a commentator quaintly answers, "No, not at all, since Mary is present at the Judgement!" The thought contained in this remark is profound.'

So what has really happened is that we have made a generous sacrifice of what we can 'demand' in *justice* for our penances and so forth, so that Our Lady can use the spiritual value of those penances where she will. Instead of relying on our own works and on what we can, as it were, demand for them (recalling that they only have value before God in the first place because they are done in the power of the grace of Christ working in us), we are now instead simply casting ourselves on the generosity and mercy of Our Lord and Our Lady.

If we did then end up getting judged by the strictest justice, then yes, we might have to suffer longer in purgatory. But this is where the Total Consecration gives us freedom of spirit. We move beyond the realm of tallying up our own works, and learn to live in the world of total confidence in the generosity, love and power of Our Lady.