

ALLOCUTIO, SENATUS, 6 SEPTEMBER 2015

We've started reflecting on what St Louis de Montfort calls, 'The Perfect Devotion to Our Lady' in which we give ourselves '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.' (*True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Part II, Ch. 3)

Last time we began looking at exactly what it meant to give over our spiritual possessions to Our Lady, such as our merits, and our penances (or 'satisfactions') for sin. Today we'll consider how this total consecration to Mary also means trustingly handing over to her all of our prayers for various intentions.

Having made this gift, we still make the same prayers for the needs dear to our hearts, but now everything is subject to Mary's good pleasure. She can use those prayers exactly as she wishes. And we have simple trust that as a supremely good and generous mother, she's going to take special care of one who has totally given themselves to her. But, it's in her hands – no longer so much in our own hands, our own control (to the extent that the outcome of prayers is ever in our own control). But that's fine, as long as we trust Mary to take good care of us, more than we trust ourselves to do so.

The *Handbook* considers an objection: 'There is difficulty in understanding how those things for which one is bound in duty to pray, such as one's family, one's friends, one's country, the Pope, etc. will fare if one makes the unreserved gift of one's spiritual treasures. Let all these misgivings be put aside, and let the Consecration be boldly made. Everything is safe with Our Lady. She is the guardian of the treasures of God himself. She is capable of being the guardian of the concerns of those who place their trust in her. So together with the assets of your life, cast all its liabilities – its obligations and duties – into that great sublime heart of hers. In her relations with you, she acts in a manner as if she had no other child but you. Your salvation, your sanctification, your multiple needs are peremptorily present to her. When you pray for her intentions, you yourself are her first intention.' (Ch. 6, p. 40)

In other words, Mary isn't going to take our prayers and use them in total disregard of the desires of our own hearts.

Still, the *Handbook* does then go on to say, 'But here, where one is being urged to make sacrifice, is not the place to seek to prove that there is no loss whatever in the transaction. For to prove this would sap the very foundations of the offering and deprive it of the character of sacrifice on which its value depends.' (*ibid.*)

It's a subtle point, but an important one. The Total Consecration *is* a gift of oneself, a sacrifice. And if it's a genuine sacrifice, then at some level, we're going to be giving up something. Otherwise, there's no gift being made at all, no true generosity. It would all be nothing else than a roundabout way of making gains for ourselves.

We *are* truly handing over control to Mary. And just as in the bigger picture of saying to God, 'Not my will but yours be done', so with handing over control to Mary. It *will* sometimes presumably mean that things will happen differently to how we would have chosen ourselves – how things would have happened if we'd kept firm 'control' of the value of our prayers and works. That's part of the sacrifice we make. But we make the sacrifice with the confidence of love, that in the bigger picture,

we (with all those we love and all those for whom we pray) will ultimately be great gainers – because God and Our Lady will match our act of generosity a thousand times over.

The *Handbook* makes a wonderful comparison with the five loaves and the two fish that fed the multitude. The boy with the loaves and fish gave them up in simple generosity with no guarantee of return – and no apparent prospect of them doing very much good. Of course we all know what happened: the feeding of five thousand, including no doubt the boy himself and his family, and with the twelve baskets of scraps left over.

So the *Handbook* says, ‘Such is always the way of Jesus and Mary with the princely soul which gives its possessions without reserve or stipulation. The gift avails to satisfy the wants of a vast throng. Yet, one’s own needs and intentions, which had appeared to suffer, are filled to overflowing and still the Divine bounty lies scattered about. Let us then, hasten to Mary with our poor loaves and fishes, and press them into her arms, so that Jesus and she may multiply them to feed the souls of the millions hungering in the arid desert of this world. The form of one’s ordinary prayers and actions need not be changed as a result of the making of the Consecration. The customary paths of life may be pursued, and one may continue to pray for one’s usual intentions and for all special purposes, but subject in future to Mary’s good pleasure.’ (*ibid.*)

So that’s the spirit of the Total Consecration: a surrender of control to Mary, knowing that she’ll purify all that we give her, and knowing that she’ll take care of everything so much more than we could ourselves.