

ALLOCUTIO, LEGION OF MARY MELBOURNE SENATUS, 7 FEBRUARY 2016

We continue our reflections on St Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, focusing on what he calls 'The Perfect Devotion to Our Lady', in which we give ourselves 'entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her'. In Chapter Four, St Louis speaks about eight *motives* that recommend this Total Consecration. We've already spoken about the first three, so today we consider the remaining five:

1. It is an excellent means of giving glory to God
2. It leads to union with our Lord
3. It gives liberty of spirit
4. It is of great benefit to our neighbour
5. It is a wonderful means of perseverance

So firstly, the Total Consecration is an excellent means of giving glory to God. Human beings often don't know what will bring about God's greater glory, or they don't desire it in the first place. But Mary both desires it and knows it perfectly, so if we've made the Total Consecration to her, then we can be assured that everything we've given into Mary's hands is truly best directed for the greater glory of God.

Secondly, the Total Consecration leads to union with our Lord. There are other paths to divine union, St Louis agrees, yet this way of total consecration is *smooth, short, perfect* and *sure*. A *smooth* path: true, there are battles, trials and sufferings on any path to God, but on this path, Mary is always close to her servants 'to brighten their darkness, clear away their doubts, strengthen them in their fears, sustain them in their combats and trials.' Mary's servants might indeed even be given heavier crosses than others, but they will carry them with greater ease and obtain more merit and glory.

It is a *short* road to union with Our Lord, because we walk along it with greater ease and joy, and so with greater speed. 'We advance more in a brief period of submission to Mary and dependence on her than in whole years of self-will and self-reliance.' Jesus himself gives us the example that most of his years on earth were spent in submission and obedience to his Mother.

It is a *perfect* road to union with Our Lord since Mary is the most perfect and holy of all creatures, the road that God himself chose in descending to us and becoming like us. So we who are nothing in ourselves, by being led along this same path, *ascend* to become like God by grace and glory.

Finally, it is a *sure* road, a safe road. St Louis emphasises that he is not inventing this devotion of the total Consecration, and he quotes spiritual writers over hundreds of years in support of it. And since the time of St Louis, we now have support from the Magisterium itself that we can confidently follow this path. Thus St John Paul II singled out St Louis as an exponent of how we come to Jesus through Mary: 'I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of [Marian] spirituality, the figure of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments.' (Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* 48)

And he explained his own episcopal motto, *Totus Tuus* ('Totally yours' – meaning 'Totally Mary's'), with reference to 'the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who

explained in the following words Mary's role in the process of our configuration to Christ: "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". (Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 15)

A third motive recommending the Consecration is that it gives liberty of spirit. 'To reward us for this enslavement of love', St Louis says, 'our Lord frees us from every scruple and servile fear which might restrict, imprison or confuse us; he opens our hearts and fills them with holy confidence in God...'

Fourth, the Total Consecration is of great benefit to our neighbour. 'By this devotion we show love for our neighbour in an outstanding way, since we give him through Mary's hands all that we prize most highly – that is, the satisfactory and prayer value of all our good works, down to the smallest good thought and the smallest suffering.' Our Lady uses all this for the conversion of sinners and the deliverance of souls from purgatory, and in such a way that we avoid the temptation of vainglory, since she is clearly the one in control, not us. And what greater good can we give our neighbour than the infinite good, the possession of God? Also, 'our good works, passing through Mary's hands, are progressively purified' and their value for our neighbour is increased. Even if we only converted one sinner or delivered one soul from purgatory by this means, this should induce us to practise the devotion. And we may well find at the hour of death that not just one but many souls have been converted and delivered by our doing so.

And the final motive St Louis gives for the Total Consecration is that it is a wonderful means of perseverance. Human beings are so weak that we often fall backwards. 'Why is it', St Louis asks, 'that most conversions of sinners are not lasting? Why is it that most of the faithful...often lose the little grace and virtue they have?' (A fairly bleak assessment, though I suppose he was speaking from experience.) But by this devotion we entrust all our graces, virtues and merits to Mary to protect, and she takes care of them most faithfully. 'Moved by pure love, this good Mother always accepts whatever is given her in trust, and, once she accepts something, she binds herself in justice by a contract of trusteeship to keep it safe...Heaven and earth would pass away sooner than Mary would neglect or betray those who trusted in her.'