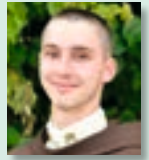


Sacred Slavery of Love

To lose oneself in Mary's interior abyss, to identify oneself with Her by the bond of the slavery of love in order to love and glorify Jesus through Her: this is the excellent path to which St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort invites us.



Adriel Brandelero

Situated at the confluence of two modest waterways – the Meu and the Garun – which flow among the oaks of Brittany, the peaceful town of Montfort still seemed, in the middle of the 17th century, to preserve the sturdy granite faith on which its glorious history had been built – a past of exploits so well evoked by its walls. However, these rocks did not yet know the most auspicious event of Montfort-sur-Meu, for it began on January 31, 1673, the day Louis-Marie Grignon, second son of Jean-Baptiste Grignon and Jeanne Robert, was born.

The cradle chosen and prepared by Providence for the Saint's birth, Montfort became a perennial symbol of a supernatural reality that this man of God's life and feats made explicit to humanity: a special deepening in devotion to the Holy Mother of the Creator, brought to the extreme of slavery and complete surrender of oneself to her maternal care.

To understand the extent of this surrender, St. Louis de Montfort needed to make of his existence an intimate, prolonged and loving meditation on Our Lady, so that the Most High would teach him a secret that he could

never have found in ancient books or those of his contemporaries. It is the secret of Mary, the mystery of an intimate relationship with the Mother of God, which at the end of his life St. Louis transcribed in the *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, bringing together the teachings which will form, until the end of time, the authentic servants of the Queen of the Universe.

Let us briefly look at this life of meditation that prepared the drafting of the *Treatise*.

Delighting in Mary's company

When only twelve years old, Louis was sent by his parents to study at

St. Louis de Montfort carried devotion to Our Lady to the extreme of slavery and complete surrender into her hands

College of Saint Thomas Becket in Rennes, where he stayed with his uncle Alain Robert, a priest of the Saint-Sauveur parish.

Contrary to the customs of his peers, as a teenager he tried to practice recollection often, preferably at the feet of some statue of Our Lady in the neighbouring churches, thus avoiding the worldly affairs that surrounded him.

From 1695, when he was a postulant in the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, the young man's soul rose ever higher, like an eagle soaring aloft among the clouds to contemplate more fully the almost infinite splendours of the Morning Star. Our Lady was the only panorama that this eagle was pleased to admire. Any entertainment from which the names of Jesus and Mary were absent was insipid and distasteful to him.

During those years, he did not lack excellent readings which solidified in his soul the principles inspired by grace, such as Henri-Marie Boudon's *Dieu seul. Le saint esclavage de l'admirable Mère de Dieu*, and the *Psalter of the Virgin* attributed to St. Bonaventure. It was while still in the seminary that the Saint

decided to found the association of the Slaves of Mary in order to propagate the doctrine of holy slavery, the distinctive sign of his ministerial apostolate.

However, what helps us more clearly understand the intensity of his relationship with the Lady of the Angels are the little-known moments when She visited and personally communicated her maternal designs to the apostle whom She had chosen.

On one occasion, a man entered the sacristy to go to Confession and found the missionary, already at the end of his days, conversing with a Lady of indescribable whiteness. As if in apology for the inconvenience, he received the amiable explanation: "My friend, I am enjoying the company of Mary, my good Mother."¹ Were such miraculous encounters with the Queen of the Universe commonplace for Louis? Judging by the naturalness of his remark, there is reason to think so...

Recollected in La Rochelle

At the end of his fruitful life, St. Louis de Montfort decided to consign to paper the doctrine that he had so successfully for many years taught, in public and in private, during his missions.

In all probability, it was the autumn of 1712, in the tranquil city of La Rochelle. A bed, a table, a chair and candelabra were all the trappings of his dwelling in the hermitage of St. Elias, where he spent the last mission years and wrote with his own hand the lines of the so-called *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*.

The writing went relatively quickly, the result of an enormous remote prep-

aration: abundant readings, familiar conversations with the holiest and wisest figures of his time, incessant preaching and ardent prayers for many decades.

The hatred of hell

It inevitably happens in salvation history that every holy work which bears good fruit is hated and opposed by the Serpent's race. Thus the writing of St. Louis also became the target of infernal forces, as the Saint had prophesied in a strikingly accurate manner: "I clearly foresee that raging beasts will come in fury to tear to pieces with their diabolic-

From his recollection at La Rochelle, the Saint of Montfort set down in writing that which he had taught and practised for decades



Lucio Cesar Rodrigues

St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort - Private collection

al teeth this little book and the one the Holy Spirit made use of to write it, or they will cause it at least to lie hidden in the darkness and silence of a chest and so prevent it from seeing the light of day. They will even attack and persecute those who read it and put into practice what it contains."²

In fact, during the French Revolution the manuscript was locked in a box and hidden in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, in a field near the chapel dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel.

Once the storm had passed, it remained forgotten there until April 29, 1842, when a missionary of the Company of Mary found it among other old books.

After the discovery, some doubts arose as to certain corrections made, which did not appear to be the author's, as well as several pages that had mysteriously disappeared.

Originally, the work consisted of nineteen notebooks, the first seven of which were lost. Of the eighth, only ten pages remained, and of the last, only six. For this reason



Francisco Lecaros

The table on which St. Louis de Montfort wrote the "Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin" - Convent of the Daughters of Wisdom, Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre (France)

no one knows the real name of the *Treatise*. It is supposed that it is most probably *Preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ*, because St. Louis calls it such in the manuscript.³ As for the actual title, it was given to the work when the first edition was printed.

Nevertheless, neither the lost title, nor even the almost one hundred pages that have disappeared, prevent it from bringing about in souls the conversions that the Virgin so ardently awaits, for the *Treatise* is the bearer of graces that teach hearts even more profoundly than the words it contains instructs minds.

Rescued from obscurity and placed on the lamp-stand, the new Marian doctrine contained in those few pages began to spread throughout the world, and the number of the slaves of Mary multiplied, as it continues to do right into in the twenty-first century.

Now, what new and powerful doctrine is this, so feared by hell that every means were employed to make it disappear?

In search of the most precious pearl

Slavery: There is no lower condition. But “among Christian peoples, nothing makes a person belong more completely to Jesus and His holy Mother than voluntary slavery. Our Lord Himself gave us the example of this when out of love for us He ‘took the form of a slave’ – *forma servi accipiens*. Our Lady gave us the same example when She called herself the handmaid or slave of the Lord.”⁴

To bind oneself to the hands of Our Lady is, as the Saint amply argues,⁵ the shortest, most efficacious, perfect and secure way to fully unite ourselves to Our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to consummate the spiritual life and attain sanctity.

Now, following the recommendations of St. Louis to the letter, we shall see that devotion to Mary, taken to the extreme, requires the most radical surrender to Her of all that one possesses, both in the order of nature and of grace, as he himself strongly recommends: “If you have discovered this treasure in the field of Mary, this pearl of great price, you should sell all you have to purchase it. You must offer yourself to Mary, happily



St. Louis Grignion de Montfort before Our Lady Queen of Hearts, with his “Treatise” at the foot of her throne

To bind oneself to Mary was, for him, the shortest, most efficacious, perfect and secure way to fully unite oneself to Our Lord

lose yourself in Her, only to find God in Her.”⁶ Once this priceless pearl is possessed, what can the human soul desire more than to remain with it, even in the beatific vision?

This is a clause which fortunately appears in the essential words of the formula composed by St. Louis: “I surrender and consecrate myself to You, body and soul, as your slave, with all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the value of all my good actions, past, present, and to come. I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without any reservations, in whatever way You please, for the greater glory of God *in time and throughout eternity*.”⁷

Such a complete surrender to a mere creature – Mother of God and Queen of Heaven and earth, no doubt, but still merely human – could not fail to raise opposition, which the Saint of Montfort had also already foreseen:

“If any critic reading this should imagine that I am exaggerating or speaking from an excess of devotion, he has not, alas, understood what I have said. Either he is a carnal man who has no taste for the spiritual; or he is a proud and critical man who ridicules and condemns anything he does not understand. But those who are born not of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God and of Mary, understand and appreciate what I have to say. It is for them that I am writing.”⁸

The apostles of the latter times

St. Louis’ prophetic sense was far-reaching, for he did not imagine that these souls receptive to the sublime devotion of the slavery of love were restricted to those who were alive at that time, but he envisioned them on his supernatural horizon in a future period:

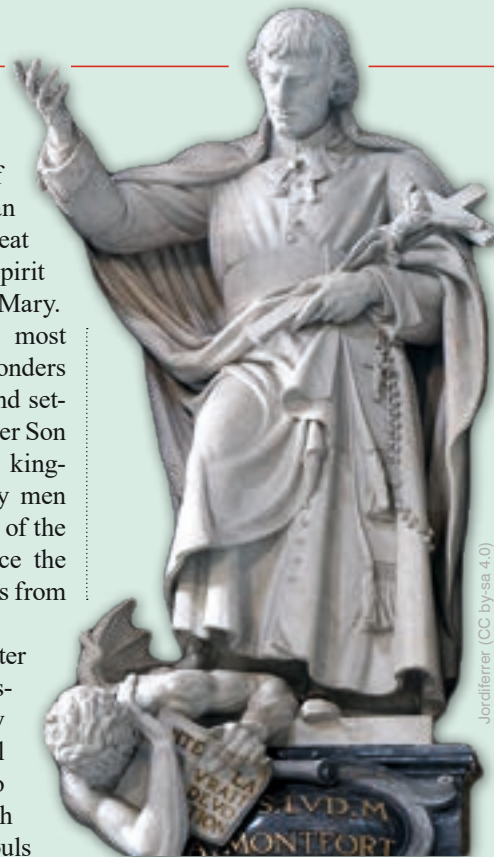
“We are given reason to believe that, towards the end of time and perhaps sooner than we expect, God will raise up great men filled with the Holy Spirit and imbued with the spirit of Mary. Through them Mary, Queen most powerful, will work great wonders in the world, destroying sin and setting up the Kingdom of Jesus her Son upon the ruins of the corrupt kingdom of the world. These holy men will accomplish this by means of the devotion of which I only trace the main outlines and which suffers from my incompetence.”⁹

These apostles of the latter times, according to the expression of St. Louis, will not only live his teachings in a radical way, but will be living torches to illuminate the hearts of men with the spirit of Mary, preparing souls for the reign of her Divine Son:

“As it was through Mary that God came into the world the first time in a state of self-abasement and privation, may we not say that it will be again through Mary that He will come the second time? For does not the whole Church expect Him to come and reign over all the earth and to judge the living and the dead? No one knows how and when this will come to pass...”¹⁰

“Adveniat regnum Mariæ”

The immensity of his desires made him groan as he awaited this new order of things that devotion to



Jordiferrer (CC by-sa 4.0)

St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort - St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican

“When will that happy day come when God's Mother is enthroned in men's hearts as Queen? When will souls breathe Mary as the body breathes air?”

Mary, as he had taught it, would bring about:

“When will that happy day come... when God's Mother is enthroned in men's hearts as Queen, subjecting them to the dominion of her great and princely Son? When will souls breathe Mary as the body breathes air? When that time comes wonderful things will happen on earth. The Holy Spirit, finding His dear Spouse present again in souls, will come down into them with great power. He will fill them with the gifts, especially wisdom, by which they will produce wonders of grace.”¹¹

It is with good reason that the most probable name of the *Treatise* is *Preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ*. The age of Our Lord will come at the moment when sacred slavery is spread throughout all mankind: “That day will dawn only when the devotion I teach is understood and put into practice. *Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariæ.*”¹²

While the humanity of this century are inebriated with the attractions of this world, which is incapable of offering the soul the only good that can satisfy it, let us turn our eyes to Our Lady and make the prayer of the Marian Saint our own: that in the near or distant future the Blessed Virgin will have more children, servants and slaves of love than ever before, and that through them Jesus, my dear Lord, will reign more than ever in the hearts of men.¹³ ✧

¹ LE CROM, Louis. *Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort: un apôtre marial*. Tourcoing: Les Traditions Françaises, 1946, p.367.

² ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.114. In: *God Alone*. Bayshore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1987, p.324.

³ Cf. Idem, n.227, p.363.

⁴ Idem, n.72, p.312.

⁵ Cf. Idem, n.120; 152-159, p.327; 336-339.

⁶ ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Secret of Mary*, n.70. In: *God Alone*, op. cit., p.281-282.

⁷ ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT.

Love of Eternal Wisdom, n.225. In: *God Alone*, op. cit., p.113.

⁸ ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.180, op. cit., p.346-347.

⁹ ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT.

Secret of Mary, n.59, op. cit., p.277.

¹⁰ Idem, n.58, p.277.

¹¹ ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.217, op. cit., p.360.

¹² Idem, n.217, p.360.

¹³ Cf. Idem, n.113, p.324.