



INTRODUCTION TO THE

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

*(Compiled following group discussion with
young people)*

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Issued by the Legion of Mary
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FOREWORD

Father Michael Kennedy, C.c. of Cashel & Emly diocese, has performed many useful tasks for the Legion of Mary. In preparing this simple, but dynamic little introduction to the True Devotion to Mary, he has rendered a service of far reaching consequences for, we hope, many of our legionaries.

The True Devotion to Mary is not of obligation for active membership of the Legion. Brother Duff, our founder, was a firm believer however in the principle of growth. We enter the Legion with a sincere good-will to sanctify ourselves and assist others for the glory of God. Mary is our mother, she will be prepared to nourish us and provide us with that necessary growth in our spiritual life, if we but ask her. For those Legionaries and others, both young and not so young, who know very little about the True Devotion to Mary, Father Kennedy's book will be an excellent lead to a closer study of De Montfort's Treatise.

What is particularly pleasing about this book is the fact that in Chapter Seven the True Devotion to Mary is brought to its logical conclusion: which is the need for all members of the Mystical Body of Christ to be apostolic.

Sam Hughes

(Concilium President)

Nihilobstat: James Ryan, LSS. *Imprimatur:* + Thomas Morris,
Archbishop of Cashel & Emly.

29 May 1987.
Reprinted September 1996

CHAPTER 1

"By its fruit you will know it" (Mt. 12:33)

The place is France, the year is 1716. At eight o' clock in the evening it is all over. The whole district quivers at the news of Fr. Grignon's death. The roads are crowded with the converts streaming for a last farewell. Rosary beads, crucifixes and medals by the thousand are being brought to touch his body. So vast are the crowds that a guard has to be set around his coffin. He is buried on the afternoon of April 29th where he would have asked to be, in the chapel of his mother. His career is over, or rather, it is just beginning. . .

Today this man is known to us as Saint Louis-Marie Grignon De Montfort. He founded two religious congregations, one of men and one of women, and yet he died at the early age of 43 years after only 16 years of priesthood. Through his teaching of the True Devotion to Mary he was instrumental in the conversion of countless heretics.

In his book Fr. Grignon recorded the following fascinating prophecy: "I clearly foresee that raging brutes will come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little writing and him whom the Holy Ghost has used to write it, or, at least to enclose it in the silence of a coffer in order that it may not appear".

Nevertheless, he predicted both the appearance of the book and its success. It is of interest to note that while Fr. Grignon died in 1716, his book was not found until 1842.

Another person who read and practised the True Devotion to Mary was the reformed alcoholic Matt Talbot. Many find the book a difficult one to read and yet Matt Talbot, an uneducated saintly man, mastered it and took to himself its spirit. It was one of the most marked books on his shelf. Referring to this book afterwards, in connection with the wearing ~f a chain, Matt remarked that he "had read of a devotion which lifted him from earth to heaven". The world now knows of its impact on Matt Talbot.

Dublin in 1917 was a city of great poverty. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was making strenuous efforts to combat this. One day a group of ladies volunteered their services. Their offer was accepted and one of the brothers was put in charge of them. He was a young civil servant named Frank Duff.

Frank was introduced to a book by a friend. It was "The True Devotion to Mary". Upon finishing the book, he wasn't very impressed. He thought it was a bit excessive. This is what Frank later said: "I still have recollections of that first reading. The book was laid aside. I would not have opened it again but for the dear tyranny of a friend. He exacted repeated readings which were grudgingly conceded. Then gradually it dawned on me that the book was an inspired production, that it was right and I was wrong; what it said was true and had the character of a special message; the excesses which I thought I found were really deficiencies in myself, wide gaps in knowledge and apprehension. I realised that I must try to fill them in and to some extent succeeded. Ever since, the book has been a source of light to me so that I add myself to those, who bless the day in which it came to them".

Frank began to give talks on the subject to his group and eventually the question was put: "Why don't we try to put this into practice?". From that a meeting was held-the first ever Legion of Mary meeting. Frank recalls: "It was just like making an electric connection and something happened. We spent the evening talking about the Devotion. I do not say that even so we understood it fully, but at least we were in ardent sympathy with it. We desired to practice it. Then at once the Legion happened. A meeting was arranged: 8 p.m. September 7th, 1921, the eve of Our Lady's birthday. It was really born with Mary". So we see that the Legion was the fruit of the True Devotion to Mary.

Alfie Lambe and Edel Quinn also practised the True Devotion to Mary. Both of their causes for beatification have been introduced and Edel's is already at an advanced stage. While in our own day, Pope John Paul II adds his name to this distinguished list.

Frank Duff's cause was introduced and accepted on the 4th June 1996 and he is now to be referred to as the Servant of God.

I mention the fruits of De Montfort's lifecountless heretics converted, two religious congregations established, also the heroic life of Matt Talbot, as well as Frank Duff, the Legion of Mary, Alfie Lambe, Edel Quinn and Pope John Paul II for one reason-to show the marvellous effects that the True Devotion to Mary *can* have on one's life if one takes it seriously.

CHAPTER 2

What then is this True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

"For love a man will give up all that he has in the world and think nothing of his loss". (Old Testament: Song of Songs 8:7)

Once upon a time a very lovely girl married a blind and crippled soldier. She knew that there would be little pleasure and much trouble in their life together. She knew she was condemning herself to be an unpaid full-time nurse to a man whose illness would fray his nerves and temper. But, she was still in love with him. . . Because she loved him she wanted to. give herself totally to him. The fact of being able to serve him, and help him, more than outweighed, the sacrifices she would be called upon to make.

Now, we love Our Lady. The girl just mentioned did not limit her love to paying an occasional visit to her beloved or to carrying his photo in a locket. She gave herself entirely to him. Very often in life we come across examples of love that lead to complete dedication of self. We remember those mothers who give up everything for a sick child or husband. We think of those wonderful men who work and slave in a job for those they love. We think of boys and girls who sacrifice a career to support their parents. They dedicate themselves entirely to the service of those they love. It is no exaggeration to say that they make slaves of themselves for their sakes; but what a fantastic, noble, splendid, heroic slavery. There is nothing degrading in their spontaneous generous slavery. Because we want our love for Mary to surpass all human love, we should want to dedicate ourselves to her, more perfectly than human beings give themselves to the service of those they love. Complete surrender of self, entire dedication of self, noble voluntary slavery, that is surely the most perfect way of showing our love for Our Lady.

This is precisely what De Montfort is asking us to undertake in his book "The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin". He wants us to give ourselves entirely to the Blessed Virgin Mary so that we may belong entirely to Jesus Christ. This entails our body with all its senses and members, our soul with all its powers, our material possessions and all we may acquire, our interior and spiritual possessions-our merits, virtues and our good works, past, present and future.

This is different to most other devotions in that we give to Jesus all that we can give him (more than religious congregations ask of their members) and in the most perfect manner possible, namely, through the hands of Mary. The Devotion can be called a perfect renewal of the promises of baptism because in it we renounce the devil, the world, sin and self, while we give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary. We no longer do so through parents or god-parents but personally, voluntarily and with full knowledge of what we are doing.

CHAPTER 3

Why should I consider undertaking the True Devotion to Mary?

When Jesus was on earth, He used his mouth to tell people about God the Father's love for them, His hands to help those in need and His feet to carry the good news around Palestine. However, a time came when He was crucified. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. He would need another body to continue His mission of bringing the Good News to men down through the ages. This new Mystical Body of Jesus Christ was to be His church you and I.

Jesus Christ provides for the growth of this Body through Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Matrimony and Holy Orders. He provides for the healing of the Body through the sacraments of reconciliation and of the sick. We are His hands, His feet, His mouth today. Because we are members of His Body we share in His mission to the world.

All aspects of Christ's life must be reflected in His Mystical Body today-His Church. For example, Jesus spoke "with authority" and so He continues to speak "with authority" today through His Church. Jesus forgave sinners and continues this mission through His Mystical Body-the Church. Jesus suffered and continues this saving aspect of His mission today in the suffering members who "make up in their bodies what was lacking in the suffering of Christ for the sake of His Body-the Church." Jesus offered himself on the cross of Calvary. He continues to offer this same sacrifice in an unbloody manner through the hands of the priest at each Mass. Jesus also loved His mother, Mary, and gave her special honour. He wishes to continue this aspect of his life through us today. "Son behold thy mother." (In. 19:27).

CHAPTER 4

The True Devotion to Mary fits in most perfectly with God's plan of redemption. God decided to redeem us by following point by point the very plan used by Satan in our Fall. The principal cause of our ruin was Adam. The principal cause of our saving was Jesus. The secondary though important part in the Fall was played by Eve. The secondary though important part in the Redemption was played by Mary. This means, therefore, that God's plan for our Redemption includes both a new Adam (Christ) and a new Eve (Mary).

God could, so easily, have dispensed with Mary's role, if He had wished. But the point is that He did not wish to dispense with her. He wished that we should depend for all the fruits of Redemption, for grace, for holiness, for salvation first and above all on the work of Christ, Our Lord. But he also willed that we should depend in a secondary way an Our Lady too. So, when we honour Our Lady, our devotion, if it is adequate and perfect should recognise our God-planned dependence on her, and should lead us to try to express this dependence in our lives.

CHAPTER 5

"I am interested in undertaking the True Devotion to Mary but how do I go about it?"

De Montfort wants us to dedicate ourselves entirely and without reserve to the Blessed Virgin by the Act of Consecration. He wants us to give ourselves to Jesus and Mary as their slaves of love. Here are the words of the Act of Consecration:

"I (N.N.), a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands O Immaculate Mary, the promises of my baptism.

I renounce for ever Satan, his seductions and his works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life.

And to be more faithful to Him than I have been till now, I choose thee, this day, O Mary, in the presence of all the heavenly court, for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of my good actions past, present and future. I leave to thee the entire and full right to dispose of me and of all that belongs to me, without exception, as thou pleasest, to the greater glory of God, in time and in eternity."

If Jesus rewards a hundred-fold in this life, those who for His love leave exterior, temporal perishable goods-what an abundant hundredfold will He not give to those, who sacrifice to Him even their interior and spiritual goods!

That Solemn Act of Consecration is so important that St. Louis Marie De Montfort does not want people to make it until they have spent 30 days preparing for that great event.

At least once a year on the anniversary day renew the Consecration after three weeks preparation. Renew daily if possible by reciting "I am all thine my Queen and my Mother and all that I have is thine". He also asks that we wear some little chain as a sign of loving bondage. ("With St. Paul let us glory to be in chains for Jesus").

CHAPTER 6

Preparation for Consecration

The preparation is not obligatory. The only essential thing in this devotion is:

(1) To have the intention of giving oneself through Mary, and

(2) To make some attempt afterwards to remember to act in accordance with the fact that we belong to Mary. Having said that, however, it is advisable to prepare well before undertaking it.

Saint Louis Marie De Montfort advises us to spend 12 days in trying to rid ourselves of the spirit of the world, to spend the next three weeks in trying to know ourselves, to know Our Lady, and to know Our Lord. To enable us to do this Saint Louis Marie De Montfort advises us to pray and to meditate.

(1) Ridding oneself of worldliness:

It does not mean blinding oneself to the beauty and the joys of this life. It does not mean that we must renounce forever .the cinema, the television and video, dances and social events. The spirit of the world is that mentality which leads people to consider that this life is more important than eternity. It is the outlook which over-emphasises the importance of anything that brings riches, comfort, pleasure, in this world and which minimises, if it does not altogether ignore, the importance of providing for our life in the next world.

During these 12 days let us pray constantly for the grace of judging everything from the point of view of eternity, for the grace of thinking, speaking, behaving like people who really do believe that this life is only meant to be a preparation for the life that is to come. Think of the answer to the catechism question, "Why did God make you?" Think of the length of eternity, think of the comparative shortness of the longest life on this earth. Think of the imminence of your approaching death. You will find that this is ridding you bit by bit of the spirit of the world.

(2) Knowing Self

We are made by God and for God. Everything we are and possess has been given to us by God. At every moment God needs to uphold us in existence.

If we get this idea into our minds it will give us "basic humility". We might remind ourselves of our constant need of God's grace, of how we cannot do a single thing that can lead to heaven, either for ourselves or for others without special supernatural grace from God. Knowing ourselves, we shall realise how much we need the help of Our Lady in order to imitate and love her Son.

(3) Knowing Mary

We get to know Mary by praying and meditating on the joyful mysteries of the Rosary. During the week dedicated to acquiring knowledge of Our Lady we must ask God by insistent prayer to grant this knowledge to us. We should choose some little action that we perform several times each day and try to do it in the way that Our Lady wants.

(4) Knowing Christ

We should centre our prayers and thoughts on Jesus present in His Blessed Sacrament, telling ourselves that He is living in our town and in our parish.

We might meditate on the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross to understand something of that immense love that led God to suffer and die for us, Of to think over the life of Christ on earth in order to discover for ourselves the example of willing, loving dependence on His Mother that He set for us.

It was this thought that led St. Louis Marie De Montfort and countless other saintly souls to decide to give themselves entirely to Mary

in order to follow more closely the example of Our Divine Model.

For the benefit of those desiring to make the complete preparation recommended by the Saint, the following book is very helpful:

"Alive to God" by Donald MacDonald S.M.M.

A vailable from:

De Montfort House, Morning Star Avenue, Brunswick Street,

Dublin 7.

CHAPTER 7

Living the Consecration

When a girl gets married she is changed forever, outwardly she appears the same, inwardly all her virtues and qualities, and all her defects and weaknesses remain. Yet she is different. She knows that she belongs to her husband and he to her. She does not need to go around repeating that truth to herself-she knows and she acts in accordance with that knowledge.

In a similar way we need to acquire the realisation at all times that we belong to Our Lady and that we should be trying to do the things that are pleasing to her. Unfortunately, we have to develop the habit of reminding ourselves that we belong to her. The most obvious way is by renewing the Act of Consecration with some brief formula such as "I am all thine, my Queen and my Mother and all that I have is thine". It is helpful to have a fixed time for doing this each day. Once we have developed the habit of remembering, the next step should be to try to let this fact influence the actions we are doing at the time. We should try to please her in the action that we are then doing.

True Devotion to Mary also involves apostleship. Adequate devotion to Mary is achieved only by union with her, "and from that time the disciple took her to live in his home" (John 19:27). Mary's life did not consist mainly in the claiming of admiration but in the communicating of grace. Her whole life and destiny has been motherhood-first of Christ, then of men. It follows that without participation in her motherhood, there can be no real union with her. Therefore, True Devotion to Mary must involve a service of souls. Apostolic duties will not descend from Heaven. The only effective way of offering ourselves as apostles is to undertake apostleship. Mary will embrace our activity and incorporate it in her motherhood. Mary's treasury of grace is vast (Mediatrice of all graces), she cannot spend from it without our help. If she could use them as her heart desires the world would be converted in a flash. Deprived of our help souls starve and die. So she welcomes eagerly any who will really place themselves at her disposal-the holy and the not so holy. They are all needed to transmit the power of Mary.

Examples

If we recall our consecration when it is time to get up in the morning, it should be apparent that our Lady would prefer us to be prompt and generous rather than slothful and lazy. At work if we remember our consecration to God's Mother, it should be obvious that she wants us to be efficient, painstaking and honest. The thought that we have given ourselves to Mary should, in our conversation make us charitable; in our sufferings make us patient and cheerful; in our homes pleasant and helpful. In fact, it should influence whatever we are doing.

Thus, conscious sanctification of ordinary actions is the secret of all sanctity. We cannot expect to succeed perfectly right from the beginning. We can only try, knowing that our very efforts will please our Mother and knowing that she too will lead us on, in her own good time. There is a great rule in the spiritual life to the effect that if we are trying we are succeeding. This is particularly true of trying to live in union with Mary.

Additional Quotations from De Montfort's Book on The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

"I look forward to a great legion of brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary of both sexes, to combat the world, the devil and corrupted nature in these more than ever perilous times which are to come".

(Prophecy of De Montfort made nearly three centuries ago).

Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, claimed that the essence of the true devotion to Mary consists in trying to live in a spirit of dependence on Our Lady and in a spirit of union with her.

Re: dependence on Mary, De Montfort says:

"Moses by the power of his prayer, stayed the hand of God's anger lifted over the Israelites.

What therefore are we to think of the prayer of the humble Mary-a prayer more powerful than that of all the angels and saints in heaven."

Re: Union with Mary, he says:

"Because they acted on the advice of Mary, the servants of Cana were honoured with the first miracle of Jesus Christ who changed water into wine at the request of the Blessed Mother. "

MAHONS DUBLIN