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DE MONTFORT

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## ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

The Story of Our Lady's Slave,  
St. Louis Mary Grignon De Montfort

# ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

THE STORY OF OUR LADY'S SLAVE,  
ST. LOUIS MARY GRIGNION DE MONTFORT

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For  
His Excellency  
the Most Reverend  
Joseph E. Ritter, S.T.D.,  
Archbishop of St. Louis,  
who as seminarian and later as Archbishop  
made pilgrimages  
to the shrine of Our Lady  
on the hill  
where this book was written.

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# CONTENTS

1. A Fool or a Saint? . . . . .	1
2. A Slave . . . . .	6
3. Trouble with the Poorhouse Staff . . . . .	10
4. Father Grignon Disappears . . . . .	16
5. Father Grignon's Advice . . . . .	21
6. Consecration to Mary . . . . .	26
7. Preparing and More Preparing . . . . .	31
8. Ready at Last . . . . .	37
9. Mary Louise's Vocation . . . . .	41
10. Mary Louise's New Life . . . . .	47
11. The New Dress . . . . .	51
12. Shock Waves from Jansenism . . . . .	56
13. Searching for God's Will . . . . .	61
14. "Father, Please Come Back!" . . . . .	68
15. Sister Mary Louise's Decision . . . . .	73
16. Preaching in the Streets . . . . .	80
17. The Young Stranger . . . . .	85
18. A Dishonest Plot . . . . .	90
19. The Vicar General Says "No!" . . . . .	95
20. New Hopes . . . . .	99
21. Walking to Rome . . . . .	104
22. Audience with the Pope— And Surprises Back Home . . . . .	109
23. Helping to Make Saints . . . . .	114
24. Discovered! . . . . .	119
25. The Grumpy Brother . . . . .	124
26. A New Mission . . . . .	130
27. Ordered to Leave . . . . .	133
28. A New Companion and an Old Shrine . . . . .	139
29. Where to Dig? . . . . .	144
30. The Calvary at Pontchâteau . . . . .	149

31. The Bombshell .....	153
32. Mission to the Calvinists .....	159
33. Verdict of the Three Canons .....	163
34. Pirates! .....	170
35. Hopes for the Future .....	175
36. Surprise for Sister Mary Louise .....	181
37. A Broken Promise .....	186
38. The Bargain .....	192
39. The Last Words of a Saint .....	197
Epilogue: Continuing the Great Work .....	202



ST. LOUIS  
DE MONTFORT



## CHAPTER 1

### A FOOL OR A SAINT?

**T**HE Bishop of Poitiers peered through his study window at the shabbily dressed young priest striding briskly toward the front gate in the pale sunlight of the late November afternoon. Then, shivering at the whistle of the chill wind through the leafless trees, he turned, and, leaning heavily on a cane, moved toward the open hearth where a fire was burning.

“Father Louis Mary Grignion,” he muttered wearily, shaking his head as he warmed himself over the leaping flames. “That young man is either a fool or a saint.”

For several minutes the Bishop gazed moodily into the fire, heedless of the fact that there had been a knock at the door and that now his secretary stood waiting in respectful silence on the threshold. Then slowly he came to himself.

“Yes, Monsignor? What is it?”

The newcomer, a tall, severe-looking man in his middle forties, bowed stiffly. “I brought the papers, Your Lordship. The ones you wanted about Father Grignion. But shall we go over them now? After all, it’s nearly supper time. . . .”

The Bishop hesitated, then hobbled painfully across the room to his desk. “Of course we’ll go over them now. Father Grignion’s case is most important. Besides, it’ll take only a few minutes.”

The Monsignor bowed again, then placed a sheaf of papers before his superior.

“Very well, Your Lordship. But I’m afraid you’ll find everything as it was last month. For instance, on this first page is the personal information about Father Grignon. Birth: January 31, 1673, at Montfort-la-Cane, in Brittany, the second of eighteen children of John Baptist Grignon and Joan Robert. Education: seven years at the Jesuit college in Rennes, seven years with the Sulpicians in Paris. Ordination to the holy priesthood last year on June 5, 1700, aged twenty-seven. After that, a few retreats and missions under Father Lévêque at Nantes. . . .”

The Bishop listened in moody silence. Then suddenly he shifted impatiently. “Yes, yes, Monsignor. I know all this. But the letters from his former superiors in Paris. Surely there are some new ones by now? What have they to say? That’s what I want to hear.”

The Monsignor smiled wryly. “There’s been nothing new, Your Lordship.”

“Not even from Father Leschassier? Or Father Brenier? Or Father de la Chétardie?”

“No, Your Lordship. None of these men will recommend Father Grignon for any work—let alone what you’ve just given him to do here in Poitiers at the poorhouse.”

A hard light shone in the Bishop’s eyes. “But what have they got against the boy?” he demanded sharply. “Hasn’t he always been at the top of his classes in the Seminary? Hasn’t he even had to do outside work to pay his tuition? Hasn’t he been prayerful, mortified, obedient, all through his student years?”

“Yes, Your Lordship.”

“Well, go on. What is it, then?”

“His . . . his professors say he’s too different, Your Lordship.”

“Different! How different?”

“Well, for one thing, his clothes. He just doesn’t seem to care what they look like, Your Lordship. Why, he won’t even wear a hat!”

The Bishop shrugged. “A hat! What has wearing a hat got to do with being a good priest?”

“Nothing, Your Lordship. But still, when all other priests wear hats. . . .”

“Go on. What else is wrong with Father Grignion?”

The Monsignor hesitated. He had no wish to become involved in an argument with the Bishop. But he could not help feeling slightly suspicious of the young priest (at present a missionary in Nantes), who only a few minutes before had been in this very room. Not only had his clothes been disgracefully shabby; he had not even seemed to care that they were. Nor had he been a bit impressed with all the elegance around him—the rich carpets, the hangings, the furniture. The approaching interview with the Bishop seemed to have produced in him none of the anxiety which the Monsignor ordinarily observed in other visitors.

Even more. When the time came, he had found Father Louis Mary Grignion, not sitting timidly in a chair, or pacing nervously about the waiting room, but on his knees in prayer. And here he had received the Monsignor’s announcement that the Bishop awaited him quite simply, without apology or sign of embarrassment.

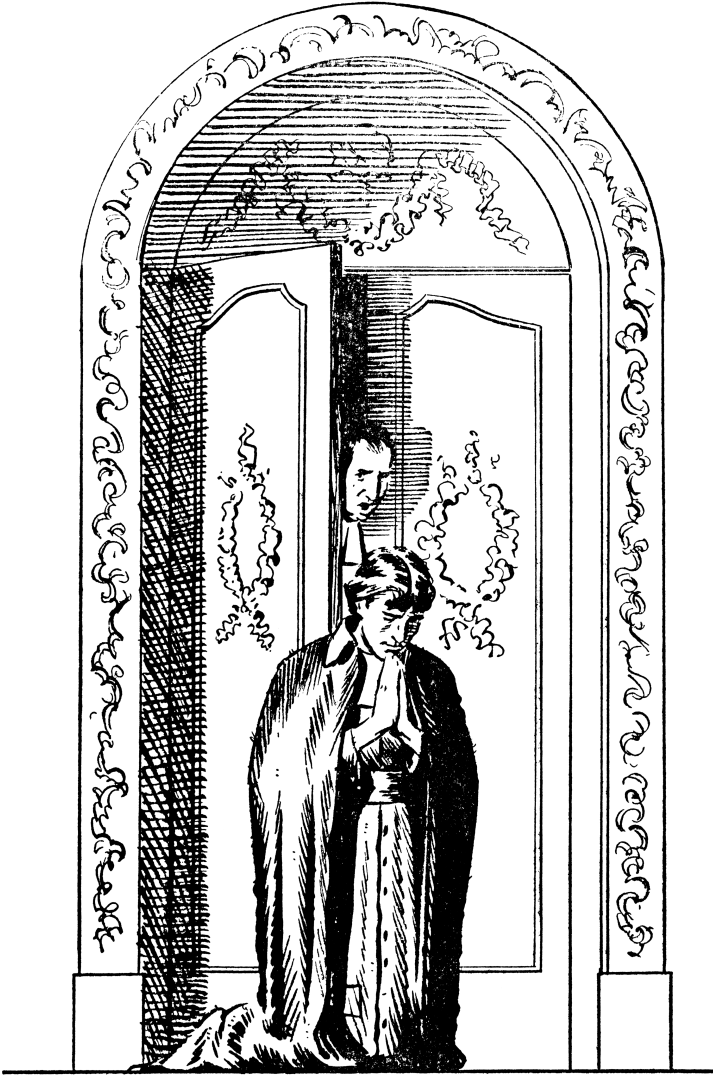
“Well, Monsignor? As you were saying. . . ?”

The latter swallowed hard. “Really, Your Lordship, I haven’t a thing against Father Grignion. I’m sure that he’s very holy. And that he’ll do good work at the poorhouse.”

Gradually the Bishop’s eyes softened. “I’m glad to hear you say that. The place is in a dreadful state.” Then, after a moment: “But you really don’t think he’ll stay, do you?”

“Frankly, no, Your Lordship.”

“Why not?”



The Monsignor felt slightly suspicious.

With a gesture of despair, the Monsignor threw caution to the winds. "Because he's not prudent! He's bound to make enemies among the staff! Mark my words, this very night he'll be preaching a sermon on the Blessed Virgin and trying to get members for that society of his!"

"*Society?*"

"Yes, the one that's mentioned here in these papers. He began it when he was only a student at the Seminary. And what an unfortunate title he chose—"The Slaves of Mary!"

"The Slaves of Jesus *in* Mary," corrected the Bishop.

"Very well. Even so, the word 'slaves' is repulsive, Your Lordship. It has nothing to do with holiness. Why, such a group could do real harm to the Church!"

The Bishop nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, if it were misunderstood. But let's hope that doesn't happen here in Poitiers, Monsignor. In fact, let's pray that Father Grignon's work at the poorhouse will be blessed with real success."

Quickly remorseful over his outburst, the Monsignor smiled awkwardly. "Well, of course that would be the charitable thing to do. But on the other hand. . . ."

"Good. After all, who knows? Perhaps someday our only claim to God's mercy will be that we helped one of His chosen workers through a difficult time. Now," with a gesture toward the papers scattered on his desk, "since it's after five o'clock. . . ."

With a feeling of genuine relief the Monsignor hastily collected the papers, then helped the Bishop to his feet. What a difficult afternoon this had been! And what a blessing that it was almost time for supper!