

The
SECRET
OF MARY

“There does not exist and never will exist a creature in whom God, either within or without Himself, is so highly exalted as He is in the most Blessed Virgin Mary, not excepting the Saints or the Cherubim or the highest Seraphim in Paradise. Mary is the paradise of God and His unspeakable world.”

—St. Louis De Montfort



Saint Louis Marie Grignon De Montfort
1673–1716

The
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OF MARY

By
St. Louis De Montfort

*“Happy, a thousand times happy, is
the soul here below to which the Holy
Ghost reveals the Secret of Mary . . .”*

—St. Louis De Montfort

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“GOD ALONE.”

—St. Louis De Montfort

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ABOUT ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

St. Louis Marie Grignon de la Bacheleraie, who abandoned his family name for that of his birthplace, was born on January 31, 1673 in the little town of Montfort-la-Canne, which is located in Brittany, France. He studied for the priesthood at St. Sulpice in Paris, having made the 200-mile journey there on foot. He was ordained a priest in 1700, at the age of 27.

St. Louis De Montfort had wanted to become a missionary in Canada, but he was advised to remain in France. There he traveled around the western part of the country, from diocese to diocese and from parish to parish, instructing the people, preaching, helping the poor, hearing confessions, giving retreats, opening schools and rebuilding church buildings. His labors were almost miraculously fruitful. He stated that never did a sinner resist after being touched by him with a Rosary.

But because he encountered great opposition from religious authorities—in particular, being forbidden by the Bishop of Poitiers to preach in

his diocese—he decided to travel to Rome to ask the Holy Father if he was doing God's Will and whether he should continue as before. St. Louis De Montfort walked to Rome—a thousand miles—and put his case to Pope Clement XI. The Pope told him to continue his traveling missionary work and named him Missionary Apostolic, but told him always to be sure to work under obedience to the diocesan authorities.

One of St. Louis De Montfort's greatest problems was the opposition he encountered from propagators of the Jansenist heresy, which was then very active in France. The Jansenists spread an atmosphere of harshness and moral rigorism, claiming that human nature was radically corrupted by Original Sin (as opposed to the Catholic teaching that human nature is still essentially good, though fallen, and although it has suffered a darkening of the intellect and weakening of the will). The Jansenists denied that God's mercy is available to all, and they allowed only infrequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and only after long and severe preparation—with Holy Communion being looked upon as a reward rather than a remedy. Also, they taught that God should always be addressed with fear and trembling. These tenets resembled those of Calvinism.

Although Jansenism had been condemned by the Church twice even before St. Louis De Montfort's birth, its teachings continued to spread and to influence people for a century. In contrast, St. Louis De Montfort preached confidence in Mary and union with her Divine Son.

St. Louis De Montfort founded two religious orders: the Daughters of Wisdom, begun in 1703 from a number of poor and afflicted girls at the Hospital of Poitiers, where he was temporary chaplain, and the Missionaries of the Company of Mary (Montfort Fathers and Brothers), founded in 1715. The Brothers of St. Gabriel, a teaching order, also claim St. Louis De Montfort as their spiritual father.

St. Louis De Montfort left several writings, the most famous being *The Secret of the Rosary*, *True Devotion to Mary*, and *The Secret of Mary*. These books were based on sermons he had given when traveling around France. By spreading devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Louis De Montfort was teaching souls to love the devil's great enemy. (In *True Devotion to Mary*, he states that the devil fears Mary more than all angels and men, and in a sense more than God Himself.) At the Saint's beatification investigation, many witnesses testified that during his life they had heard struggles between him and the devil, including the sound

of fist blows and the swish of whips.

St. Louis De Montfort exhausted his great physical strength by his apostolic labors. On his deathbed in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, at age 43, he kissed the crucifix and a statue of the Blessed Mother. Apparently speaking to the devil, he exclaimed: "In vain do you attack me; I am between Jesus and Mary! I have finished my course: All is over. I shall sin no more!" Then he died peacefully on April 28, 1716. His feast day is April 28, the day of his birth in Heaven. St. Louis De Montfort's writings were examined by the Holy See, which pronounced that there was nothing in them to hinder his beatification and canonization. He was canonized in 1947.

The
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OF MARY

*“Mary is the admirable echo of God.
When we say, ‘Mary,’ she answers, ‘God.’
When, with St. Elizabeth, we call her
‘Blessed,’ she glorifies God.”*

—St. Louis De Montfort

—Part I—

THE SECRET OF MARY

DOCTRINE OF THE
HOLY SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION

A SECRET OF SANCTITY

Conditions

1. Predestinate soul, here is a secret the Most High has taught me, which I have not been able to find in any book, old or new.¹ I confide it to you, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, on condition:

1° That you communicate it only to those who deserve it by their prayers, their alms-deeds and mortifications, by the persecutions they suffer, by their detachment from the world and their zeal for the salvation of souls.²

1. The holy slavery of Jesus in Mary was known, no doubt, before St. Louis De Montfort's time; yet he rightly calls this devotion *a secret*: first, because there lies in it, as in all things supernatural, a hidden treasure which grace alone can help us to find and utilize; secondly, because there are but few souls that enter into the spirit of this devotion and go beyond its exterior practices. Again, as no one had as yet thoroughly explained this devotion nor shaped it into a definite method of spiritual life, St. Louis De Montfort could say of a truth, "I have not been able to find this secret in any book, old or new."

2° That you make use of it for your personal sanctification and salvation, for this secret works its effect in a soul only in proportion to the use made of it. Beware, then, of remaining inactive while possessing my secret; it would turn into a poison and be your condemnation.³

3° That you thank God all the days of your life for the grace He has given you to know a secret you do not deserve to know.

2. These words show how highly St. Louis De Montfort esteemed this devotion. As there are professional secrets committed only to men who know how to appreciate and exploit them, so this secret of sanctity must be entrusted only to such souls as truly concern themselves with their perfection; and following the recommendation of Our Lord not to profane holy things (*Matt.* 7:6), De Montfort preserves this secret with a holy jealousy that denotes respect for divine things.

3. "This solemn warning of the Saint is an application of the Parable of the Talents reported in *Matthew* 25. The unfaithful servant buried the talent he received and was condemned by the Master for his culpable negligence and for his disdain for the gifts of God. It is also a condemnation of the passivity or inertia taught by the false spirituality of Quietism or Semiquietism that existed in St. De Montfort's time and that was condemned by Rome. The Saint does not mean that one is obliged to follow his plan of spiritual life in order to be saved, for in his *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary*, which is a development of the *Secret of Mary*, he explicitly says that we can attain divine union by other roads, but that his method is an EASY, SHORT, PERFECT and SECURE WAY that leads us to union with Our Lord."

As you go on making use of this secret in the ordinary actions of your life, you will comprehend its value and its excellence, which at first you will not fully understand because of your many and grievous sins and because of your secret attachment to self.⁴

2. Before you read any further, lest you should be carried away by a too eager and natural desire to know this truth, kneel down and say devoutly the *Ave Maris Stella*⁵ and the *Veni Creator*,⁶ in order to understand and appreciate this divine mystery.⁷

4. These words contain three important counsels: 1) This devotion must be practiced in the ordinary course of life as well as in the most important actions. 2) Only when we steadily persevere in it, and not merely try it for a few weeks, shall we be able to judge of its excellence and know its fruit. 3) It is necessary to remove all hindrances to this devotion, namely, sin and secret affection for that which is sinful.

5. Page 63.

6. Page 61.

7. Let us not make light of this recommendation. It is an important one. If many persons do not become acquainted with the secret of this devotion, it is because they forget that in order to be allowed to enter this "Garden Enclosed," as Mary is called, they must entreat the Holy Ghost, "who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (*1 Cor.* 2: 10), to grant them that favor. (See *The Tree of Life*, p. 48; also *Prayer to Jesus*, p. 80.)

As I have not much time for writing, nor you for reading, I shall say everything as briefly as possible.

Note: The numerals in bold type were added by the Montfort Fathers to facilitate reference to this book; numerals which St. Louis De Montfort included in the text are indicated by a degree sign (for example, 1°).—*Publisher*, 1998.

I

OUR SANCTIFICATION

NECESSITY OF SANCTIFYING OURSELVES

The Will of God

3. Faithful soul, living image of God, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, it is the will of God that you be holy like Him in this life and glorious like Him in the next. Your sure vocation is the acquisition of the holiness of God, and unless all your thoughts and words and actions, all the sufferings and events of your life tend to that end, you are resisting God by not doing that for which He has created you and is now preserving you.¹ Oh, what an admirable work! To change that which is dust into light, to make pure that which

1. Those who begin this devotion are here reminded of the recommendation of the masters of the spiritual life, namely, that the interior life must be their chief concern. They must be determined to obtain good results bought with the price of sacrifice. Compare these words with St . Louis De Montfort's advice on cultivating *The Tree of Life*, page 48.

is unclean, holy that which is sinful, to make the creature like its Creator, man like God! Admirable work, I repeat, but difficult in itself, and impossible to mere nature; only God by His grace, by His abundant and extraordinary grace, can accomplish it. Even the creation of the whole world is not so great a masterpiece as this.

Means of Sanctification

4. Predestinate soul, how are you to do it? What means will you choose to reach the height to which God calls you? The means of salvation and sanctification are known to all; they are laid down in the Gospel, explained by the masters of the spiritual life, practiced by the Saints, and necessary to all who wish to be saved and to attain perfection. They are humility of heart, continual prayer, mortification in all things, abandonment to Divine Providence and conformity to the will of God.

5. To practice all these means of salvation and sanctification, the grace of God is absolutely necessary. No one can doubt that God gives His grace to all, in a more or less abundant measure. I say in a more or less abundant measure, for God, although infinitely good, does not give equal grace to all, yet to each soul He gives sufficient grace.

The faithful soul will, with great grace, perform a great action, and with less grace a lesser action. It is the value and the excellence of the grace bestowed by God and corresponded to by the soul that gives to our actions their value and their excellence. These principles are certain.

An Easy Means

6. It all comes to this, then: that you should find an easy means for obtaining from God the grace necessary to make you holy; and this means I wish to make known to you. Now, I say that to find this grace of God, *we must find Mary*.²

2. This is characteristic of St. Louis De Montfort's devotion and makes it a special method of spiritual life.