# TRUE DEVOTION to MARY with PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION

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# TRUE DEVOTION to MARY with PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION

#### SAINT LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT

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*Edited and Annotated by* The Fathers of the Company of Mary

"Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be because Mary has been up to this time unknown." —St. Louis De Montfort



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"The more we honor the Blessed Virgin, the more we honor Jesus Christ, because we honor Mary only that we may the more perfectly honor Jesus, since we go to her only as the way by which we are to find the end we are seeking, which is Jesus." —St. Louis De Montfort

### FROM THE POPES

*Pope Pius IX* declared that St. Louis De Montfort's devotion to Mary was the best and most acceptable form of devotion to Our Lady.

*Pope Leo XIII* granted a plenary indulgence to those who make St. Louis De Montfort's act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin. On his deathbed he renewed the act himself and invoked the heavenly aid of St. Louis De Montfort, whom he had beatified in 1888.

*Pope St. Pius X*: "I heartily recommend *True Devotion to The Blessed Virgin*, so admirably written by Blessed De Montfort, and to all who read it grant the Apostolic Benediction."

Pope Benedict XV: "A book of high authority and unction."

Pope Pius XI: "I have practiced this devotion ever since my youth."

*Pope Pius XII*: "The greatest force behind all his [St. Louis De Montfort's] apostolic ministry and his great secret for attracting and winning souls for Jesus was his devotion to Mary." (*From Canonization address, July 20, 1947*).

Pope Paul VI: "We are convinced without any doubt that devotion to Our Lady is essentially joined with devotion to Christ, that it assures a firmness of conviction to faith in Him and in His Church, a vital adherence to Him and to His Church which, without devotion to Mary, would be impoverished and compromised."

*Pope John Paul II*: "The reading of this book was a decisive turningpoint in my life. I say 'turning-point,' but in fact it was a long inner journey. . . . This 'perfect devotion' is indispensable to anyone who means to give himself without reserve to Christ and to the work of redemption." "It is from Montfort that I have taken my motto: '*Totus tuus*' ('I am all thine'). Someday I'll have to tell you Montfortians how I discovered De Montfort's *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, and how often I had to reread it to understand it."

*Vatican Council II*: "The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. All her saving influence on men originates not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it." ". . . the practices and exercises of devotion to her recommended by the Church in the course of the centuries [are to] be treasured. . . ." (*Lumen Gentium*: 60, 67).

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### THE CONFRATERNITY OF MARY,299QUEEN OF ALL HEARTS

## ABOUT ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

St. Louis Marie Grignion 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—see no. 52). 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 Sainte-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 a Saint in 1947.

### ABOUT TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

St. Louis De Montfort himself prophesied regarding *True Devotion* to Mary: "I clearly foresee that raging beasts shall come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little writing and him whom the Holy Ghost has made use of to write it—or at least to smother it in the darkness and silence of a coffer, that it may not appear. They shall even attack and persecute those who shall read it and carry it out in practice." (T.D., no. 114). This prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Throughout the whole 18th century, the spiritual sons of St. Louis De Montfort were persecuted by the Jansenists for their zeal in spreading this devotion; the precious manuscript of De Montfort remained hidden during the troubled times of the French Revolution and was brought to light only in the year 1842, when it was found in a chest of old books by a Montfort Father.

The title page from *True Devotion* was missing, and the book has been variously known as *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, and *True Devotion to Mary*—the phrase "true devotion" being drawn from chapter III of Part 1, wherein St. Louis De Montfort distinguishes between true devotion and false devotion to Mary. Over the years, however, the phrase "true devotion" has come to be used in reference to the *Perfect* Devotion to Mary which is expounded on in Part 2 of the book. St. Louis De Montfort was the one to whom it was given to explain thoroughly the path "to Jesus through Mary" and to shape it into a definite method of spiritual life. He does not propose some special or "extra" prayers, but rather, a devotion which essentially consists of one single act which, under various forms and conditions, we apply to our whole life, both interior and exterior. This devotion leads to a permanent disposition of living and acting habitually in dependence on Mary; it embraces one's entire life, not just one's prayer times or specifically religious acts.

St. Louis De Montfort knew that Mary is the pathway to her Son, leading souls quickly and securely to Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom.

Inflamed with holy love St. Louis De Montfort wrote many poems to the Divine Wisdom, including the following fervent lines:

Divine Wisdom, I love Thee unto folly. I am Thy lover. Thou alone in this world I seek, Thou alone I desire. I am a man gone mad with love, Forever chasing Thee.

Tell me who Thou art, For I am half blind. I can discern only That Thou art a secret I must fathom. Show Thyself fully to my soul Which dies for love of Thee.

Where dost Thou live, Wisdom Divine? Must I cross continents or seas To find Thee, Or fly across the skies? I am ready to go wherever Thou art, Not counting the costs, to possess Thee.

To Jesus through Mary: This is the sublime secret of holiness set forth by St. Louis De Montfort in *True Devotion to Mary*—a book which ranks among the greatest spiritual masterpieces ever penned, a book which seems to have been inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself. May this book lead many souls to a deep and faithful love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### PREFACE by Cardinal O'Connell

The doctrine of St. Louis Marie Grignion De Montfort needs neither introduction nor explanation to those who are conversant with the spiritual life. It is well known that the practice of the Perfect Devotion to the Blessed Virgin which he taught is widespread among priests, religious and even lay people throughout the world. It is gratifying to note that its beneficial influence is felt in many sections of our own country.

This widespread propagation of the Perfect Devotion in many respects resembles the growth of the mustard seed spoken of in the Gospel: It had a humble beginning, grew without great exterior display, and, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, spread throughout the entire Church. This new edition of the manual will contribute toward making it still better known. It is my happy privilege to recommend it to everyone, following therein the example of our late Holy Father of blessed memory, Pius X.

I have known this form of devotion for many years and I have never hesitated to recommend it to those in whom the grace of God seemed to be at work, drawing them toward a deeper and more intense spiritual life. As Rector of the American College in Rome, I proposed and taught it to the seminarians as an excellent means of acquiring the holiness of their priestly ideal. It was with my encouragement that there was formed among them a "Blessed De Montfort Society." The Legion of Mary, which we have heartily encouraged in our diocese with such happy results, derives from the spiritual teachings of Montfort to such an extent that he is said to be the "tutor of the Legion" (Handbook, p. 51). Several confraternities of Mary, Queen of All Hearts, are at present propagating the Perfect Devotion in various centers throughout the United States.

The more we reflect, the more we realize that the mission of Christianity is to take possession of man in his entirety in order to transform him into a soul worthy of Heaven. Hence, Pius XI, in speaking of Christian Education, says that its "proper and immediate end is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism." In this work of transformation, a definite part has been assigned by God to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that of leading souls to Jesus Christ, and of keeping them in His love.

Hence, the role of Mary, Mother of God and Mediatrix of All Grace, ought not to be overlooked. Indeed, the recognition of the high dignity granted her by God leads her clients toward a richer understanding of the mysteries of Christ and a fuller participation in the fruits of the Redemption.

Our Holy Mother the Church has recognized the merit of the *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary* in conferring upon its author the honor of beatification. She has approved and enriched with numerous indulgences the Confraternity of Mary, Queen of All Hearts. It is our conviction that a wider diffusion of this work "of great unction and authority"—to use the words of His Holiness, Benedict XV—will draw souls from every walk of life to a greater interior perfection and a fuller development of Christian piety.

h. Card Connell.

December 8, 1940

### FATHER FABER'S PREFACE

It was in the year 1846 or 1847, at St. Wilfrid's, that I first studied the life and spirit of the Venerable Grignion De Montfort; and now, after more than fifteen years, it may be allowable to say that those who take him for their master will hardly be able to name a saint or ascetical writer to whose grace and spirit their mind will be more subject than to his. We may not yet call him saint; but the process of his beatification is so far and so favorably advanced that we may not have long to wait before he will be raised upon the altars of the Church.

There are few men in the eighteenth century who have more strongly upon them the marks of the man of Providence than this Eliaslike missionary of the Holy Ghost and of Mary. His entire life was such an exhibition of the holy folly of the Cross that his biographers unite in always classing him with St. Simon Salo and St. Philip Neri. Clement XI made him a missionary apostolic in France, in order that he might spend his life in fighting against Jansenism, so far as it affected the salvation of souls. Since the Apostolical Epistles it would be hard to find words that burn so marvelously as the twelve pages of his prayer for the Missionaries of the Holy Ghost, to which I earnestly refer all those who find it hard to keep up under their numberless trials the first fires of the love of souls.

He was at once persecuted and venerated everywhere. His amount of work, like that of St. Anthony of Padua, is incredible, and indeed, inexplicable. He wrote some spiritual treatises which have already had a remarkable influence on the Church during the few years they have been known, and bid fair to have a much wider influence in years to come. His preaching, his writing and his conversation were all impregnated with prophecy and with anticipations of the later ages of the Church. He comes forward like another St. Vincent Ferrer, as if on the days bordering on the Last Judgment, and proclaims that he brings an authentic message from God about the greater honor and wider knowledge and more prominent love of His Blessed Mother, and her connection with the second advent of her Son. He founded two religious congregations—one of men and one of women—which have been quite extraordinarily successful; and yet he died at the age of forty-three in 1716, after only sixteen years of priesthood.

It was on the 12th of May, 1853, that the decree was pronounced at Rome declaring his writing to be exempt from all error which could be a bar to his canonization. In this very treatise on the veritable devotion to our Blessed Lady, he has recorded this 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 made use of to write it; or at least to envelop it in the silence of a coffer, in order that it may not appear." Nevertheless, he prophesies both its appearance and its success. All this was fulfilled to the letter. The author died in 1716, and the treatise was found by accident by one of the priests of his congregation of St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre in 1842. The existing superior was able to attest the handwriting as being that of the venerable founder, and the autograph was sent to Rome to be examined in the process of canonization.

All those who are likely to read this book love God, and lament that they do not love Him more; all desire something for His glory—the spread of some good work, the success of some devotion, the coming of some good time. One man has been striving for years to overcome a particular fault, and has not succeeded. Another mourns, and almost wonders while he mourns, that so few of his relations and friends have been converted to the Faith. One grieves that he has not devotion enough; another that he has a cross to carry which is a peculiarly impossible cross to him; while a third has domestic troubles and family unhappinesses which feel almost incompatible with his salvation; and for all these things prayer appears to bring so little remedy.

But what is the remedy that is wanted? What is the remedy indicated by God Himself? If we may rely on the disclosures of the saints, it is an immense increase of devotion to our Blessed Lady; but, remember, nothing short of an immense one. Here in England, Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It is frightened out of its wits by the sneers of heresy. It is always invoking human respect and carnal prudence, wishing to make Mary so little of a Mary that Protestants may feel at ease about her. Its ignorance of theology makes it unsubstantial and unworthy. It is not the prominent characteristic of our religion which it ought to be. It has no faith in itself. Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls which might be saints wither and dwindle; that the Sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelized.

Jesus is obscured because Mary is kept in the background. Thousands of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable, unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is pressing for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to His Blessed Mother. I cannot think of a higher work or a broader vocation for anyone than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the Venerable Grignion De Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Oh, if Mary were but known, there would be no coldness to Jesus then! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much more wonderful would be our faith, and how different would our Communions be! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much happier, how much holier, how much less worldly should we be, and how much more should we be living images of our sole Lord and Saviour, her dearest and most blessed Son!

I have translated the whole treatise myself, and have taken great pains with it, and have been scrupulously faithful. At the same time, I would venture to warn the reader that one perusal will be very far from making him master of it. If I may dare to say so, there is a growing feeling of something inspired and supernatural about it, as we go on studying it; and with that we cannot help experiencing, after repeated readings of it, that its novelty never seems to wear off, nor its fullness to be diminished, nor the fresh fragrance and sensible fire of its unction ever to abate. May the Holy Ghost, the Divine Zealot of Jesus and Mary, deign to give a new blessing to this work in England; and may He please to console us quickly with the canonization of this new apostle and fiery missionary of His most dear and most Immaculate spouse, and still more with the speedy coming of that great age of the Church which is to be the Age of Mary!

> F. W. Faber Priest of the Oratory Presentation of Our Blessed Lady November 21, 1862

#### —PART ONE—

### DEVOTION TO THE Blessed Virgin Mary

Necessity

Fundamental Truths

Choice of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin



PRELIMINARY REMARKS

#### by St. Louis De Montfort

1. It was through the most holy Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that He has to reign in the world.

2. Mary was singularly hidden during her life. It is on this account that the Holy Ghost and the Church call her *Alma Mater*—"Mother secret and hidden."<sup>1</sup> Her humility was so profound that she had no inclination on earth more powerful or more constant than that of hiding herself, from herself as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God only.

3. He heard her prayers when she begged to be hidden, to be humbled and to be treated as in all respects poor and of no account. He took pleasure in hiding her from all human creatures, in her conception, in her birth, in her life, in her mysteries, and in her resurrection and Assumption. Even her parents did not know her, and the angels often asked one another: "Who is that?" (*Cant.* 3:6; 8:5) because the Most High either had hidden her from them, or if He did reveal anything, it was nothing compared to what He kept undisclosed.

4. God the Father consented that she should work no miracle, at least no public one, during her life, although He had given her the power to do so. God the Son consented that she should hardly ever speak, though He had communicated His wisdom to her. God the Holy Ghost, though she was His faithful spouse, consented that His Apostles and Evangelists should speak very little of her, and no more than was necessary to make Jesus Christ known.

5. Mary is the excellent masterpiece of the Most High, the knowledge and possession of which He has reserved to Himself. Mary is the admirable Mother of the Son, who took pleasure in humbling and concealing her during her life in order to favor her humility, calling her by the name of "woman" (*Jn.* 2:4; 19:26), as if she were a stranger, although in His heart He esteemed and loved her above all angels and all men. Mary is the "sealed fountain" (*Cant.* 4:12), the faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, to whom He alone has entrance. Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity, where God dwells more magnificently and more divinely than in any other place in the universe, not excepting His dwelling between the Cherubim and Seraphim. Nor is any creature, no matter how pure, allowed to enter into that sanctuary except by a great and special privilege.

6. I say with the Saints, the divine<sup>2</sup> Mary is the terrestrial paradise of the New Adam, where He was made flesh by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to work there incomprehensible marvels. She is the grand and divine world of God, where there are beauties and treasures unspeakable. She is the magnificence of the Most High, where He hid, as in her bosom, His only Son, and in Him all that is most excellent and most precious. Oh, what grand and hidden things that mighty God has wrought in this admirable creature, as she herself had to acknowledge, in spite of her profound humility: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me." (*Lk.* 1:49). The world knows them not, because it is both incapable and unworthy of such knowledge.

7. The saints have said admirable things of this holy city of God; and, as they themselves avow, they were never more eloquent and more content than when they spoke of her. Yet, after all they have said, they cry out that the height of her merits, which she has raised up to the throne of the Divinity, cannot be fully seen; that the breadth of her charity, which is broader than the earth, is in truth immeasurable; that the length of her power, which she exercises even over God Himself, is incomprehensible; and finally, that the depth of her humility, and of all her virtues and graces, is an abyss which never can be sounded. O height incomprehensible! O breadth unspeakable! O length immeasurable! O abyss impenetrable!

8. Every day, from one end of the earth to the other, in the highest heights of the heavens and in the profoundest depths of the abysses, everything preaches, everything publishes, the admirable Mary! The nine choirs of Angels, men of all ages, sexes, conditions and religions, the good and the bad, nay, even the devils themselves, willingly or unwillingly, are compelled by the force of truth to call her "Blessed." St. Bonaventure tells us that all the Angels in Heaven cry out incessantly to her: "Holy, holy, holy Mary, Mother of God and Virgin";<sup>3</sup> and that they offer to her, millions and millions of times a day, the Angelical Salutation, *Ave Maria*, prostrating themselves before her, and begging of her in her graciousness to honor them with some of her commands. Even St. Michael, as St. Augustine says, although the prince of the heavenly court, is the most zealous in honoring her and causing her to be honored, and is always anxiously awaiting the honor of going at her bidding to render service to some one of her servants.<sup>4</sup>

9. The whole earth is full of her glory, especially among Christians, by whom she is taken as the protectress of many kingdoms, provinces, dioceses and cities. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God under her name. There is not a church without an altar in her honor, not a country nor a canton where there are not some miraculous images where all sorts of evils are cured and all sorts of good gifts obtained. Who can count the confraternities and congregations in her honor? How many religious orders have been founded in her name and under her protection? How many members in these confraternities, and how many religious men and women in all these orders, who publish her praises and confess her mercies! There is not a little child who, as it lisps the Hail Mary, does not praise her. There is scarcely a sinner who, even in his obduracy, has not some spark of confidence in her. Nay, the very devils in Hell respect her while they fear her.

10. After that, we must cry out with the saints: "*De Maria numquam satis*"—"Of Mary there is never enough." We have not yet praised, exalted, honored, loved and served Mary as we ought. She deserves still more praise, still more respect, still more love, and still more service.

11. After that, we must say with the Holy Ghost: "All the glory of the King's daughter is within." (*Ps.* 44:14). The outward glory which Heaven and earth rival each other in laying at her feet is as nothing in comparison with that which she receives within from the Creator and which is not known by creatures, who in their littleness are unable to penetrate the secret of secrets of the King.

12. After that, we must cry out with the Apostle, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart comprehended" (*1 Cor.* 2:9) the beauties, the grandeurs, the excellences of Mary—the miracle of the miracles<sup>5</sup> of grace, of nature and of glory. "If you wish to comprehend the Mother," says a saint,<sup>6</sup> "comprehend the Son; for she is the worthy Mother of God." "Here let every tongue be mute."

13. It is with a particular joy that my heart has dictated what I have just written, in order to show that the divine Mary has been up to this time unknown,<sup>7</sup> and that this is one of the reasons that Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be. If then, as is certain, the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ are to come into the world, they will be but a necessary consequence of the knowledge and the kingdom of the most holy Virgin Mary, who brought Him into the world for the first time, and will make His second advent full of splendor.

#### NOTES

<sup>1.</sup> Antiphon to the Blessed Virgin for Advent; also the hymn, Ave Maris Stella.

<sup>2. &</sup>quot;... the word 'divine' may be used without attributing the nature of divinity to the person or thing thus qualified. We speak of our own prayers, whether addressed to God or to His saints, as a 'divine service.' The Psalmist speaks of us all as being gods and sons of the Most High; and yet no one takes offense, because the sense given to the words uttered is understood. Mary may be called 'divine' because divinely chosen for the divine office

of Mother" of a divine Person, Jesus Christ. (Cardinal Vaughan, Preface to the English edition of *True Devotion*).

- 3. St. Bonaventure, Psalt. majus B. V., Hymn. instar Ambrosiani.
- 4. Quoted by St. Bonaventure, Speculum B. V., lect. III, no. 5.
- 5. St. John Damascene, Oratio Ia de Nativ. B. V.
- 6. St. Eucherius.
- 7. Meaning insufficiently known, as the immediate context shows: "Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be."