



*Living the Marian Life: Interior Devotion and Total Consecration*

The Marian life focuses primarily on the Trinity: the Father's will, the Son's incarnation and the Spirit's action. It centers on Mary in so much as She is the perfect creature, first disciple and the model and type of the Church. It is in Her "yes" to God that our "yes" is made possible. It is through Her intercession that we "poor banished children of Eve" are able to respond to God's grace and invitation.

God as pure act receives nothing from creatures that He has not first given to them. Creation can only receive and respond to God's initiative. In created persons, receptivity is not meant to be passive, but a free consent and cooperation with God's will and action. He wants our loving assent not an inert submission and still less a forced compliance. He is our Master and Lord by nature, but He would have us be His children, friends and spouse.

But as we all know only too well, Adam and Eve abused their freedom and plunged the human race into slavery, sin and death. Yet, even in the face of this rebellion, God's merciful plan to save the human family was revealed in God's curse of the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will strike at your head while you strike at his heel (Gen 3:15)."

*The Marian Life*

This Protoevangelium begins to be fulfilled in the free unrestricted "fiat" that Mary is able to make because of God's gift of Her Immaculate Conception. Because of Her sinlessness she is able to say yes to God's will in the deepest fiber of her being and thus to become the place where the Word is made flesh. She makes herself wholly available to whatever God wills for Her. Even though She doesn't know where this will lead, She gives God limitless permission to do whatever He chooses with Her. When we say yes to God's will we do not know what form it will take, but we know it will entail self-denial and a carrying of the Cross in whatever form God has willed for each of us. This taking up of suffering is out of love for God and for the restoration of our relationship with Him.

This childlike trust and courageous assent makes our fallen natures quail. Yet it is exactly what we promised to do in our baptismal vows... and what we have each failed to do. Interior devotion and total consecration to Jesus through Mary consists precisely in renewing these vows in Mary's hands and with Her help to keep them.

Mary is Mother of God and of the Church because she is humble and empty of



self. She is God's ark and dwelling place, His habitation, because she does not cling to "what is hers," but rather, gives herself unreservedly, opening herself wholly to God's will for her. Thus, she becomes Mother of God and mother of Christ in baptized souls. Interior devotion to Mary means taking Her as our Mother so that the Holy Spirit can form Christ in us. Mary is void of ego. Praising her only causes her to praise God. When she says that her soul magnifies God, she does not mean she is adding anything to God's infinite greatness, but that she is transparent to the great graces and works that He is doing in and through her. She does not cling to her own fame or person, but lets herself be what she truly is, God's image. Totally consecrating ourselves to Jesus through Mary allows her to communicate her spirit of humility to us, thus conforming us to Her Son, who is meek and humble of heart.

Mary is the first disciple of Her Son, Jesus. After the intimacy of the hidden years, she appears to be demoted to just one of many disciples. Sometimes, Jesus seems even harsh to His Mother during his public life. However, Christ is preparing her to stand with Him at His ultimate sacrifice of the Cross. In giving everything to God through Her, she will purify our self-gift, adding her own virtues and merits to it, making our offering acceptable to the Father and uniting it to the perfect sacrifice of the Son

*True Devotion*

As St. Louis de Montfort establishes in the beginning of his work *True Devotion*, Mary as crea-

ture is of herself nothing. God is omnipotent and in need of no one, but by His free and unchanging choice He has made Himself dependent on Mary for His plan.

*The five principles of true devotion*

The first principle that de Montfort establishes is that the ultimate end of our devotion to Mary is Christ Jesus, Our Savior, True God and true man. He alone has the fullness of Divinity, grace, virtue and perfection. He alone is Our Teacher, Lord, Head, Physician, Shepherd, Way, Truth, Life and Ultimate Happiness. His Name is the only Name by which we are saved. He alone is the Foundation for salvation, perfection and glory.

"Through Him, with him and in Him, we can do all things and render all honor and glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit..."(61).

Devotion to Mary establishes perfect devotion to Jesus. By Her very nature she has an inseparable union with Christ. She is the pure, safe, and secure way to Christ because Mary wills what Christ wills (63). "Lord ... let me share your feelings of gratitude, esteem, respect and love for your holy Mother. I can then love and glorify You all the more, because I will be imitating and following you more closely." (65)

The second principle that St. Louis teaches is slavery to Jesus and Mary (in imitation of Christ's



self-emptying Phil. 2:5-11; Lk 1:38)

“From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says (1 Cor 6:20; 12:27), that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves, for He bought us at an infinite price – the shedding of His precious blood. Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, but baptism made us in very truth slaves of Jesus. We must therefore live, work and die for the sole purpose of bringing forth fruit for Him, glorifying Him in our body and letting Him reign in our soul...” (68).

Americans might find the topic of slavery repellent, however this concept is scriptural (cf. Phil 2:6-11) There are three kinds of slavery: by nature, by conquest and finally by love, namely by the surrender of our will. In ¶ 71 of *True Devotion*, St. Louis compares being a slave versus being a servant. Being a slave of love entails a complete gift of self. One is totally disinterested, that is, not looking for what is in it for one’s self. This kind of slavery is a permanent commitment, establishing total dependence upon the Beloved and an eternal service to Him.

“... Nothing makes a person belong more completely to Jesus and his holy Mother than voluntary slavery” (72).

“...We can ... become the loving slaves of our Blessed Lady in order to become more perfect slaves of Jesus. Mary is the means our Lord chose to come to us and she is also the means we should choose to go to Him ... Mary’s strongest inclination is to unite us to Jesus, Her Son, and Her Son’s strongest wish is that we come to Him

through his Blessed Mother” (75).

The third principle is that total consecration through Mary purifies our self-gift to Christ. Our best actions are tainted and infected by original sin and our own actual sins. Mary purges the pride and selfishness by helping us to be aware of this contamination by the light of the Holy Spirit. She leads us in a daily death to inordinate self-love and self-will in order for us to bear spiritual fruit. Total consecration and holy slavery to Jesus through Mary is the Marian devotion that most leads us to this dying to self and filling us with God.

Fourth, it is more humble to imitate Christ by going to Jesus by the way He came to us: Mary.

Finally, Mary is the secure way to persevere in growth in the spiritual life. It is difficult for us to keep any graces received from God, because of our own weakness and fickleness, the devils’ constant effort to steal them from us and the world’s excessive corrupting influence. If we make this entrustment of graces to Mary, she will keep them as her own treasure and a sacred trust in justice. Her singular fidelity to God will keep our graces secure because she is unstained by sin.

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