

Total Consecration and the Brown Scapular

June 23, 2014

While we, students and teachers, have been on summer vacation for about a month, it was just two days ago that we marked the first day of summer. Summer has its own distinct character: baseball, swimming, camping, cook-outs, ice cream and family vacations. I could imagine that everyone in this room has had some experience of a family trip whether it was during the summer or during another part of the year, whether it was to Europe or to the lake. This time spent all together on a journey has a way of embedding itself into our memory. From the times of getting lost to the various games played in the car (like the license tag game), from statements like “are we there yet?” to “don’t make me stop this car!”, each one of us can make a connection to these experiences.

If I told you that I had something for you that would ensure that your next family trip was the smoothest, shortest, most perfect and surest way to your destination, I believe I would have a line of people ready to sign up (and probably a few people incredulous at my claim). True, I do not have any gadget or gizmo, no fail-proof GPS or map program that will make your next excursion painless as mentioned but I do have something else to offer you for another journey. We know that this life is a journey, a journey to Heaven where we will be united with God for all eternity. More so than any earthly journey, we want this trip to go without any difficulties or dangers. We desire union with God more than any trip to Rome (as exciting as that sounds); otherwise, you would not be here on a nice summer evening.

So, I want to amend my offer. Instead of offering you the smoothest, shortest, most perfect and surest way to your next vacation destination, I want to offer you the smoothest, shortest, most perfect and surest way to Heaven, our true

destination. This way is Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary according to St. Louis Marie de Montfort. Tonight, I am going to talk about what it means to be consecrated, how effective Marian consecration is and one of the signs of our consecration.

First, what does it mean to be consecrated. When something, like a chalice is consecrated, it means that it has been made holy, sacred in order to hold the Precious Blood of Jesus. When someone is consecrated, like a Sister, it means that she has been set apart to belong totally to God. The bread and wine are consecrated at Mass and become the Body and Blood of Christ. In our Baptism, we, as Christians, have been anointed with the sacred chrism which means we have been consecrated as members of the priesthood of the laity. We have been made children of God anointed for His service. To make an act of consecration reminds us that we are devoted to God, totally given to His service, and belong completely to Him.

To give ourselves totally to God for His service can seem overwhelming. How can we do a sufficient job when we are so sinful? We do not need to fear; we have a Mother who wishes to help us. We know that Mary was given to us as our Mother when Jesus was dying on the Cross. Mary takes her role as our Mother very seriously. St. John Vianney said that “Mary will not rest until all her children are in Heaven.” Imagine what will happen when we ask Mary to help us give ourselves completely to God; she will not disappoint us. Fr. Gaitley in his work, [33 Days to Morning Glory](#) writes, “Marian consecration (or consecrating oneself to Jesus through Mary) basically means giving Mary our full permission (or as much permission as we can) to complete her motherly task in us, which is to form us into other Christs”

(26). St. Louis de Montfort says, “God the Son wishes to form himself, and, in a manner of speaking, become incarnate every day in his members through his dear Mother” (n. 31).

Not only is Mary our Mother but she is Jesus’ mother. Jesus came to this earth through Mary and he wants to continue to come to souls through Mary. St. Louis Marie de Montfort writes, “It was through the blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world” (n. 1) and, again, “The Most High God came down to us in a perfect way through the humble Virgin Mary, without losing anything of his divinity or holiness. It is likewise through Mary that we poor creatures must ascend to almighty God in a perfect manner without having anything to fear” (n. 157). If we ever think that we cannot reach God, we should have no fear for we have been given assistance in so many ways.

As I stated earlier, we were consecrated at our Baptism and this consecration of St. Louis Marie de Montfort includes a renewal of our Baptismal promises. When one makes the “Act of Consecration” one prays:

But I must confess that I have not kept the vows and promises which I made to you so solemnly at my baptism. I have not fulfilled my obligations, and I do not deserve to be called your child or even your loving slave...I, an unfaithful sinner, renew and ratify today through you my baptismal promises. I renounce for ever Satan, his empty promises and his evil designs, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life, and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now (de Montfort, 141-2).

So this consecration fits well into our life of faith, reminding us of our identity as Christians. Just as we were slaves of the devil before our baptism so now through this consecration we become slaves of Mary, handing over everything to her to do with as she decides.

What does this mean that we have given over everything to Mary, that we are her slaves. De Montfort writes,

This devotion consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. It requires us to give: (1) Our body with its senses and members; (2) Our soul with its faculties; (3) Our present material possessions and all we shall acquire in the future; (4) Our interior and spiritual possessions, that is, our merits, virtues and good actions of the past, the present and the future. In other words, we give her all that we possess both in our natural life and in our spiritual life, as well as everything we shall acquire in the future in the order of nature, of grace, and of glory in heaven (n. 121).

Now we may think that we are giving too much to Mary. Let us look at a few points.

She is sinless; so when we give her our good works she purifies them, adorning them with her own merits and virtues before giving them to God.

St. Louis de Montfort uses the example,

It is as if a poor peasant, wishing to win the friendship and favour of the king, were to go to the queen and give her an apple – his only possession – for her to offer it to the king. The queen, accepting the peasant’s humble gift, puts it on a

beautiful golden dish and presents it to the king on behalf of the peasant. The apple in itself would not be a gift worthy of a king, but presented by the queen in person on a dish of gold, it becomes fit for any king (n. 147).

When we perform good works, many times we do them for ourselves and not for God's glory. When we give them to Mary, she prepares them for us. "She purifies them of every taint of self-love and of that unconscious attachment to creatures which slips unnoticed into our best actions. Her hands have never been known to be idle or uncreative. They purify everything they touch" (de Montfort, n. 146).

So Mary purifies our gifts. But more importantly in giving ourselves to Jesus through Mary we are going to Jesus by the same way He came to us, through Mary. Let us think of the Annunciation. God sent the archangel Gabriel to ask a 16 year old young woman to be the Mother of the second person of the Blessed Trinity. She did all of the things that a mother does for her child. God could have come to this earth in any way; he could have appeared as an adult but he chose to come to us through Mary. Mary was called to participate in our redemption; after Jesus' Ascension and Mary's Assumption into Heaven, this does not end but continues. Mary was so much a part of God's plan for our salvation that it only makes sense that she would continue this work in the lives of the members her Son's Body, the Church. De Montfort states, "What immeasurable glory then do we give to God when, following the example of Jesus, we submit to Mary!" (n. 139).

When we seek Mary's assistance, we do not need to worry that we are giving her too much. Our Saint writes, "There has never been and there never will be a creature so ready to help us in achieving that union more effectively, for she will dispense to us all the graces to attain that end" (n. 165).

Remember, she wants to make sure that we make it to Heaven. In addition, she wants to teach us how to imitate her son.

So now let us look at St. Louis de Montfort's claim: "This devotion is a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of attaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists" (n. 152). What does this mean for us?

How can this journey be the smoothest way? "It is a smooth way made easy by the fullness of grace, the unction of the Holy Spirit. In our progress along this road, we do not weaken or turn back" (de Montfort, n. 168). So often when temptations or difficulties come our way, we want to turn back. Mary assists us; she guides us on our journey. As on a trip, we want everything to go well; we pack all the necessities in order that our trip might have all that it needs to go well. On our journey of life, Mary stays close to us; she helps us in time of bitterness. If our experience is a flat tire, she will send someone to repair it.

We have all been on trips that seem to last a long time, whether it is a car trip or a trip across the Atlantic. Even as adults, we want to cry, "Are we there yet?" With Mary, she leads us quickly to Jesus. Consecration to Jesus through Mary "is a quick way and leads us to Jesus in a short time" (de Montfort, n. 168). Mary wants us to be united to her Son, Jesus; she will not let anything get in the way of this union. Some of us may have experienced getting lost and having to back track or having to take a detour due to construction or weather. When we take our spiritual journey on all ourselves, we tire easily but with Mary we speed along. "We advance more in a brief period of submission to Mary and dependence on her than in whole years of self-will and self-reliance" (de Montfort, n. 155).

St. Louis Marie de Montfort also calls it the most perfect way. He states, "It is a perfect way without mud or dust or any vileness of sin (n. 168)." The last thing that we want to bring home with us

from a trip is our laundry covered in dirt and mud. In our journey to Heaven, Mary will keep us from the worst stain, that of sin. If we turn to her in time of need, she will prove faithful in keeping us from sin. From True Devotion, “If a person gives himself to her without reserve, she gives herself also without reserve to that person provided his confidence in her is not presumptuous and he does his best to practice virtue and curb his passions” (n. 181).

“Finally, it is a reliable way, for it is direct and sure, having no turnings to right or left but leading us straight to Jesus and to life eternal (de Montfort, n. 168).” Just as detours slow us down on our journey, so do advertisements calling us to this site or that restaurant keep us from our destination. Mary helps us to keep our eyes on our goal, union with Jesus. Mary will not lead us astray; she wants us in Heaven with her Son. “[It] is Mary’s role to lead us safely to her Son; just as it is the role of our Lord to lead us to the eternal Father” (de Montfort, n. 164). She will help us fight against temptations and, “Where Mary is present, the evil one is absent” (de Montfort, n. 166).

At times if may feel that we are lost, at other times we may feel a little carsick. Sometimes we may wonder if we are ever going to reach our destination, or, that we just want to turn around. We can take St. Louis Marie de Montfort’s advice, “Let us then take this road and travel along it night and day until we arrive at the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ (n. 168).”

Driving, it is easy to notice that many people like to identify their cars with some mark of their personality, whether it be a special license plate or a bumper sticker. For us in our Christian life, we want to be identified as children of Mary, under her protection. To show this we have the Brown Scapular. Pope Pius XII stated that the Scapular is “the sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary” (“Brown Scapular...”). By wearing the Brown Scapular we are allowing

Mary to clothe us with her graces; again, Mary is our Mother and she wants to see us well-dressed.

There are so many other things to say about the Brown Scapular – it could be its own talk. So I would like to focus on a few stories that show Mary’s protection of her children entrusted to her. I have heard stories where Mary has protected someone’s life or brought about a conversion through the Brown Scapular. One story that I think illustrates a good point for us here tonight is of a Catholic man. He wrote,

Six months ago, shortly after I started wearing the Scapular, I experienced a remarkable change in my life. Almost at once, I started going to Mass every day. After a short time, I started going to receive Holy Communion daily. I kept Lent with a fervor that I had never experienced before. I was introduced to the practice of meditation, and found myself making feeble attempts on the way to perfection. I have been trying to live with God. I credit Mary’s Scapular (“Brown Scapular...”).

Mary wants to draw us closer to her son. When we give ourselves over to her through Total Consecration and show this through the wearing of the Brown Scapular, she will be able to do great things in us.

Another story is a good illustration of how Mary will help us on our journey. The story goes, One day in 1944, a Carmelite missionary in the Holy Land was called...to give the Last Rites. The Arab driver made the priest get off the bus four miles from the camp because the road was dangerously muddy. After two miles, the missionary found his feet sinking

deeper and deeper into the mire. Trying to get solid footing, he slipped into a muddy pool. Sinking to his death in this desolate place, he thought of Our Lady and Her Scapular. He kissed his great Scapular – for he was wearing the full habit - - and looked toward the holy mountain of Carmel, the birthplace of devotion to God’s Mother. He cried out, ‘Holy Mother of Carmel! Help me! Save me!’ A moment later, he found himself on solid ground. Later he said, ‘I know I was saved by the Blessed Virgin through Her Brown Scapular. My shoes were lost in the mud, and I was covered with it, but I walked the remaining two

miles praising Mary (“Brown Scapular...”).

So on our journey to our Heavenly Homeland, let us entrust our lives to Jesus through Mary!

Works Cited

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