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DOCUMENTS ET RECHERCHES

XVI

*Joseph Grandet*

**The Life  
of Monsieur Louis-Marie  
Grignon de Montfort**

(foto)

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTAIN

ROMA 2006

(Frontespizio – pagina 3)

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XVI

*Joseph GRANDET, p.s.s.*

THE LIFE  
OF MONSIEUR LOUIS-MARIE  
GRIGNION DE MONTFORT  
Apostolic Missionary Priest

Translated from the French  
by *Fr. Paul R. ALLERTON, s.m.m.*

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTAIN  
ROMA 2006

## FOREWORD

The present volume is a translation by Paul R. Allerton, s.m.m. of *La Vie de Messire Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort*, by Joseph Grandet, published in the series *Documents et Recherches*, vol. X, Centre International Montfortain, Rome 1994.

The French language has changed somewhat since the 18th century, so that the usage of certain words and phrases, and certain constructions, are a little difficult to translate at times. The translator has tried to be as faithful as possible to the style of the times, and to give what seems to be the best interpretation to those phrases which could not be found in modern dictionaries. A few notes have also been added where the task of translation seemed to call for it. All the notes are to be found at the end of the text.

Most of the rest of this Foreword is a translation of the *Avant-Propos* of the French edition.

### Who is Joseph Grandet?

Joseph Grandet was born in Angers on 30 July 1646. After completing his humanities, he left for Paris in 1669 to study theology at the Sorbonne. At the beginning of 1671 he entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. On 26 July, he successfully defended his thesis. While still a deacon, he was called to work in the Seminary of Angers, founded in 1659 and directed by diocesan priests.

He was ordained priest on 19 May 1674, but fell ill almost immediately afterwards and retired to his mother's house for 10 years. In 1684, he went back to the seminary and remained there until his death, while at the same time taking an active part in various missions, of which he was often the instigator, in Angers, Saumur and elsewhere.

In 1685 he was appointed parish-priest of the parish of Sainte-Croix, not far from the seminary. In 1692, he was appointed superior of the seminary, and was confirmed in this post in January 1693 by the new Bishop, Mgr. Michel Le Peletier. On 19 April 1695, after 20 years of trying, the seminary of Angers was officially united with the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and the bishop's brother, M. Maurice Le Peletier, was appointed superior. Father Joseph Grandet then became an *agrégé* of the Congregation of Saint-Sulpice.

Around 1715, Fr. Grandet resigned his post as parish-priest in favour of one of his curates. On 1 December 1724, he died, aged 78 years and 4 months. His body was buried in the chapel of the seminary of Saint-Eloi, which he had founded.

Fr. Joseph Grandet wrote a great deal: 21 manuscripts are preserved in the Town Library of Angers (labelled from A to M); or the library of the Seminary of Angers (from N to R; or in Saint-Sulpice (from S to U). They comprise Notes, Dissertations, Memoirs, Notebooks, Exhortations, etc.

The chronicler of missions in Angers and Saumur (1684), he was most at ease in spiritual writings (a method of mental prayer, instructions for the young...). He was not averse to history and hagiography: the Life of Mlle de Meleun; of Gabriel du Bois de la Ferté; of Pierre Cresley, priest; of Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. As if to summarise the whole, Fr. G. Letourneau, superior of the seminary of Angers, does not hesitate to accord him a place among “The holy French priests of the 17th Century”.

### **The Life of M. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort**

The Life of Fr. de Montfort is certainly the last work published by Joseph Grandet, a few months before his death. This “Life”, therefore, benefited from the vast and diverse experience of a man already well-informed through his post in the Seminary of Angers and in the Congregation of Saint-Sulpice. What is more, he made it his concern to consult the friends and collaborators of Fr. de Montfort, his spiritual directors, and the documents of the bishops of Nantes, La Rochelle and Poitiers. When he is speaking of the missions, M. des Bastières, a collaborator with Fr. de Montfort, is very often quoted. Certain documents, which he had asked for in order to write the biography of the missionary, arrived after he had finished writing his text. At the end of the book, these documents are to be found by way of supplementary information. One cannot but be impressed by the number and the quality of the letters and testimonies collected: the lady Governor of the Hôtel-Dieu in Poitiers, Fr. Préfontaine, M. l’Abbé Barrin, M. Desjonchères, Fr. Martinet. M. le Normand, M. Arot, Fr. Dubois.

Grandet could be reproached for having, throughout his biography, a prejudice in favour of his hero. Among other things, when he deals, in Book V, with the virtues of the servant of God, his language takes on a style which is less pleasing to modern ears: faith, confidence in God, devotion, zeal, hatred of sin, love of penance and the Cross..., everything is presented as though for a process of beatification, even though it was just a few years after the death of Father de Montfort. Nevertheless, it remains true that the statements of the historian are based normally on concrete facts and on eye-witness evidence. It is for the reader to make a judgement, all the more so as certain extreme attitudes taken by Fr. de Montfort, when recounted objectively, are in themselves sufficient explanation of the lively reactions of his circle.

Whatever the case, Grandet’s biography remains irreplaceable, and the proximity of the events described often gives to the story a taste of the living chronicle which a modern reader cannot help but appreciate.

*Marcel Gendrot, smm*  
*Paul R. Allerton, smm*

THE LIFE OF M. LOUIS-MARIE  
GRIGNION DE MONTFORT  
Apostolic Missionary Priest

*Written by a priest of the secular Clergy*

Printed at Nantes  
by N. Verger, printer to the King  
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## **APPROVAL**

I have read, on the orders of Monseigneur the Guardian of the Seals, the life of the late Messire Louis Grignon de Montfort, Apostolic Missionary. This great Servant of God, inspired by a truly apostolic zeal, worked with much fruit for the salvation of souls, in several dioceses of this kingdom, and died in the odour of sanctity. His life and labours are a perfect model for all those who dedicate themselves to this divine ministry. Given at Paris, this tenth of September seventeen hundred and twenty-three,

REGERY

## ROYAL PRIVILEGE

LOUIS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, King of FRANCE AND NAVARRE, to our beloved and loyal Counsellors, the Advocates of our Court of Parliament, the Masters of Requests of our Household, the Grand Counsel, the Provost of Paris, the Bailiffs, Seneschals, and their civil lieutenants, and others to whom it belongs to right wrongs, GREETINGS: our beloved NICOLAS VERGER, one of our ordinary printers and a book-seller in Nantes, having indicated to us that he wished to print or have printed and to present to the public, a book which is entitled, *The Life of M. LOUIS GRIGNION DE MONTFORT, Missionary*, if it pleased us to grant our letters of privilege necessary for this, for this reason, with the desire to treat favourably the said book-seller, we have permitted and we permit him, by these present letters, to have the said book printed, in as many volumes, and in whatever form, margins, characters, together or separately, and as many times as seems good to him, and to sell it, have it sold and retailed throughout our kingdom, for ten consecutive years, reckoning from the date of the present letters. We forbid any persons, of whatever rank or condition, to introduce any foreign printing of this book in any place under our jurisdiction; as also all bookshops, printers and others, to print, sell, cause to be sold, retail or forge the said book, in full or in part, and to make any excerpt from it, under any pretext whatsoever, or make any addition, correction, or change of title or otherwise, without the express permission in writing of the said book-seller, or of those to whom he may give the rights, under pain of confiscation of the forged copies, a fine of fifteen hundred livres imposed on each of the forgers, of which a third is to be paid to us, a third to the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris, and the other third to the said book-seller, and all expenses, damages and interests accruing; provided that these present letters be registered fully in the register of the society of book-sellers and printers of Paris within three months of these present letters. The printing of the said book is to be done in our kingdom and not elsewhere, on good paper and with a fine typeface, in conformity with the rules for bookshops. Before the book is put up for sale, the manuscript or printed copy which has been used for the printing, is to be deposited, in the same state as when approval was given, with our dear and loyal Knight-Guardian of the Seals of France, Monsieur Fleuriau Darnemontville, under pain of nullification of these present letters, the content of which we require and enjoin the book-seller or his successors to put into effect, fully and peaceably, without any obstacle or hindrance being put in their way. We require that the copy of the present letters which is to be printed in its entirety at the beginning or end of the said book, should be held to be duly signed, and that the copies checked by one of our dear and loyal Counsellors and Secretaries should be deemed as authentic as the original. We command in the first place our Bailiff or Sergeant to do whatever is required and necessary for the execution of the present letters, without having to ask any further permission, and notwithstanding anything to the contrary. For such is our pleasure. Given at Paris, this twenty-third day of September, in the year of grace seventeen hundred and twenty-three and the ninth of our reign. By the King and his Council. DE SAINT HILAIRE.

*Registered in the register of the society of book-sellers and printers of Paris, page 354, N° 649, in conformity with the Regulations and particularly the ruling of the Council of 13 August 1703. Paris, 28 September 1723. BALLARD. Manager.*

## OFFERING

### *And Prayer to JESUS CHRIST, the Sovereign Priest and Pastor of our souls*

There is no-one, my Jesus, to whom I ought, rather than to you, dedicate the life of a holy priest, and a zealous missionary: because you are at one and the same time the Sovereign Priest and the heavenly Missionary sent by your Divine Father from heaven to earth to procure your glory, and to sanctify sinners. But if your being chosen, your vocation and your mission are the principle of those of all good priests and all apostolic missionaries, they are also their model and their end. Like you, they were chosen from all eternity to work for the glory of God. *In gloriam meam creavi eum, non vos me elegistis sed ego elegeri vos*<sup>1</sup>. Like you, they were called to the priesthood to offer, with you and through you, the adorable sacrifice of your Body and Blood. *Vocavit ad se quos voluit*<sup>2</sup>. And finally, like you, they were sent into the Church to be your vicars, your lieutenants and your coadjutors in the great business of the salvation of men. *Sicut misit me vivens Pater ita et ego mitto vos*<sup>3</sup>.

My Jesus, the priest whose life I now present to the public, consecrating it to you, seemed to me to bear all the marks of your election, vocation and mission, for one could say that he was predestined from all eternity to be a holy cleric. He was called to the priesthood without flesh and blood having any bearing on it, since it was the obedience he rendered towards his superiors that alone caused him to commit himself to this ministry, and he was sent into various dioceses by order of the bishops, in your Name, to work for the sanctification of their people. And you poured out such abundant graces and blessings on his labours that it is impossible to doubt that you were the beginning and end of them all. But your life was also the model for his own, for if he was calumniated, humiliated and persecuted, he was only the more like to you in this. And it would appear that you offered this holy priest, in these latter times in which luxury, vanity and pleasures reign, as a rare example for your Church of a poor, humble, mortified and crucified life, so as to influence the clerics who live in the world, to flee, like him, from that lax, soft, useless, idle and self-interested life which alone can damn them (even if they are not guilty of greater crimes), following that saying of your Gospel which condemns the one who received talents without increasing their value, and sends the useless servant to external darkness. Grant, divine Jesus, that this abundant grace which you poured out on the conduct and the words of M. de Montfort while he was still alive, might again be poured out on the tale of his actions after his death, and that those who read it might be inflamed with the desire to work, like him, for the salvation of souls, who are perishing for want of workers or anyone to lower them into the sheep-pool. Grant that this missionary might speak to them from the depths of his tomb, and might say, like that good householder, *Quid hic statis tota die otiosi*.

Grant, my divine Saviour, that M. de Montfort might do, after his death, what he was unable to do in life. May he, in fulfilment of his desires, go throughout the universe, to preach to the people the knowledge and the love of God Alone, hatred for sin, detachment from the world and its vain pleasures, contempt for honours and riches, and the obligation we have to

do penance, to renounce ourselves and to carry everyday our secret and public crosses, as he carried his. *Amen, amen. Fiat, fiat.* This is the grace that the author of his life asks of you, for himself and his readers.



## PREFACE

The behaviour of M. Grignon de Montfort seemed so extraordinary while he lived, that impious people were inclined to brand it as diabolical, calling him a sorcerer, an anti-Christ, possessed. Worldly people saw it as extravagant, and even good people believed it to be singular and strange: so much so that I have reason to fear that his life, which I am undertaking to write, might suffer the same fate after his death. I must expect that those who take the trouble to read it, will be surprised, even indignant to see a man who goes about bare-headed in winter, in rainy weather, and even during the great heat of summer, who carries a crucifix on top of his staff as he travels about, who kneels down in the houses he enters and says the prayer, *Visita quaesumus super hanc familiam*. The proud will not be able to bear the fact that he casts himself down at the feet of his servant when he believes he has committed some fault, and that he would have him beat his feet and treat him as the greatest of villains. The prudent ones of this world will no doubt disapprove of the fact that a missionary should make all his journeys on foot, without any money, credit or friends; that he should often be obliged to sleep in barns, in stables with the animals, or under the porches of churches; that he should get zealous priests to work with him without any idea of where they would be sleeping the first night, nor where their first meal would come from the following day. Those who are led by natural feelings will have no taste for the fact that he did not want to go to stay with, nor eat with, his parents, nor even visit them when he was in his birth-place. Sensual people will be repelled by the fact that he looked for crosses, for poverty and humiliation, with as much energy, and that he accepted them with the same joy as the proud, the avaricious and the pleasure-seekers show in seeking out honours, pleasures and riches. The wise of this world will find fault with the fact that he would take up the burdens of the poor people he met along the way, put them on his own shoulders to give them some rest, and that he would eat, drink and lodge with them. In a word, that he would do so many things which might appear ridiculous and extravagant. Even more, devout people and pious individuals will perhaps lose all the esteem and good opinion of his sanctity that we are trying to inspire in them, when they learn that several great bishops who called him into their dioceses, to preach the Gospel to their people, later forbade him, and that others had no desire to accept him into their dioceses because of the rumoured indiscretions and unfavourable reports about his behaviour that the world caused to run after him.

It might seem at first, therefore, that, on account of all that we have said here, it would have been better to suppress such an extraordinary life rather than offer it to the public, who, at the very most, are bound to find it more to be admired than imitated.

But two principal reasons have obliged us to recount the actions of M. de Montfort, no matter how extravagant they may appear in men's eyes.

The first is to justify God (if I may be permitted to speak in this way) in the behaviour he displays towards several saints that he has chosen to combat the false wisdom of worldly people through the apparent foolishness of his Gospel.

The second is to justify this holy man himself, who did nothing but follow, in all he did and suffered, the example of many saints and the inspirations of grace, which caused him to lead such an extraordinary life as his.

We can have no doubt that God has chosen in all ages, both in the Old Testament as well as in the New, admirable men whom he has inspired to do things which appeared extravagant in the eyes of worldly people, so as to combat their teachings. For, he commanded Jeremiah formerly to forge chains and fix them round his neck<sup>4</sup>, and afterwards to go and find several kings of Edom and Moab to reprove them for their crimes. He gave orders to the prophet Isaiah to strip himself of his clothes, remove the sandals from his feet, and to walk in this way through Jerusalem, to announce to the people frightening truths and bring them to repentance. *Fecit sic vadens nudus, et discalceatus.* (Is 20:2).

Did not JESUS CHRIST himself, Incarnate Wisdom, do various things which caused him to be seen as out of his senses and quite mad in the opinion of the Jews? *Demonium habet et insanit*<sup>5</sup>, they said, *versus est in furorem* (Mk 3.21). And they laughed at him with the utmost derision, *et deridebant eum* (Mt 4.24). Even Herod, that wise man of his age, treated him in this way with his whole army, because this lovable Saviour would not reply to the curious questions he put to him, and remained silent before him, which this king took for real stupidity, *Sprevit autem illum Herodes cum exercitu suo et illusit indutum veste alba* (Lk 23:11).

The Apostles were never more wise than when they had received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and yet they never appeared more out of their senses. And because they spoke all kinds of languages, with extraordinary transports of love for God, the Jews and the majority of those who heard and saw them, took them for fools and men full of wine, and they laughed at them, *Alii autem irridentes dicebant, quia musto pleni sunt isti* (Acts 2:13).

We read in the Lives of the Saints that St. Simon was taken all his life for a madman; that St. Philip de Neri and St. Felix of Cantalice did things in the centre of Rome which were much more ridiculous than what Montfort did. St. Martin, according to Sulpicius Severus, though wholly inspired by God, was taken for an extravagant person because he almost always had his eyes turned upwards to look at Heaven.

It must be accepted that the things God chooses for the Saints are very different from those he lays down for ordinary men. He chooses Deserts, as in the case of St Anthony: others he takes up into the air, such as Elias in his chariot of fire following inaccessible ways. He gives his Spirit to some, as it were, by weight, number and measure, while he communicates this same Spirit to others in such abundance, and with such great impetuosity, that, unable to bear the fullness which is beyond their natural strength, they are obliged to do such extraordinary things, as though to be rid of it and to be cured of it, that those who see them cannot understand. The Holy Spirit, in the words of the Prophets, comes upon them with such violence and strength, and he carries them so forcefully outside of themselves, that they appear to the ordinary rank and file of men like a new species, and they no longer look upon them as rational beings, so sublime and divine is their state: *Irruit in eum Spiritus Domini* (Judges 14:6). *Insiliit super eum Spiritus Domini* (Kg 10:10). In a word, they are much like St. Paul, who said that he had become mad for the love of Jesus Christ, *Nos stulti propter Christum* (Cor. 4:10), having embraced his cross, a scandal to the Jews, *Judaeis scandalum*, and seen as folly in the mind of the Gentiles, *Gentibus stultitia*. We must not be surprised then if these Apostolic men whom God, according to St. Paul, raises up from time to time in his Church in order to confound the wisdom of the wise, *Quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus ut confundat sapientes*<sup>6</sup>, are sometimes seen as extravagant and ridiculous by people in the world: did not the same Apostle say that God, not being known by Idolaters

through the works of his Wisdom, the Heavens and the Earth, wished to have himself adored through the foolishness of the Cross of his Son, and the ignominy of his Passion.

That seems to me enough to justify God; it only remains to justify his servant, M. de Montfort. There are four things which serve as his *Apologia*, so as to leave us in no doubt that the conduct which he maintained in his missions was indeed inspired by God.

The first thing is that all the missions he gave in seven or eight Dioceses in the course of more than ten years, were followed by an infinity of conversions and by the plaudits of all men of good will.

The second thing is that the Bishops who judged it best to forbid him in their dioceses due to complaints made to them concerning some indiscretions of which he was accused, were the first to praise him, and to give certificates very much in favour of his conduct after his death, as we shall show at the end of this Life; and it was these very bishops who did us the honour of writing to ask us to undertake this task.

The third thing justifying M. de Montfort is all the establishments he made to perpetuate the fruits of his Missions. Establishments which were so wise and sensible that he rightly gave them the name of “Wisdom”, and they continue to have a blessed existence in several Provinces.

The fourth thing is that God himself seems to proclaim the *Apologia* of his servant, and to justify him much more than men ever could, by an infinity of miracles which are performed daily at his tomb for the past six years. And especially by the lack of corruption of his body, which was found to be whole and lacking any bad smell eighteen months after his burial.

It only remains for us, therefore, to assure the reader that the facts contained in this Life are attested by the evidence of Missionaries who had the good fortune to work with him, especially M. des Bastières and Messrs. Vatel and Mulot, who accompanied him in his Missions, evidence sent to us from Paris, Poitiers, Nantes, la Rochelle, etc., by persons of very great worth and very worthy of belief; we will give several Letters to the Public from these persons at the end of this Life.

THE LIFE  
OF MESSIRE LOUIS MARIE  
GRIGNION DE MONTFORT  
Apostolic Missionary

**Book One**

**CHAPTER I**

*Concerning his Parents, his Birth and his early Studies*

Louis Grignon was the son of the Gentleman Jean-Baptiste Grignon, Sieur of la Bachelleraye, Advocate in the Baillywick of Montfort-la-Cane, in the Diocese of Saint-Malo in Brittany, and of Jeanne Robert. He was born in the month of February 1673<sup>7</sup>, and was baptised in the church of St. Jean in Montfort. He was given the name Louis, to which he added the name Marie when he received the Sacrament of Confirmation, having always had a great devotion to the most worthy Mother of God. From his earliest days, he showed signs of what he was to become one day; for he was still only four or five years of age when he was speaking of God, and going up to his mother when he saw her saddened to console her and exhort her to suffer with patience. He was the eldest of two brothers and six sisters. While still a child he developed a closer friendship with his sister called Louise than with the others, because he found her to be more ready to accept the sentiments and practices of piety which he wanted to inspire in her: and though they were both still children, he did everything he could to draw her away from the ordinary amusements of youth: he would call her away in secret, but with insistence, from her little companions, to lead her to pray to God, and if she showed any reluctance, he would give her little presents, and he would tell her: "My dear sister, you will be very beautiful and everyone will love you if you love God." She would then immediately go with him, and, following his example, would encourage her little companions to recite the Rosary with her, and, in order to get them to agree to say it every day, he would give them the most beautiful and the best things he had. The greatest joy they could give him was to speak with him about God, or to tell of their desire that he speak to them of him. At length, when this dear sister was older and would be encouraged by her brother's desires to give herself to the practice of some virtue or other, he did not know what caresses to use to express his joy to her. So the young Grignon, like Tobias, kept the Law of

God from his infancy, *Legem Dei puerulus observabat* (Tobit 1:8). Withdrawing from the company of young people of his own age, and from worldly people, so as to avoid their distractions, he would retire to some corner of the house, to give himself to Prayer and to recite his Rosary before a little picture of the Blessed Virgin; a practice which he kept up at a later age. His teachers assure us that he never caused them any pain, that he was conscientious in doing his homework, without needing to be forced into this by any chastisements or threats, and that he was already exercising a Missionary role towards his companions, teaching them Catechism, or reading them some pious books.

Although his parents were not at all well-off, they tried to give him a holy and honest education, and to cultivate the good dispositions they found in him towards knowledge and virtue.

They sent him in 1685 to study humanities at the College of the Jesuits in Rennes: he was about twelve years old when he entered the sixth class under Father Camus. All his teachers showed great affection and unusual esteem for him, and he was held up to his companions as a rare example of diligence and application to study. He carried off all the prizes at the end of each year.

When he was in the third year, in the higher Classes, he devoted himself even more to virtue and the practice of good works, especially charity towards those of his classmates that he knew to be the poorest, and he would try to help them all he could. When he himself had nothing to give them, he would go to people he knew to be rich and charitable, to ask alms of them for his classmates, among others Mlle. Jussé who used to give him quite considerable sums of money, because she knew that he would distribute them among those who were in the greatest need.

At that time, there was in Rennes a priest called M. Bellier, who used to gather together a certain number of students every week in his house, to give them talks on piety. Louis Grignion was one of the foremost and most regular in his attendance, and in passing on to others the practice of Christian and clerical virtues taught there. This priest used to send them after the talks on days off, in twos and threes, to serve the poor in the General Hospital and the Hospital for Incurables, by reading to them some good book during their meal and teaching them the catechism afterwards. Louis never failed to carry out these exercises.

One day his mother, who had come to Rennes towards the end of his Physics year, was in the St. Yves Hospital to visit the sick, when she recognised a poor woman and asked her who had procured a place for her there. The woman replied, "It was your son, Madame, who obtained for me entrance to this place and had me transported here in a chair."

While Louis Grignion was studying at the College, his parents were obliged to go to live in Rennes, so that two other boys, younger than Louis, might also study there, and so that they might not be forced to incur the expense of paying for lodgings for three children, and so that they might keep a closer eye on their conduct. Louis acted as Monitor to the other two, and led them towards the practice of piety by his words, but more so by his actions. There was never any quarrelling or arguing among them, and he used to bring peace, as far as it was possible, to all other quarrels which arose in the College among his companions. So much so that his maternal uncle, a priest who was then staying with his brother-in-law M. Grignion de la Bacheleraie, bears witness that Louis exhibited a gentle and peaceful temperament, a deep humility, a precise obedience and submission to all the commands of his parents, and especially an exemplary piety and angelic purity. He says also that, never having seen anything but what would edify in his behaviour, he believed that Louis had preserved his Baptismal innocence. He says he had a horror of the Carnival capers, which he could not

abide, and that, being invited one Mardi Gras to take supper with one of his friends, a young man wearing a mask entered the room where they were eating: Louis immediately got up from table, so as not to witness such a scandalous spectacle, and let the company see his displeasure which drove him even to tears.

To give himself a break from studies, he learnt to draw, and he spent most of his recreation time in making miniatures and little pious pictures, and he succeeded so well in this that, having one day shown one of these pictures done in his own style (a picture of the Child Jesus playing with St. John the Baptist) to a Councillor of the Parliament who was visiting his father's house, this officer found it so good that he gave him a Golden Louis for the poor.

## CHAPTER II

*M. Grignon goes to Paris to study Theology.  
He stays in an Ecclesiastical community.  
He falls sick. The virtues he practised.*

M. Grignon having completed his Physics year at the age of 20, asked his parents, about 1693, for permission to go to Paris to study theology, and they willingly accorded this permission. They wanted to give him a horse to carry him at least half-way, but he refused to accept this, and made the whole journey on foot, carrying his small pack on his back, so preparing himself, even at this stage, to make apostolic journeys in this way. His uncle and his brother went with him as far as the village of Cesson, where he bade them farewell and embraced them, then took out his Rosary, which he said during the whole of his journey. A short time later, there was such a downpour of rain that he was wet all the way to Paris, but that did not stop him continuing on his way. Ten days later he wrote to his parents, to ask them to help him thank God for the graces he had given during the journey, and informing them that he had arrived happily in Paris in good health. He found a lodging first of all in the house of a virtuous woman called Mlle. De Montigny, who had stayed for some time in Rennes with his father while pursuing a lawsuit in the Parliament of Brittany. This young woman, seeing that they had many children, asked if she could take one of the six daughters, then aged only eight years and three months, to Paris with her, where she would pay for her lodging and for teachers who would come each day to teach her to read, write and do embroidery.

Since Mlle. De Montigny lived in the suburb of Saint-Germain, as soon as Louis had got over the fatigue of his journey, she took him to the house of M. Bottu de la Barmondière, who was then parish-priest of Saint-Sulpice, a rich and virtuous man, who gave the opportunity to study to a number of poor students in a small community which he had established in his parish, so that they could reflect on their vocation to the ecclesiastical state and live a life of great regularity, far from the corruption of the times. Mlle. De Montigny, who was well known to this holy pastor, suggested that he take Louis Grignon into his community. He joyfully agreed to this in view of the praise which she heaped on the virtues he had practised in Rennes, and he even promised to pay the meagre sum for his lodging.

Since Louis Grignon was very much attracted towards mortification, he forced his confessor to consent that he should practise very severe penances. A short time later, he became seriously ill and asked as a favour that he should be taken to the Hôtel-Dieu, wishing to die among the poor whom he loved tenderly. This request of his was granted, and the

Hospital Sisters who looked after him were charmed by the patience with which he suffered very severe pains, for at the height of his sickness he told those who were complaining about it, "I am too happy to be here in the House of God."

The care taken of him, and the remedies applied, had the result that he recovered his health and returned to the small community of M. de la Barmondière, where he spent some further time.

### CHAPTER III

*He enters the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.*

*He studies theology.*

*He is successful in his studies and in Catechism classes.*

M. de la Barmondière died on 18 September 1694, and so his little community was no more. The Superior of the Seminary, who at that time was M. Tronson, a man of rare merit and great discernment, chose the best of his students to go to the Little Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and M. Grignon was among their number. He took as his Director M. Leschassier, who began to moderate his austerities and prescribed for him a rule that was gentler and less harmful than what he had been practising until then, trying to reduce it as much as possible, being persuaded that bodily mortification is harmful unless it is accompanied by mortification of the judgement and one's own will. We must punish the guilty one, namely the spirit, says St. Francis de Sales, before chastising the body which is innocent.

This mitigated rule did not stop M. Grignon leading an extraordinary life, much superior to that of the normal run of his companions. He was always the first to arrive at the exercises of the house, and the last to leave. He never failed to assist at the Meditation, and would not take the liberty which was accorded of making it sitting down; on the contrary he would stay kneeling for a whole hour, after which he would hear Mass. On the days when he received communion he would make his thanksgiving for half an hour in the same position; this would be 4 or 5 times a week. He would much rather have stayed the whole day prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament. In fact he spent so much time in meditation and the other exercises of piety that his class-mates could not understand how he had any time left in his room for study.

From a sense of humility, and so as to preserve an inner spirit of recollection, he did not wish to continue to go to the Sorbonne, like the others, to study various treatises in theology; he was content with the lectures given in the house by one of the Doctors.

One day when, as was the custom in the Seminary, he had to defend a thesis on Grace, his class-mates made up their minds to present him with such strong arguments that he could not reply, and to quote the most difficult passages from the Fathers, in order to embarrass him and force him to devote more time to study rather than to contemplation. But they were very much surprised when they heard him replying in a masterful way and quoting long passages from St. Augustine and the other Fathers of the Church to explain the points they made in objection, so much so that they were obliged to admit that the Spirit is a better Teacher than all the Doctors, when it comes to teaching the souls he has chosen for himself: *Ubi Deus Magister est, quam cito discitur quod docetur*, as St. Gregory says.

Nevertheless, in order to distract him a little from his extraordinary absorption in spiritual matters and the presence of God, for fear that his health might suffer by this, as it had already, he was given charge of the Library and of the ceremonies, and asked to teach catechism to the most unruly children in one of the districts in the suburb of St-Germain. He carried out this last task with such a grace-filled attitude and with such success, that his classes touched the least docile of the youngsters at their very heart, so that, having heard him, they burst into tears and gave solid proof of real repentance.

Some of the seminarians finding it hard to believe in such a prodigious effect of grace, decided one day to witness it for themselves, and went to listen to M. Grignon, more with the idea of laughing at him rather than crying. He spoke before this audience about death, judgement and hell, in a manner so sad yet so firm, that they could not prevent themselves from bursting into tears and returning home profoundly touched by the great truths they had heard him proclaim, convinced more than ever that he possessed a rare talent for touching hearts. And these were just the first attempts and merely the prelude to the Apostolic grace which the young missionary was to cause to shine out, later on, with great success in the Provinces. It is said that, one day as he crossed the Pont-Neuf, he saw a trickster surrounded by a large crowd of people gathered to listen to a buffoon, so he got up on the ledge at the other side of the Pont-Neuf and proceeded to show them the sins they were committing by listening to obscenities, for which they would have to render a terrible account to God on judgement day, and by this means he managed to disperse the crowd that had gathered.

He was so absorbed in God that he spiritualised everything, thought only of God, spoke only of God, and, even when travelling, would stop often to teach the poor people he met along the way to know and love God. He even invented a game which, far from distracting him, brought him even closer to God; it involved a fistful of straw stalks, called jackstraws, on each of which he wrote the names of all the virtues, so that, for example, Charity was worth 50 points, Faith 40 points, Humility 30, and the one who drew the highest score, without letting the rest fall, won the game.

## CHAPTER IV

*Divine Providence takes care  
of the needs of one of his sisters,  
making her a religious in an extraordinary manner.*

Mlle de Montigny having died, M. Grignon's sister was obliged to leave the community where she had been placed, after living there for 4 or 5 years. But God did not thereby abandon her, for Madame the Duchess of Mortemart, who knew of the detachment of M. Grignon, spoke of his sister to Mme de Montespan, who found her a place with the Daughters of St Joseph in the suburb of St-Germain, whose benefactress she was, and paid for her lodging there. One day, Mme de Montespan having asked him about the situation of his family, he told her frankly that they were poor and that he had six sisters; upon which Mme de Montespan told him to have two of them come up to Paris, and that she would take



care of them. He wrote immediately to his parents with this good news, and they lost no time in sending them to Paris, from where, a few days later, this good lady took them to Fontevault. Her sister, Mme de Rochechouart, who was the Abbess there, received them with open arms on her recommendation. One, however, was obliged to leave and return to her parents in Rennes, because of a congestion in her eyes which threatened her with loss of her eyesight. The other made her profession at Fontevault, with her dowry supplied by Madame de Montespan, and she is still a religious there.

## CHAPTER V

### *He receives Holy Orders, and becomes a priest.*

M. Grignon, after the example of the saints, showed a certain respectful aversion for Holy Orders. He considered himself unworthy of them, and it could be said of him that he deserved to go forward to this sublime dignity all the more as he did not recognise his worth. His director urged him often to receive minor orders, but he kept putting it off. At length he gave in, and having obtained dimissorial letters from the Bishop of Saint-Malo, his bishop, he was ordained acolyte through obedience. But, when it came to the point of getting him to approach sacred orders, he wept and groaned and would as soon have run away. It was necessary to employ a kind of holy violence towards him, and when he was ready to receive the priesthood, he redoubled his prayers, penances and good works. For he was convinced that it is not enough to be called by God to be a priest, but that one must even more receive the spirit and grace of the priesthood in abundance, if one is to secure one's own salvation and work for that of others, following the example of Our Lord who was not content to be called by his Divine Father to the dignity of Sovereign Priest, but who, so to speak, sanctified himself and offered himself again to sanctify his apostles and the peoples to whom he would have to proclaim the gospel. *Et pro eis ego sanctifico me ipsum, ut sint et ipsi sanctificati in veritate*<sup>8</sup>. At length, after much resistance and many prayers, M. Grignon bowed his shoulders and consented to accept this burden which the holy Council of Trent called a tremendous one even for angels, *Angelicis humeris onus formidandum*. He was raised to the priesthood on the Ember Saturday of Pentecost in the year 1700, by Messire Jean Hervieu Bazan de Flamanville, the Bishop of Perpignan, whom Messire Antoine de Noailles, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, had delegated to carry out the ordinations in his diocese. M. Grignon was the more at ease with receiving the imposition of hands from this prelate in that he had had the honour to be, during several Lenten seasons, his clerk or assistant when the latter taught catechism at Saint-Sulpice, as a simple priest, to nearly a thousand servants, with such great success that only those who beheld it could believe it.

M. de Montfort, then, prepared himself for five whole years in the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice to receive the priesthood and to become worthy of the apostolic ministry to which he was called, imitating in this way Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. John the Baptist, who spent thirty years in retreat before preaching for three years penance and the gospel. And perhaps, says a great servant of God of the last century, if St. John had lived for only three years in solitude, and then preached for thirty years, he would not have borne such fruit nor have converted so many sinners. In this respect, M. de Montfort was far removed from the haste of

those churchmen who believe that their bishops are asking too much when they oblige them to spend a year in the seminary before receiving Holy Orders.

The day that M. de Montfort was ordained a priest, he was so gripped and penetrated with feelings of respect, wonder and thanksgiving towards God, that, instead of his usual custom of saying just once *Deo Gratias* to all his friends that he met along the way, whenever he had received some heavenly favour, that day he repeated a thousand times *Deo Gratias*, my dear friends, *Deo Gratias*, and got permission from his director to spend the rest of the day before the Blessed Sacrament, to thank God for such an extraordinary grace, and then he spent several days preparing himself for his first Mass.

## CHAPTER VI

### *M. Grignon goes to Nantes*

*where he is employed for some time in giving missions.*

As soon as M. Grignon had been ordained a priest, he was on fire with a desire to work for the salvation of souls. He even wished to go and preach the gospel to the heathens in the New World, and he would sometimes say to the clergy living with him: “What are we doing here, dear friends? Why are we useless workers, while there are so many souls perishing in Japan and India, for want of preachers and catechists to teach them the truths which are necessary for salvation?” Carried away by zeal, having heard one day that M. Tronson was about to send off, the following day, a number of clergymen to go to Canada to live in the seminary in Montreal, which was dependant on that of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, he offered to accompany them. But this wise superior, convinced that God wanted him elsewhere, thanked him for his good intentions, but refused.

At that time, in the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, there was an excellent priest called M. Lévêque, the founder and first superior of the community of St. Clément in Nantes, who came almost every year to Paris to give retreats for several months. As the priests with whom he worked in Nantes were solely occupied in giving missions in the countryside, in the various dioceses of Brittany, he suggested to M. Grignon, whom he saw to be so keen on this work, that he should come with him to Nantes, promising him ample scope for the exercise of his zeal, very much in tune with his inclinations.

M. de Montfort was delighted with this opportunity. He willingly accepted the offer of M. Lévêque, and the pair of them boarded a boat in Orleans in the month of September 1700, to travel down the River Loire to Nantes. On the boat there were three libertines who began taking the name of God in vain and using much obscene language. M. de Montfort, who had no human respect whatsoever, took it on himself to correct them. But no matter how much he reproved them, warning them that were offending God, and telling them that they ought to fear the chastisement of the justice they were annoying, they still continued to commit the same sins, which obliged M. de Montfort to say to them, in a firm and prophetic tone, that misfortune would come upon them. In fact, a few days later, two of these debauchees quarrelled with one another, drew their swords and inflicted severe wounds on one another. The third got as drunk as a beast and was so sick as a result that he thought he would die.

A few days after these zealous missionaries arrived in Nantes, they went off together to give a number of missions in the countryside, which lasted until the February of the

following year, 1701, and so it was here that M. Grignon did his apprenticeship in the missions which he continued to give throughout the rest of his life, convinced by experience that no other task in the Church is so pleasing to God, so useful to our neighbours, and so meritorious for those gospel workers who carry it out worthily, because it is an efficacious means to bring about restitutions and reconciliations, to convalidate marriages entered into with diriment impediments, and to put an end to scandals and sinful habits; in a word, to rescue a multitude of souls from slavery to the devil, souls who have been rotting in the mire of their crimes, and dragged down by the weight of the chains of their sins for so many years, for want of a man who would help them to break these chains, or who could cast them into the Sheep Pool, like the paralysed man in the gospel, getting them to make a general confession, which some have needed to do for ten, twenty, thirty or forty years.

But God, who was calling M. de Montfort elsewhere, did not permit him to stay very long in the diocese of Nantes. He left to go to Paris, because he had been informed that his sister was soon to be obliged to leave the community of St. Joseph where she was living, since she was a stranger and they wished to accept only young ladies from Paris, and since, apart from that, she lacked many things necessary for life.

## CHAPTER VII

*He exhorts his sister to abandon herself to Divine Providence,  
and prepares her to suffer in a Christian manner  
her departure from the community of St. Joseph.*

As soon as he learnt that his sister was to be dismissed from the community of St. Joseph for the reasons given above, M. de Montfort, while waiting for an opportunity to go to help her in person, wrote her a very touching and Christian letter, to prepare her to accept this mortification with complete submission of her own will to God's will. This is what he wrote<sup>9</sup>.

*My dear sister in Jesus Christ,*

*May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!*

*Even though we are far from each other, we are together in spirit because you are so close to Jesus Christ and his holy Mother, and both you and I are children of divine Providence though I am unworthy to be so called. It would be better to call you a novice of divine Providence because you are just beginning to practise the trust and perfect abandonment which God asks of you. You will be a professed Daughter of Providence only when your abandonment is perfect and your sacrifice complete. God wants you, my dear sister, he wants you to be separated from everything that is not himself, even if it means being deserted by everyone. But be glad and rejoice, you who are the servant and the spouse of Jesus, when you resemble your master and spouse. Jesus is poor; Jesus is abandoned; Jesus is despised and rejected as the refuse of the world. You are indeed happy, Louise Grignon, if you are poor in spirit, abandoned, despised and like refuse cast out from the house of St. Joseph. It is then that you will be truly the servant and spouse of Christ and a truly professed daughter of divine Providence, even if not professed as a religious. What God wants of you, my dear sister, is that you should live each day as it comes, like a bird in the trees, without worrying about tomorrow. Be at peace and trust in divine Providence and the Blessed Virgin,*

*and do not seek anything else but to please God and love him. There is an unshakeable truth, a divine and eternal axiom, as true as the existence of one God (would to God I could engrave it on your mind and heart!): "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all the rest will be added unto you." If you fulfil the first part of this declaration, God, who is infinitely faithful, will carry out the second; i.e. if you serve God and his holy Mother faithfully you will want for nothing in this world or the next. You will not even lack a brother-priest for I will always be with you in my sacrifices so that you may more fully belong to Christ in your sacrifice.*

*I greet your Guardian Angel. 1701.*

## CHAPTER VIII

*M. Grignon visits Poitiers. They try to make him stay.*

*He stays for a few weeks. The good he does there.*

*He leaves to go to Paris.*

Leaving Nantes, M. Grignon took the road for Paris, by way of the diocese of Poitiers, since he wished to see, on the way, his sister in the Abbey of Fontevault, who had made her profession there a short time before. From there, he was inspired to pass by the town of Poitiers itself towards the end of that year 1701. He went first of all to the hospital, to say Mass there, after which, having finished his thanksgiving, which lasted nearly an hour, he was in such a state of recollection the whole time that he seemed to be outside of himself. His rare modesty and his piety charmed all the poor people who saw him, and since they were at that time in need of a chaplain to say Mass for them, give them instruction and administer the sacraments to them, they said to one another: "Let us keep this good priest to guide us," and when they saw him get up to leave the church they stood in front of him, closed the door to prevent him leaving, and begged him urgently to stay with them to serve the hospital. He excused himself, not only through humility, believing himself unworthy of this task, but also because he was obliged to go to Paris on important business. Nevertheless, since his great inclination was to take care of and serve the poor, he consented to stay with them for several months, if the Bishop of Poitiers were in agreement. The Bishop at that time was M. de Girard, an incomparable prelate who had given his whole life for his flock, through the continual visits he made in his diocese and all the apostolic labours he had engaged in for the three or four years that he had been bishop. One of the poor people, who had the ability to do so, took on the task of writing to him to ask for this priest for the hospital. His letter was truly admirable. The memoranda sent to me claim, one may say, that it was as though an angel had dictated it to him. But, since the bishop was absent, he could not receive it immediately. His Vicars General arranged for M. Grignon to lodge, while awaiting his return, in the minor seminary in the parish of St. Porchaire. During the month that he was there, he would go almost every day to teach catechism to the poor and the children that he gathered in the market hall. Everyone went there in droves, his words being so full of the unction of the Holy Spirit and making such a strong impression of grace on the hearts of those who listened to him. He also went from time to time to visit the poor in the hospital to console them, and he spoke to them, with as much respect as if they were princes, seeing Jesus Christ in them. He

preached to them and instructed them, morning and evening, and whenever he was given any alms for them, he took care to share it among them.

Having learnt that the majority of the pupils in Poitiers were great libertines and lived in a state of great disorder, he undertook to win them back to God and make them saints. First of all, he suggested to those who were more docile that they should form a little society among themselves to meet from time to time; that they accept certain rules that he laid down for them, which consisted in giving a little time each day to meditation and spiritual reading from a good book, going on free days to enjoy themselves innocently together, frequenting the sacraments, enrolling in the sodality of Our Lady which was established in the Jesuit college, and especially trying to win for God those of their comrades who were the most disordered. This little society bore admirable fruit. The moment M. de Montfort spoke to one of these pupils, no matter how scandalous or hardened he was, he was completely changed and burned with the desire to lead a Christian life. The whole town of Poitiers can bear witness that this society produced a great number of excellent priests and holy religious. One of these priests, seven years ago, devoted his life to the service of plague-ridden soldiers, prisoners of war who had been put in a small hospital outside the town of Poitiers, numbering about 500, who received no other help than that given by him and by a Jesuit, both of whom, having assisted the soldiers corporally and spiritually, died as martyrs of charity.

M. de Montfort busied himself in this way for several weeks in Poitiers, carrying out various good works. However, Mgr. de Girard, the Bishop of Poitiers, on his return learnt of his worthiness by what he was told of the rare talents and the graces that had been seen in him during his absence, and he appointed him to the hospital of Poitiers. There, M. Grignon set about rendering all the services imaginable to the poor inmates. But he had to leave, after a stay of two months, because his sister was urging him strongly to go to Paris to take care of her in her need, which was extreme. Thus he left at the beginning of 1702, without saying good-bye to anyone, for fear that they would force him to stay longer.

## CHAPTER IX

*M. Grignon goes to Paris. He sees to the needs of his sister.*

*He causes her to become a Religious in a wonderful manner.*

Since M. Grignon always travelled on foot, without any money, abandoned to Divine Providence, he often had feet that were skinned and bloody. He arrived in Paris in this state, and, so as not to be a burden to anyone, he went to lodge at the Hôtel-Dieu to let his wounds heal. He spent about two weeks there, and when he was better he went to see his sister who had left the community of St. Joseph. He found her in a pitiable state, with hardly anything to live on, and lacking clothes to keep out the cold during the winter. The servant of God was himself at that time so poor that he thought of sending her back to Rennes to her parents, everyone he approached being unable or unwilling to furnish her with what was necessary.

Nevertheless, before putting this plan into action, he recommended her very much to God, and, trusting in his Providence, he went one day to see M. Bargeville, a very worthy priest of the community of Saint-Sulpice, an old friend of his, and told him very naturally of the situation he was in, both in regard to himself and his sister, neither of them having the

wherewithal for life. M. Bargeville, without rejecting him nor offering him any hope, said that he would do all he could to help, and, the following day, spoke with Mother de St. Mechtilde, the superior of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, an excellent young woman whom God has used, in our day, to establish the convent of the Benedictines, in the rue Cassette in Paris. These Sisters are continually occupied in adoring the Blessed Sacrament, night and day, a cord round their neck and a light in their hand, to make honourable amends to Jesus Christ for all the sacrileges and profanations that he suffers in this mystery. He told them that he knew no priest more mortified and more zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, more abandoned to Divine Providence, nor more devoted to the Blessed Virgin than M. Grignon.

The praise of a man, of such a rare character, in this century in which we live, inspired in Mother de St. Mechtilde a great desire to know him. She begged M. Bargeville to get him to pay a visit. M. Grignon went to see her the following day, and after a very short conversation on some matter of piety, he confessed to her in an ingenuous way the pitiable state to which his sister and he were reduced.

“For your sake,” said this worthy superior to M. de Montfort, “I offer you every day, while you are in Paris, a portion such as is given in our community and which is served in our refectory before the image of Our Lady. It will be passed to you through the hatch, and you can go and eat it in one of our parlours.” M. de Montfort gladly accepted such a charitable offer, his greatest pleasure being to live on alms like a poor person. But he asked permission of Mother de St. Mechtilde to bring along one of his brothers (as he called the poor) to share with him this meal. She agreed to this.

At that time he took only one meal a day, and that a meagre one, a practice he kept up ever after.

To test the faith and trust of his servant even further, God allowed all the efforts and solicitations he made on behalf of his sister to come to nothing. He could not even find what was most necessary for her food and clothing.

Meanwhile, the Bishop of Poitiers, who had heard that this priest who had been living in the hospital in Poitiers, where he was so much wanted, had gone to Paris to Saint-Sulpice, wrote about him around the month of February 1702 to the parish-priest of Saint-Sulpice, at that time M. de la Chétardie, asking him to send him back to be the director of his General Hospital. The parish-priest, believing that M. de Montfort had himself asked for this position, criticised him, but, on learning that it was Providence alone that had intervened to procure the position, told him that he would do well to accept it.

M. Grignon, therefore, prepared, for the second time, to go to Poitiers and to send his sister back to Rennes. However, first he went to visit the Mother Prioress to thank her for all the goodness she had shown him. A lady of quality was, by chance, in the parlour when he was saying his good-byes, and, hearing that this good priest had no means of paying for his journey, gave him an écu. As he accepted it, he asked if she would agree that he use it to buy some stockings and shoes for a sister he had in Paris, who had great need of them. This lady said he could use it for whatever purpose he wished. Going out, M. Grignon asked the superior and some of the Sisters who were present, if they did not have need of a lay Sister in their house in Paris or elsewhere in one or other of their communities. They replied that they would need to see the person before replying, to judge what talents she might have and what she might be fit for, and that, although for the present they had no need of young women in their Paris houses, they would do all they could, to oblige him, to find her a place elsewhere.

M. Grignon hurried away to let his sister know of this proposal and brought her back to the parlour where the Sisters were awaiting her. But when they saw her, they all came to the conclusion that the delicacy of her temperament made it impossible for her to be a lay Sister in a monastery, and that she was better suited to enter the Religious Life as a choir Sister.

There were, just then, two young women from Paris who were ready to leave to become Religious in the convent of the Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament in Rambervillers, in Lorraine, the diocese of Toul, 70 leagues from Paris, where they were awaited.

As a number of people of quality, very charitable people, had contributed to supply the dowries of these two young women, Mother de St. Mechtilde wished, at that moment, in order to please M. de Montfort, whom she already regarded as a great servant of God, that some persons could be found who would have the will and the power to do the same for his sister as for the others.

But there seemed to be no chance that this good fortune would materialise, for two reasons: first, because these Sisters had already exhausted the funds of all their friends to supply the dowries of the two who were ready to leave; and secondly, because the time was too short to negotiate such an important piece of business, for the two young women destined for Lorraine were due to depart in two days' time.

The lady who had given the écu (as we said before) to M. de Montfort, having learnt what was happening with regard to his sister, made an immediate approach to certain persons she believed were in a position to contribute to such a good cause, but without success. So it was that the two postulants, who had been favoured with the price of their dowries on account of their great talents for Religious Life, prepared to leave the following day alone.

M. Grignon, who never lost confidence in God when what concerned his glory seemed most desperate, redoubled his prayers and got his friends in all quarters to do the same.

Wonder of wonders! A person of quality, who had been asked for nothing, and who was much less rich than those who had been asked, hearing that this young woman was about to go back into the world as a servant girl, and that she was hence at great risk for her salvation, was inspired to promise the required sum, along with clothes; and even to defray the cost of the journey; for fear that God would demand an account from him for this soul if she were to be lost through his fault.

## CHAPTER X

*M. Grignon's sister leaves*

*to become a Religious in Rambervillers in Lorraine.*

*She makes her profession.*

This was the moment when M. Grignon came to know by his own experience that (as he had already done several times) it was much better to put his trust in God than in men, because God never fails to see to the needs of his faithful servants. He is least likely to

abandon them when they abandon themselves most to his guidance. *Dominus regit me et nihil mihi deerit.*

Mlle. Grignon left therefore, with the two postulants, and arrived safe and well in the town of Toul. But the Bishop, who had asked for only two, seemed to be very unhappy to see three of them, because, although the monastery of Rambervillers had great need of subjects, he was nevertheless not about to accept so many young women, and it seemed most likely that he would send the Grignon girl back to Paris. But Providence, which was in charge of this whole business, did not allow the Bishop of Toul to carry out his plans.

Suddenly he softened in her favour and allowed her reception for whatever the Sisters of Rambervillers wanted. Our postulants passed through Lunéville, where the court of Lorraine was at that time. The woman who was accompanying them, being well-known to the Duke of Lorraine, took them to greet his Highness, who received them with kindness, approved highly of their plans, and provided them with one of his carriages to bear them with more honour to Rambervillers, where they arrived at the end of October 1702. The Grignon girl was made no less welcome than her two companions by the whole community, under the auspices of Divine Providence. And after a three-month trial, she took the habit and veil of the order, under the name of Sister de St. Bernard, along with the two others.

## CHAPTER XI

*He writes three letters to his sister: one to congratulate her on the happiness of having entered Religious Life; and the two others to remind her of the spirit and the vocation of a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament.*

### First Letter<sup>10</sup>

*My dear sister in Jesus Christ,*

*May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!*

*Permit my heart to join yours in a flood of joy and my eyes to shed tears of gratitude and my hands to describe on paper the happiness which transports me.*

*My last visit to Paris was not fruitless and the crosses and rejection you suffered in the past were not in vain for the Lord has been merciful to you. You prayed to him and he has heard you. You are now immolated, truly, deeply and for ever. Let no day pass without offering yourself in sacrifice as a victim. Spend more time before the altar praying than in resting and eating, and be brave, my dear.*

*Continue asking pardon of God and of Jesus, the eternal High Priest, for the offences I have committed against his divine majesty in the Blessed Sacrament.*

*I greet your Guardian Angel who is the only one who has stood by you all the way. I am as entirely yours as there are letters in the words I write provided you are just as often sacrificed and crucified with Jesus Christ, your only love, and with Mary, our good Mother.*

*De Montfort, priest and slave of Jesus in Mary.*



## **Second Letter, of 27 October 1703<sup>11</sup>**

*My dear sister in Jesus Christ,*

*May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!*

*I thank God every day for the mercy he shows you. Try to respond to him by accepting faithfully what he asks of you. If God does not open the door of the convent for you, then you must not go in, for even if you were given a golden key made especially to open the door, it would become for you the door of hell.*

*To be a Daughter of the Blessed Sacrament is a special vocation for her ideals are very high. The true Sister of the Blessed Sacrament is a real victim, body and soul. Continual and total self-sacrifice is her food; her body is sacrificed by fasting and watching before the Blessed Sacrament and her soul by obedience and self-abandonment. In a word, she dies daily as she lives this life, but by dying she acquires true life. Do all you are asked to do in this house.*

*All yours. De Montfort.*

## **Third Letter<sup>12</sup>**

*Dear Victim in Jesus Christ,*

*May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!*

*I cannot thank God enough for the grace he has given you in making you a perfect victim of Jesus Christ, an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament and one who is called to atone for so many bad Christians and unfaithful priests.*

*What an honour it is for your body to be spiritually sacrificed in the hour of your adoration before the Blessed Sacrament! What a privilege for your soul to do here below what the angels and saints are doing in heaven so sweetly and gloriously although you have not their understanding nor their light of glory but only the feeble light of faith. Faithful adorers give so much glory to God here on earth but they are so few, for even the very spiritual want to taste and see, otherwise they lose interest and slacken off. But "faith alone suffices."*

*But you, faithful child of the Blessed Sacrament, what profit, what wealth, what pleasure is yours kneeling at the feet of this generous and inestimable Lord of Lords! Be brave, take courage, enrich yourself and rejoice as you burn yourself out each day like a lamp. The more you give yourself, the more God will give of himself to you. Now that I have congratulated you, don't you think that I ought to congratulate myself too - if not because I am your brother, then at least because I am your priest? It is a source of happiness and a great honour for me to have someone so near to me offering loving sacrifices to make up for the faults I have, alas, so often committed against Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, by half-hearted communions and the times I have forgotten him or neglected him. You and all the good mothers are a source of great rejoicing for me because you have obtained graces for me and for so many other unworthy priests who through their lack of faith have become unworthy to approach the altar.*

*I am leaving at once for the poorhouse at Poitiers. I beg you, my dear sister, love Jesus in Mary and love God in Jesus through Mary.*

*Always yours.*

## **CHAPTER XII**

*His sister falls ill during her novitiate.*

*He writes to her to remind her that God wishes to purify her,  
and that she should not be discouraged.*

M. Grignon, having heard that his sister had fallen ill during her novitiate, wrote her the following letter, to encourage her to make holy use of this time of trial, and to strengthen her against the temptations which the devil might send her during her illness. Here is what he wrote<sup>13</sup>.

*My dear sister,*

*May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!*

*I am delighted to hear about the illness which God has sent you to purify you like gold in a furnace. You are to become a victim, offered on the altar of the King of Kings for his eternal glory.*

*What a sublime destiny! What a noble calling! I almost envy you your good fortune.*

*Now how can this victim be entirely acceptable if it is not completely free from every stain, even the smallest? The most Holy One sees stains where creatures only see beauty. His mercy forestalls his justice for he purifies us by sickness which acts as a furnace in which he purifies his chosen ones. You are indeed blessed if God decides to purify you himself, preparing his victim as he himself wishes. Think of the many he leaves to themselves or to others to be cleansed. Think of the many who are accepted as victims without passing through God's trials and his purifying siftings. Be brave then and take courage. Don't be afraid of the devil who will often tell you while you are ill that you will never be professed because of your indisposition, that you will have to leave the monastery and go back to your parents, that you will be left without a home and you will be a burden to everyone. Let your body suffer but let your heart be firm, for nothing is better for you at the moment than sickness. Pray that I may receive divine wisdom and get others to pray.*

*I am all yours in Jesus and Mary. Your brother etc.*

God having restored the health of Sister Grignon, known as Sister of St. Bernard, and her novitiate and that of her two companions being finished, all three made their profession together, on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, 2 February 1704, in the convent of Rambervillers, where all three have, since then, carried out to perfection the duties of the religious Life.

## **CHAPTER XIII**

*M. Grignon stays for some time in Paris.*

*There he becomes acquainted with the interior dispositions  
of a very perfect Religious Sister, and she becomes acquainted with his.*

M. Grignion, meanwhile, stayed in Paris for several months, awaiting the success of the journey and the novitiate of his sister. He often went to say Mass in the church of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in the rue Cassette, to recommend her to God.

One day, after the Mass, while giving communion to the community, God caused him to know the sublime state of perfection of grace attained by one of the Sisters who was receiving communion from his hand. Carried away by the feelings of wonder and joy which penetrated his heart after his thanksgiving, he asked a Sister he knew who had come to see him in the parlour, what the name of this other Sister was. But, since he had been more taken by the interior dispositions of this Sister than by her external appearance, he was unable to describe her to the one who had come to see him.

A few days later, M. Grignion having returned to say Mass in the same church, this Sister of whom we have just been speaking, being at that moment in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, herself received, by a very clear enlightenment, knowledge of the state of soul of M. Grignion, which was very like her own; this made her ask permission of the Superior, who was then in choir, to speak with this priest who was leaving the altar and whom she did not know at all. The Superior gave permission, but was nevertheless very surprised that Mother de St. Joseph (for that was her name) should ask such a permission contrary to her usual habit, for she was so dead to herself and to all other creatures that she was never curious about anything, never went to the parlour and spoke to no-one. After half an hour's conversation, the only one she had ever had with this servant of God, she came to thank the Superior, and to tell her, with a holy joy, that she was happy and that she had found a man after her own heart, which said a great deal since she was bearing at that time the most painful interior crosses of privation, abandonment, dryness, emptiness and death. And this was the way that God used to purify this holy Sister, who died two months later.

Father Gourdan, a Canon Regular of the Abbey of St. Victor, hearing of the death of Mother de St. Joseph, wrote to a Sister who had told him about it: "I am very much consoled by what you have told me concerning the holy and faithful adorer of the Blessed Sacrament whom God has taken to himself. One cannot admire too much the mercies shown by God to this soul. Everything about her is worthy of love and admiration. She is a masterpiece of the workings of Jesus in the divine Sacrament. It was there that she drew the life which she is now enjoying, beyond the veil of the sacred Host, which was her whole delight on earth. God gives us the grace of watching from afar such a rare and indefatigable example of piety and worship. I shall not fail to offer her up at Mass, though we may well believe that she is already in heaven, a part of this victim whom we offer, because the saints form one sole holocaust with Jesus Christ."

From that time onwards, M. de Montfort always had a great bond with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. And before quitting Paris, he asked them for a letter of association so that he might enrol all he could in the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and so enable them to share in the merits of all the good works of these holy Sisters and all the indulgences the Holy see had accorded to them. They gladly granted him this.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *He goes to stay at Mont-Valérien and in the hospital of the Salpêtrière near Paris.*

During M. de Montfort's stay in Paris, Cardinal de Noailles, the archbishop of Paris, sent him to Mont-Valérien, two leagues distant from Paris, where there are some priests who live in community and some hermits, who have been living a very penitential and exemplary life there since their foundation several years ago. His task there was to be, to edify some and hear the confessions of others, as well as those who go there on pilgrimage. On this hill, there are a number of chapels, at a short distance from one another, where the mysteries of the Passion are represented in a very devout manner, by life-size statues, where the pilgrims go to make their Stations, especially in Passiontide.

M. de Montfort went there every day without fail, to meditate on the sorrowful mysteries of the sufferings of the Saviour, for which he had a very particular attraction. It was no doubt in this place that he formed the idea of building, in a similar way, a Calvary in the parish of Pontchâteau in the diocese of Nantes, which brought him so many crosses, as we shall see later.

But since the work he had to do at Mont-Valérien did not satisfy the full extent of the zeal of M. de Montfort, he left there a short time later to go to the hospital of the Salpêtrière, half a league from Paris, there to serve the poor inmates, who numbered from 4 to 5 thousand, and to work for the salvation of souls: the two great objects of his charity. It is impossible to conceive of how much trouble and bustle he imposed on himself in order to instruct those who were ignorant of the truths of salvation, to save from sinful habits those who had been sunk in them for several years, to help the just to advance in the paths of virtue, to console the afflicted and to give to all an exalted sense of God and the enormity of sin.

He had been only four or five months in this establishment, where he would willingly have spent the rest of his days, when the devil, jealous of the good that he was doing, inspired in some of the administrators a distaste for his conduct, which they found too singular and too severe. This was why, when he least expected it, he found his dismissal in writing one evening under his plate when he sat down at table to eat a morsel of bread.

Before leaving, he gave away all his bits of furniture and everything he had to the poor, and exchanged a new hat he had been given for the old one worn by the door-keeper, and, following the gospel, shook the dust from his feet on leaving that place that God had brought him to, but the world forced him to leave.

## Book Two

### CHAPTER I

*He returns to Poitiers. The humiliation he suffered there.*

M. de Montfort, being obliged to leave Paris, and remembering the approaches made by M. de Girard, the Bishop of Poitiers, to attract him to his diocese, believed that he could do no better than to go and offer his services to his successor, Messire Claude de la Poype de Vertrieu, the Count of Lyon, whose merits alone had sufficed to raise him to the dignity of Bishop, M. de Girard having died in March 1702. M. de Montfort arrived in Poitiers towards the middle of 1703. But he found a great change in the attitude of the administrators of the hospital towards him. Though he had come to Poitiers with the sole aim of serving the poor, they would not accept him there, so that the Bishop of Poitiers was obliged to appoint him to the parish of St. Jean, there to administer the sacraments while waiting for Divine Providence to provide an opening for him to go to the hospital, which was his great and sole object. M. de Montfort exercised his ministry in this parish with much zeal and great fruit. Many people placed themselves under his guidance and, in quite a short time, made great progress in virtue by means of his advice. But a humiliating episode occurred which set back his plans a little, as we shall now relate.

One summer's day when it was very hot, M. de Montfort was passing near the river when he saw on the river bank some youths who had come to bathe, but who were making many insolent remarks in the presence of a number of women who were doing their washing there. Carried away with the zeal of Phinehas, he took out a discipline he had in his pocket, and administered two or three strokes with it to one of these young boys, to force him to retire in a more modest state. This boy, unable to bear the correction, complained to his parents, saying that he had been seriously wounded. His mother, in her first impulse of anger, went to complain to the Bishop, giving him to understand that her son was in danger of death. The Bishop, without looking deeply into the matter, sent to tell M. de Montfort that he forbade him to say Mass. The latter went immediately to Father de La Tour, his Jesuit confessor, to tell him what had happened, and to inform him of his intention to leave Poitiers. Father de La Tour told him that he should not act so quickly, that he would go and ask the Bishop to look more closely into the matter, so as to see if M. Grignon was indeed as guilty as he had been told. The Bishop, after obtaining precise information, saw that the child had shouted louder than his hurt called for, and that he was not even wounded at all, which obliged this holy prelate to withdraw immediately his interdict on M. Grignon, and allow him to say Mass the following day. Far from causing M. Grignon any harm, this humiliation only served, on the contrary, to purify his virtue, increase his merit and make him better known.

### CHAPTER II

*He enters the hospital of Poitiers.*

*The detachment he practised there.*

*He sees to the feeding of the poor and becomes their bursar.*

The poor inmates of the General Hospital, who had already had experience of the charity of M. de Montfort, never ceased making their appeals and prayers to God to ask for him, and their prayers were heard when they least expected it, for the administrators begged him to take the position of Director, which had become vacant. M. de Montfort, who had come back to Poitiers only for this purpose, was delighted. For their part, the poor inmates lit bonfires on his arrival. His detachment, his mortification and the love he had for them were immediately evident, for, not only did he refuse to accept the stipends normally paid to the other directors, but he chose for himself the poorest of all the rooms in the hospital, where it was the custom to place those infected with contagious diseases. He forbade them to give him any other food but that given to the servants; often he would even eat with the poor and from their leftovers. As there was hardly any order in the hospital when he went there, he began by setting out very wise rules, first of all for the food given to the poor, then for their spiritual welfare, *primum quod animale, deinde quod spirituale*. It was the custom to give one and a half pounds of bread per day to the poor, a system which seemed more convenient and less complicated for the administrators. The young ones, who had big appetites, having had nothing for twenty-four hours, ate the whole of their ration of bread for breakfast and spent the rest of the day without food, which caused the majority of them to languish and become ill. He persuaded the administrators that all the small loaves which were given out once a day, should be replaced by large loaves, cut into pieces and given out to the poor little by little at breakfast, dinner, tea-time and supper, to some more and to others less, according to their age and their needs. He also obliged all of them to sit down at table for dinner and supper, providing them with soup. The result of this regime was that, at the end of each week, he had more than eighty or a hundred pounds of bread left over, and, instead of the poor being, as before, discontent and the majority sick, they began to enjoy better health and to bless God for having sent them such a holy bursar.

There was just one woman that he could not get to eat in this way; being very unhappy with this reform, she chased after him with a spit to stab him. He tried to appease her by gentleness. All the other poor inmates, however, of whatever age or sex, submitted to such a wise rule, and there was a reading at each meal. He himself served them at table.

The whole town of Poitiers was charmed by the good order M. Grignon had introduced into the hospital, which resulted in pious people from all quarters bringing many charitable donations.

### CHAPTER III

*He acts as nurse for the poor sick people in the hospital.*

*The heroic charity he exercises towards them.*

M. de Montfort was not content to be just a bursar for the poor, but wanted even more to act as a nurse towards the sick among them. It is impossible to imagine his charity in this task. He remained by their side night and day, for considerable periods of time, comforting them, consoling them, bringing them the food and remedies they needed. He served them

even in those things most repugnant to human nature. When one of them during winter told him he was cold, he gave him his own blanket, without asking for another for himself. When one of the sick was in despair and cursed the holy name of God, M. de Montfort spent a long time exhorting him to patience, without his words having any effect. So he prostrated himself three times on the ground before him, even licking the floor to satisfy God's justice which this wretch was offending with his tongue. This touched the poor man so much that he stopped cursing.

M. de Montfort, having heard that there was a poor person in the town, lying in the road suffering from a contagious disease, all covered in sores, whom no-one wanted to look upon or give refuge to, let alone approach, he begged the administrators to allow him to bring this person to the hospital, promising that he would look after him. They were very reluctant to grant this permission, saying that this contagious disease could be passed on to the poor inmates. To avoid this danger, M. de Montfort put him in a room far removed from the others, and it was he alone who cared for him and bandaged him up until he died. One of the Sisters, who was in charge of the sick women in the hospital, told him one day that she felt extreme reluctance to carry out this service in certain things which she found very mortifying. To encourage her to overcome her repugnance, he told her how he himself had managed to overcome his own: one day, having collected up in a small dish the pus from the sores of the poor man we have already mentioned, he drank it, and said that he had never swallowed anything so delicious to the taste.

It is easy enough to believe this when we recall that M. de Montfort himself emptied the basins of the poor, ate with them and drank from the glasses of those who had ringworm and scrofula, washed the dishes, often on his knees, swept the house and the courtyard, and took away all the most infected refuse.

## CHAPTER IV

*He has many necessary repairs carried out in the hospital and its chapel,  
and prepares to draw up a rule for the hospital personnel.*

*He founds a congregation, with the title of Daughters of Wisdom.*

We have already said that many alms were given to M. de Montfort, which he used for the care of the poor; he also used a part of these alms to have necessary repairs done in the house and chapel of the hospital. But, since he was convinced that it was useless for men to work at the preservation and external growth of material buildings without applying themselves to the interior of the spiritual edifice by wise rules for those in charge, he was inspired to draw up one for the personnel of the General Hospital of Poitiers. It was useful not only for those who lived there, and for the care of the poor inmates, but also for other young women who might carry out wider functions, working elsewhere to instruct young girls in Christian schools, arranging retreats for their own sex, and caring for the poor and the sick in the parishes to which they were called. In this we see the plan he had formed for a congregation of young women, which he wished to dedicate to the Wisdom of the Incarnate Word, to combat the false wisdom of worldly people, planting the folly of the gospel among them. He also wished them to bear the beautiful name of "Daughters of Wisdom".

The rule he drew up is very extensive, so we will speak here only of what concerns their work in the hospitals.

1. He wants them to accept in their group only wise young women, or charitable widows, between the ages of fifteen and forty. The poor as well as the rich are to be accepted.

2. No money or boarding fee is to be demanded. If they do bring something with them, it is to be put in the common purse as an alms.

3. Borders are to be taken in only very rarely, and always on condition that they follow the rules of the community.

4. They are not to get involved in any temporal business. If they have any such business relating to themselves, they are to have it seen to by others.

5. They are to do two years of novitiate, or even longer if it seems necessary. The first year is to be devoted to the practise of all the virtues, to strip them of their bad habits, their vicious inclinations, their natural dispositions and their smallest imperfections; to this end, the mistress of novices will have them observe silence, and practise modesty, mortification, mental prayer, and mistrust of the world and of themselves. The second novitiate is to last one year, during which time, as well as common exercises, they will be set to learn the methods of good school-teaching, catechism, reading and writing well, and doing manual work according to their ability.

6. After their first novitiate year, they are to make simple vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, with no ceremony, for a single year; they are to renew these vows each year, and after five years, if their conduct has given satisfaction, they are to be received for ever in the house.

7. They are to have nothing of their own; all their furniture and clothing will be in common, and the community will be obliged after their profession to supply all that is necessary for their life and upkeep. However, they are not to renounce ownership or dominion of their goods, if they have any, but only the fruit and use to be made of them, which will rest at the entire disposal of the superiors.

8. Their habit will be grey in colour, a little like that of the Daughters of Charity founded by M. Vincent. However, they may wear a black cape, covering them from head to toe. The superior may make them change rooms each year, so as to prevent attachment.

9. With regard to obedience, he prescribes that they are to practise it absolutely, promptly with any delay, joyfully without any sadness, in a holy manner without human respect, blindly without reasoning, and perseveringly with no breaks.

10. He enjoins on them that they are to obey the Bishop, the directors appointed by him, the parish-priest, the administrators, and their superior, from whom they will ask permission on their knees.

11. He gives them some admirable practices for safeguarding their purity, such as never to speak alone to persons of the opposite sex; never to allow them to enter their room, never to look intently at them, nor touch their hands with the finger-tips; not to allow ambiguous words to be uttered in their presence, and not to laugh at such things. He says: "If God calls you to take charge of hospitals in the towns or in the countryside, whether for those who are well or for those with incurable diseases, keep the following rules of propriety and dependence. Render all the service you are capable of to the poor, both spiritual and temporal: in submission, as regards the spiritual, to the bishops and parish-priests, and even the chaplains; and, as regards the temporal sphere, in subordination to the administrators, so



that you do no more nor less than your superiors, whether ecclesiastical or lay, allow you. You must expect many contradictions in hospitals governed by a great number of administrators. So you must arm yourselves with great patience and not become discouraged. If they want you to omit or cut out some of the essential rules of your institute, you must not allow it and must rather withdraw from the hospitals, by order of your ecclesiastical superiors. If they want to make you work at something which is not essential nor absolutely contrary, you may submit out of charity and obedience, following the advice of your superiors.”

12. They will all go to the same confessor to be appointed by the Bishop, and will not leave him without grave reasons.

13. They will also obey, as regards the temporal sphere, other persons who have called them into the parishes and who supply them with the means to live.

14. They must look upon themselves as being numbered among the poor, and must in no way involve themselves (except rarely and in difficult circumstances) in their temporal affairs. The superior alone will manifest the needs of the poor to the board of directors, and if they judge that it is not right to take action, she will not get others from outside to speak to them to obtain this; otherwise, division will supplant peace and obedience.

## CHAPTER V

*M. de Montfort proposes the rule of the Daughters of Wisdom  
for the hospital personnel in Poitiers. They oppose it.  
He is obliged to leave. He is made director of the Penitents.*

M. de Montfort proposed this rule to the Bishop of Poitiers and the administrators of the hospital, who found it to be very wise and well suited to guide the personnel there to a high degree of perfection. The difficulty was to have it accepted by six ladies who governed the General Hospital along with a bursar. He proposed it to them, but met with a strange opposition. This change of clothing and the simple vows were not to their taste at all. In a word, they declared that they would never submit to it. The Bishop and the board of directors had no wish to force them and they judged that it would be better to wait until the grace of God, along with their own reflection, convinced them to embrace an institute that seemed to them rather new, even if holy. God seemed to make the execution of M. de Montfort's plans easier, by taking from this world three of the ladies who seemed most opposed to the rule. The other three saw their sudden death as a punishment for their resistance, and came along to ask pardon of M. de Montfort, who believed that the time had now come to at least try this foundation by inaugurating the novitiate. To this end, he chose those young ladies in the house who were in the poorest health but, as a recompense, had the most virtue. He gave them a room apart, associated with them three young ladies of good family from the town who were very pious, gave them as superior one of the poorest women in the house, but one who possessed a distinguished spirit and virtue, and got them all to take the habit and the headdress we have just described and to put into practice all the rules prescribed for the novitiate. And he wished them to be called “Daughters of Wisdom”.

Such a sudden and extraordinary change brought about a great upheaval in the General Hospital of Poitiers. The choice M. de Montfort had made of some young women to the exclusion of others aroused jealousy, followed by complaints and murmurs from those who had not been considered worthy to enter this congregation. The result was that the Bishop, to pacify this situation, took the decision, in his wisdom, that M. de Montfort should absent himself for some time from the hospital. And he made up his mind to maintain the rules and the good order M. Grignon had established there during the fifteen months he had been living there, and make sure they were kept. He appointed M. Grignon to be director of the House of Penitents. What is especially notable is that this novitiate of the Daughters of Wisdom which began in the hospital of Poitiers and was not completed there, nevertheless served to form some excellent young women who went on to practice this rule in La Rochelle, Nantes and St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where they teach the young, and take care of the poor, with many blessings, as we shall see later.

## CHAPTER VI

*He gives missions in the parishes of Montbernage, Saint-Savin,  
Saint-Saturnin, Sainte-Catherine, with extraordinary success.*

*He calls Brother Mathurin to go with him.*

Only God can draw good out of evil or light from darkness. It was an evil for the hospital that M. de Montfort left it, but God brought out of it the universal good of the whole town of Poitiers. It was the blindness of jealousy displayed by these good young ladies of the hospital that provided the occasion for M. de Montfort to communicate the light of the gospel to a great number of people and to open the eyes of a multitude of persons who were languishing in habits of sin and in the shadow of death. M. de Montfort was too zealous for the salvation of souls, for his zeal to remain idle for long. He asked the Bishop of Poitiers for permission to give missions in the suburbs, and even in several parishes in the town where he was living; to rebuild ruined churches and chapels falling into ruin because they were so ancient. The Bishop was delighted to find a zealous churchman to back him up in so many good works.

The first mission he gave was in Montbernage, in the parish of St. Radegonde, in one of the suburbs of Poitiers. He got the inhabitants of this suburb to buy an uninhabited barn, which he fitted out as a sort of chapel. He put a large image of the Blessed Virgin on a small altar, before which every evening the people came in crowds to recite the Rosary. He wanted to build a church in this place, in honour of the Holy Spirit, but he was prevented from doing so by something or other which came up.

In 1705, a young man called Mathurin came to Poitiers to become a Capuchin. He happened to go into the church of the Penitents to pray. M. de Montfort, seeing him, called him over and having learnt of his plan, he got him to stay with him to help in the missions, in which for 15 years he taught catechism, instructed the children, and sang hymns with great benefit to all. M. de Montfort enticed him to do this using no other language than that of the Saviour when he called the apostles: *sequere me*, "Follow me!" And, straight away, the good young man obeyed. After the death of M. de Montfort, he was tonsured, and he has many talents for the carrying out of his functions.

M. de Montfort also gave a mission in Saint-Savin, a parish of Poitiers. There he brought to a close a good number of law-suits, through the good offices of some lawyers whom he had asked to form a tribunal, where all the business of the various parties was completed at no expense, after being examined with great exactitude.

He also gave several other missions and retreats to prepare the people for death, in different parts of the town: namely in the parishes of St. Radegonde, the Resurrection, Saint-Saturnin, Sainte-Catherine, the Penitents, the Calvary, all of which were a wonderful success. The people followed him in droves, and were so touched by his discourses that they broke down in tears, emitted sighs and sobs, and cried out in a loud voice for mercy. He became so much master of their hearts that they would have been ready to follow him to the other end of the earth if he had asked them, and they took his side in all sorts of situations. It is true that he was associated with churchmen of great worth, who helped him in his functions by order of the Bishop of Poitiers. But he was the prime mover of all that was done in his missions; always the first to go into the confessional and the last to leave. He drew down the grace of God on the workers and their works by his mortifications, his fasts and his prayers, for they often found him spending half the night in the Garden of the Goretterie, meditating, his arms extended like a cross. He fasted almost every day, and took only a light meal in the evening after all his hard work; often those who saw him could not understand how he could live on so little food.

## CHAPTER VII

*Three extraordinary things happen during his missions in Poitiers,  
which cause him to be looked on as a saint.*

While M. de Montfort was giving all his missions and retreats, three extraordinary events took place which caused him to be regarded as a saint and a prophet.

The first was that in 1706, around Shrove Tuesday, M. de Montfort, having gone to the college to make his confession, his director, Jesuit Father de La Tour, asked him after his confession where he was going to say Mass. M. de Montfort replied that, if he wished, he would say it in their church. Father de la Tour then asked him to say the Mass for Madame d'Armagnac, the wife of the Governor and King's Lieutenant of Poitiers, who was terminally ill and given up by the doctors. M. de Montfort promised him he would, and, after the Mass went to tell Fr. de la Tour that she would not die of this illness; that he had prayed to the Lord for her. Then Fr. de la Tour, who knew the depths of his heart and the simplicity of his spirit, asked him to go and bring this good news to M. d'Armagnac who was very upset by the dangerous illness of his wife. M. Grignon, without any hesitation, obeyed him immediately, went into the bedroom of the sick woman and said to her: "Madame, you will not die of this illness. God wishes to leave you on earth and to prolong your days so that you can continue your charitable works towards the poor." In fact she began to get better, and lived another twelve years. Since then, M. d'Armagnac has witnessed to this on oath, before a notary, on 28 November 1718.

The second event was that, having a particular devotion to St. John the Evangelist, he undertook to rebuild the church dedicated to God under the name of this apostle, which was in ruins<sup>14</sup>, for it was so ancient that tradition in the town still claims that it had been used as a

temple to false gods. There you can see a big stone sculpted in the form of a vase, which, they say, was used to receive the blood from animals sacrificed to the idols. It did not matter what people said to M. Grignon to the effect that he would never finish this undertaking. The dean of the Cathedral said to him one day, making fun of him: "Is it not true, M. Grignon, that you have been transported to the Island of Patmos, and that God has revealed to you that he wants you to rebuild the church of St. John?" "Say what you like, Monsieur," replied M. Grignon, "but I will finish it with God's help."

In fact, he made a collection around the town, which yielded about 400 livres, and, having received more unexpected help which Providence sent his way, he succeeded in repairing this church, so to speak, from top to bottom.

The third event was that, one day, M. de Montfort, who was due to preach in the parish church of the Resurrection where he had given a mission, told those people who normally came to listen to him in the church of the Penitents about this. No matter how much they were told that he was not to give a sermon at the Penitents that day, the people were determined to stay. Among this crowd of people, there were several in the audience who, fearing that they would be deprived of the Word of God, prayed fervently to Our Lord, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, that, if M. Grignon would produce more fruit in this church of the Penitents than in the one where he was due to preach, he would be strongly inspired to come. A short time later, people were surprised to see M. Grignon coming in. He began by standing at the sacristy door and saying something to this effect: "In this church there are some people who asked God that I come to preach, and I was pressed into doing the opposite of what I had proposed; but if you do not profit by this, God will demand an exact and rigorous account from you on the day of judgement." Then he gave his sermon.

## CHAPTER VIII

*From time to time he makes retreats.*

*He is badly ill-treated by the devil.*

Monsieur Grignon, being strongly convinced of the gospel maxim that it is useless for a man to gain the whole world if he loses his own soul, was not so preoccupied with the salvation of others that he neglected his own. With this in mind, he went from time to time to make a retreat, in imitation of the apostles who would wash and repair the nets they used for catching fish, *lavantes et reficientes retia sua*, as the gospel says, so that they would be ready to be cast into the sea for a bigger catch, *mittentes retia in capturam*. He went to make a ten-day retreat in a country house, lent to him by a holy widow, near the town of Poitiers, in the parish of Savarne. He took no-one with him except a young cleric of fifteen or sixteen, who witnessed most of the fasts, meditations and mortifications which he practised in this place of solitude. The devil, unable to bear the fact that this generous missionary should prepare himself in this way for the combat, did not fail to tempt him, as he had Our Lord in the desert, with the result that this young man, who can certainly be believed, assured us that several times he heard a great hubbub in the bedroom where the holy man was alone, as though there were three or four people together beating each other with the utmost violence, and that, in the midst of the blows, he heard M. de Montfort saying in a loud voice: "I don't care about you; while I have Jesus and Mary with me, I will not be short of strength or courage. I don't care about you."

This was not the only time that the devil ill-treated him. One of the Sisters of the hospital personnel testifies that she knew that the devil often gave him great trouble, and that he had been heard at ten o'clock in the evening in the hospital garden, shouting loudly like someone fighting with another person. Because he was afraid that he might have been heard, he asked her next day if she had heard anyone crying out the previous night.

A woman who was showing a priest around near the chapel, said that she had heard him shouting several times and even seen him being dragged along the ground, but without seeing who was dragging him, and she distinctly heard M. de Montfort say: "O blessed Virgin, my good Mother, come to my aid!" Realising that this woman knew this, he forbade her to tell anyone at all what she had seen and heard. Those who know how God deals with some of his greatest saints will have no difficulty in believing this kind of persecution on the part of the devil, which has happened to others besides Job, even in our own day, especially to Father Joseph Surin, a Jesuit who, for twenty years, by the special permission of Providence, was ill-treated by the devil in a most humiliating and cruel manner.

## CHAPTER IX

*He gives a mission in the church of the Calvary Sisters of Poitiers.*

*There he endures a humiliating and very painful cross.*

*The holy way in which he deals with it.*

The last mission that M. de Montfort gave in Poitiers was in the church of the Sisters of Calvary, which church he borrowed to gather the people together. It was here that he showed clearly that he had espoused the Cross and was a true disciple of Calvary. Crowds came to take part in the various exercises he organised during the mission, which lasted three weeks. M. Grignon was there, preaching, teaching catechism and hearing confessions every day, from morning till evening, and even giving spiritual conferences with such liveliness and learning that he charmed all who heard him, and he was no longer viewed in the town as an ordinary man, but rather as a saint. He was busy especially with bringing about reconciliations in families, and with removing from the hands of libertines various indecent books and obscene pictures. They brought such a great number to him that he decided to burn them publicly, after the example of St. Paul, of whom it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, *multi autem ex eis, qui fuerant curiosa sectati, contulerunt libros, et combusserunt coram omnibus*<sup>15</sup> (Acts 19:19). He had the idea, like a certain Spanish Jesuit, of representing the world as a woman dressed in the fashion of worldly people, with all the trappings of vanity which they are accustomed to wear. More than 500 books, and as many obscene pictures, were brought along, and he stacked them around a pole on which this straw effigy was fixed, to burn them all together. His plan was, then, to erect a cross where the effigy had been, after everything was burnt, to emphasise that the crucified Jesus had triumphed over the world by his Cross, according to the words of St. Paul, *spolians principatus et potestates palam triumphans in semetipso*. But the world was too concerned about this spectacle not to oppose it. Some libertines, to make the whole thing more ridiculous, attached black puddings and sausages to the head of the effigy like earrings, without M. de Montfort's knowledge. One of the Poitiers parish-priests, who was working with him on the mission against his will, instead of charitably informing him of what he found to criticise in the project, went off to find one

of the Vicars General of the Bishop of Poitiers, who was away for the moment visiting his diocese, and described this bonfire in such unfavourable terms, and in so ridiculous a way that the Vicar General, fearing that this would only lead to scorn for religion, immediately got into a carriage with the parish-priest and went to the Calvary church. Seeing the bonfire at the door of the church, where they were saying that they were going to burn the devil, he straightaway ordered the effigy to be removed, without any thought for the fact that there were very bad books and indecent pictures hidden underneath it.

At this, a crowd of workmen and students fell upon the bonfire, tore it to pieces, smashed the effigy, and carried off the books and pictures to their houses, with extraordinary boing and laughter, shouting like fools in the streets. The devil played his part so well that day that he brought about a greater evil, for, from being a private and little-known affair, it became something public and notorious, and *novissimus error pejor priore*. And it was not finished yet. The Vicar General, accompanied by the parish-priest, went into the church, where M. de Montfort was preaching before a congregation too large to be counted, and, commanding him to be silent, he proceeded to reproach him severely for his imprudence and indiscreet zeal, and then left. M. de Montfort, without seeming to be unusually moved by all this, said to his audience: "My brothers, we were planning to erect a cross at the door of this church, but God does not wish it to be; our superiors are against it; so let us plant it in our hearts – it will be better there than anywhere else." Then he began to say the Rosary, which he never omitted at the end of each exercise of his missions.

God, who was pleased to mortify and humiliate his servant, gave him a little consolation the following day, for, the mission at the Calvary church being due to finish on the Monday, those people who had accused him of indiscretion came to publicly beg his pardon, by order of their confessors. Also, M. Revol, one of the Vicars General of the Bishop of Poitiers, who had already been named Bishop of Oléron, preached at the closing of the mission, and paid as much attention to the merits of M. de Montfort in his sermon as they had been downplayed the day before.

## CHAPTER X

*He finishes his mission at the Calvary church with a new humiliation.*

*He makes the decision to go to Rome.*

Monsieur Grignon, feeling deeply his unworthiness, while preaching that same day to say good-bye to the people, spoke to them these words: "I ask you pardon, my dear brothers, for the scandal I gave yesterday, no doubt through my own fault, even though our superiors were badly informed. I greatly regret that so many bad books and dirty pictures have been put back in circulation. Alas! If only my life had rather been taken away, for these occasions of sin are going to be the cause of a multitude of scandals in the world. If I could buy them back by the shedding of my blood, I would give it with all my heart to the last drop, to put an end to these books and paintings."

And, in an heroic act, M. Grignon, before saying the High Mass of thanksgiving, begged the parish-priest of whom we have spoken, to act as his deacon at the altar, so as to show that he bore no resentment towards him in his heart.

When the procession was over and the mission at an end, he withdrew to the hall of the Sisters of Calvary, who had arranged for a great meal to be prepared to regale all the

missionaries. They waited a long time for M. Revol, who had promised to be there, but since he was busy with some business at the steward's house, he arrived only half way through the meal, saying that he had left the steward to bear witness to the esteem he had for Monsieur de Montfort.

A few days later, M. Grignon was to give a retreat to the Sisters of St. Catherine on preparing for death, but the first day he was there, he received a letter while having his dinner, which ordered him to leave Poitiers immediately. At once, he blessed God for this humiliation, and made many acts of love of God and submission to his will, emitting sighs of a mixture of joy and sadness, and as soon as he could bade good-bye to the Sisters.

This great servant of God accepted this humiliation with respect and submission to the order of divine Providence. Going to unburden his heart to Fr. de la Tour, his Jesuit director, who was then resident at the College in Poitiers, he asked his advice on the plan he had formed a long time before of going to Rome to offer his services to the Pope and to ask his Apostolic blessing to go to preach the gospel to the pagans in the New World, and so, if possible, to merit the crown of martyrdom. Fr. de la Tour strongly approved his plan, and this is why M. Grignon undertook the journey to Italy, as we shall see in the third book.

## Book Three

### CHAPTER I

*He goes to Rome to offer his services to Pope Clement XI.*

*He obtains an audience with His Holiness. The details of his journey.*

Monsieur Grignon set out to go to Rome at the beginning of Lent 1706, on foot, fasting, with no money and determined to beg for alms for the whole of his journey. Abandoned to divine Providence, he carried with him only his Bible, his breviary, a crucifix, his Rosary beads, an image of the Blessed Virgin and a walking-stick.

On leaving Poitiers he gave away to the poor the 18 deniers he still had left, and finding an experienced young man who told him he was also going to Italy, he asked him if he had any money. The young man replying that he had thirty sols, M. Grignon asked him for them and promptly gave them to the poor, promising the young man that he would pay him back on the way.

It is impossible to imagine the troubles, humiliations and fatigue he suffered for the whole of this journey. He was rejected a hundred times by parish-priests and unbelievers from whom he asked hospitality. Often he was forced to sleep at their doorstep or in the church porches, because they took him for a spy or a vagabond priest. Contrary to his usual custom, he was sometimes obliged to accept stipends for his Masses in order to survive.

Whenever he could he stayed in the hospitals. In short his journey was that of an apostle. Before making his way to Rome, he went first of all to Our Lady of Loreto. There he stayed for nearly two weeks, saying Mass at the altar of the Holy Chapel, where the mystery of the Incarnation had been announced to the most worthy Mother of God by the Archangel Gabriel, and where she had conceived the Incarnate Word by the action of the Holy Spirit. One of the inhabitants of the small town of Loreto, seeing him celebrate Mass at the altar of Our Lady with an extraordinary devotion and recollection which he did not see in other priests, was so edified by this that he begged him to come to him for his meals and lodging; which M. Grignon did. Then he continued his journey, and, when he was two leagues from the town of Rome, having glimpsed the dome of the church of St. Peter, he prostrated himself on the earth weeping copiously, took off his shoes and walked the rest of the way barefoot. As he went along he reflected long on the way in which St. Peter entered this great city, then the capital of the world, without carriage, money or friends, possessing only a staff and the poverty of a crucified God. Thinking of the miracle by which God had planted the cross of Jesus Christ his Son on the Capitol and had established the see of a poor sinner on Caesar's throne, he gave thanks to God for it, and concluded with certainty that the Church of Jesus is the only true Church, because it is Roman.

He arrived at last in Rome, tired and exhausted, and after a few days of rest he sought an audience of Pope Clement XI through the good offices of a Theatine priest who had ready access to his Holiness. The Pope having set the day, M. Grignon asked in what language he should address the Holy Father. Being told that it was normally in Latin, he wrote a very



short but very eloquent address, which he spoke in that language when he had been admitted to kiss the Pope's feet.

He has said since that, entering the room of his Holiness, and seeing Clement XI, he was filled with an extraordinary sense of respect, believing that he was looking at Jesus Christ himself in the person of his Vicar. Clement XI received him with great kindness, and after his Latin address, he told him that he could speak in French which he understood well enough to reply. When M. Grignon put forward his idea of going to give missions in the East to convert the pagans, the Pope replied: "Monsieur, you have a big enough field of action in France to exercise your zeal; do not go anywhere else, and work always in perfect submission to the bishops of those dioceses to which you will be called. In this way God will bless your labours."

Then Monsieur Grignon presented to the Pope an ivory crucifix<sup>16</sup>, begging his Holiness to attach to it a plenary indulgence for all those who would kiss it at the hour of death, speaking the names of Jesus and Mary, with contrition for their sins. This he granted, which is why M. Grignon had engraved below the foot, in large letters, these words: *Indulgentia plenaria a summo Pontifice Clemente undecimo concessa*. He normally used this crucifix during his missions, to incite in the people contrition for their sins, as he showed them the wounds of our Saviour.

Before quitting Rome, he had a hole drilled in the top of his staff, and often he would fix the crucifix there on his way back to France, so as to take from it the subject of his meditations. The Pope also gave him permission to bless little crosses made of paper or material which he used to give out at the end of each mission, with the names of Jesus and Mary written on them, to those who had attended thirty-three sermons. Clement XI also gave him the title of "Apostolic Missionary", and encouraged him especially to teach Christian doctrine well to the people and the children, and to bring about the renewal of the Christian spirit everywhere through the renewal of the promises of Baptism. Leaving Rome, he met up with two young men on the road, who became his companions on the journey.

Arriving with these two in a certain village, he said to them: "Go and ask the parish-priest if he would kindly give us something to eat for the love of God." The parish-priest sent him a small piece of bread such as he would give to a poor person. M. de Montfort, seeing that there was not enough for three people, himself went along to the presbytery of the parish-priest to beg for alms. He found him at table with a large party. He went into the room, and having offered his greetings, knelt down as his custom was, and said an *Ave* and the prayer *Visita quaesumus*. The parish-priest, taking him for a madman, made him go into the kitchen and ordered that he be given something to eat with his servants. They gave him some black bread with poor wine. Afterwards he went to thank the parish-priest for his charity. The parish-priest asked him why he did not travel on horseback. He replied that the apostles did not have this habit, and that this was all well and good for worldly folk. Throughout his journey, whenever he had been reduced to sleeping on the ground or in a church porch or that of a presbytery, and whenever he had been most cruelly rejected, the following day he would find in abundance whatever was necessary for life and enough to make up for it.

Since he left Rome to return to France at the height of the summer heat, he suffered a kind of martyrdom. He arrived on 25 August, the feast of his patron St. Louis, at Ligugé, one league distant from Poitiers, a priory then belonging to the Jesuits and worthy of note because it had in former times been consecrated and sanctified by the sojourn there of St. Martin, when he came to seek his master, St. Hilary. There, Monsieur Grignon said Mass. Brother Mathurin, who was waiting for him there, had great difficulty recognising him, he was so changed and tanned by the sun and so weakened by the fatigue of the journey. He was

carrying his shoes, since his feet were all torn, with his hat under his arm and his Rosary in his hand.

## CHAPTER II

*Monsieur Grignon goes through Poitiers, which he is obliged to leave.*

*He makes a retreat at Mont-St-Michel.*

On his return from Rome, M. Grignon went by way of Poitiers, where he hoped to rest for a few days, but the Bishop, hearing of his arrival, sent his secretary to tell him to leave within twenty-four hours. Fr. de la Tour, his Jesuit director, whom he had gone to see, seeing how extremely tired he was from the journey, with his face full of spots, suggested that he stay at the Charity Hospital to rest and refresh himself for a few days, but two reasons prevented the servant of God from accepting this proposal, namely: the fear of disobeying the Bishop, and of not being able to say Mass. This is why he took the decision to go six leagues away from Poitiers to make an eight-day retreat, at the home of a parish-priest he counted among his friends, there to consult the will of God concerning what he had to do to prepare himself to work for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, wherever it might please his divine Providence to send him. From there, he made a devotional pilgrimage to Our Lady of Saumur, then went on through Angers, where he stayed just long enough to visit the hospitals. After this, he went on to Mont-St-Michel, to ask this holy Archangel to obtain for him the grace to win souls for God, to strengthen those in a state of grace, and to fight against the devil and sin. On the way there, he came across a poor man carrying a very heavy burden. He was so insistent in his requests to let him help to carry it, that in the end he was allowed to put it on his own shoulders. He carried it until the evening, when he went into an inn and made arrangements for this poor man to eat and sleep with him, despite the protests of the inn-keeper's wife, who said she did not want to take in this beggar. M. de Montfort pacified her by saying that he would pay the expenses; which indeed he did.

## CHAPTER III

*He goes to Rennes.*

*The detachment he shows regarding his family.*

He was in Rennes for three or four days without making himself known to anyone, not even his family who were then living there. Each day he went to the hospital to visit, instruct and console the poor inmates, and went to say Mass, sometimes at Our Lady of Good News, sometimes at Saint-Sauveur. A person who was living at the Hôtel-Dieu came one day to tell M. de Montfort's uncle, the priest sacristan at Saint-Sauveur, whose name was Le Vizeule Robert, that there was a priest who went every day to preach at the hospital, whom she believed to be his nephew, and whom she had known when he was at the college fifteen years before.

Straight away his uncle set about looking for him all over the town. Learning that he was lodging in a poor house near the Carmelite Fathers, he went there, but he did not find

him there, so he told Brother Mathurin, his companion on the journey, that it was very hard for his parents, whom had not seen him in ten years, to learn that he was avoiding them, and that he would come back again the following day. Having finally met up with him, he embraced him, and reproached him in nearly the same way as the Blessed Virgin reproached Our Lord when he left his parents to stay in the Temple, *Fili quid fecisti nobis sic*, asking him why he was acting in this way towards them, and he added that, since his father and mother were still in Rennes, he must not fail to visit them. M. de Montfort replied that he had no father but God on earth, and that he wanted to live and die detached from his relations. Nevertheless he consented to go to see them, and set out straight away to look for them at their lodgings. Entering their room, he knelt down and prayed, as his custom was, saying the prayer *Visita quaesumus super hanc familiam tuam*. His father wanted to keep him to stay in the house, but he was unable to get him to accept. He went back to the poor cottage that he had first taken. His father had no more success in getting him to eat at his table. All that he could get him to do was to take a single meal with some of his relations. After the grace, M. Grignion took an empty plate and filled it with all that was best on the table, before sending it out to the poor of the parish.

He preached in Rennes in a number of places, even at the seminary where M. Esnou - who was the superior as well as a Vicar General to Monsignor Lavardin, then the Bishop of Rennes - was so happy with the exhortations he gave that he suggested he should be numbered among the directors of the seminary, going from time to time to give missions in the countryside according to his own bent. But M. de Montfort, whose calling was wider than this, declined, feeling himself drawn, like the apostles, to preach in all the dioceses without being restricted to one of them. Very wisely he withdrew from Rennes, where no doubt he would not have done as much good as elsewhere. Two reasons may be given for this: firstly because he was known there and had been seen to study there; and secondly because a rumour had already reached there concerning the setback he had received in Poitiers, which had lessened his reputation in the eyes of worldly people.

## CHAPTER IV

*He goes to Dinan in the diocese of Saint-Malo.*

*An amusing thing that happened to him there.*

*He joins Monsieur Leudugé in giving missions.*

From Rennes, M. de Montfort made his way to Dinan in the Diocese of Saint-Malo. He took up lodgings with the mission band. Three or four days after his arrival, he had a desire to go to say Mass at the Dominican convent in Dinan, where one of the religious at that moment was his own brother, who took care of the sacristy. His piety led him to celebrate the sacred mysteries at the altar of the Dominican, Blessed Raymond de la Roche<sup>17</sup>, one of the great preachers of the Rosary and one of the great reformers of his order. He went into the sacristy, where he recognised well enough his brother, though his brother did not recognise him, and he said: "My dear brother, I beg you to give me some vestments to say Holy Mass," but did not greet him in any other way. The religious, who had been a priest for a long time, was shocked that he had only called him "brother", and, taking a dim view of him, went off to look for the poorest vestments in the sacristy and two stumps of candles, just a finger long, with the idea of taking revenge for the contempt he believed this priest had shown for him. After Mass, M. de Montfort thanked the sacristan, calling him again his dear brother, and

asked him to keep the same vestments for him the following day. This religious, believing that the priest was trying to insult him, while M. de Montfort was making his thanksgiving, asked Brother Mathurin, who had served the Mass, what he was called; and in an angry tone told him that he did not know how things were done: "I'll have him know," he said, "that I am called 'Father', that I am a priest, I preach and say Mass and hear confessions."

Brother Mathurin, forbidden by M. Grignon to make him known, excused himself as best he could, saying that the priest was a stranger and that he should pardon him this incivility. That same afternoon, the sacristan again met Brother Mathurin in the street, and, since this supposed injury was still rankling in his heart, he asked him a second time for the name of this priest who had said Mass in their church. Then Brother Mathurin, who was having a hard time not laughing, told him he was called M. de Montfort. "I have never heard of that name," said the sacristan. It was more than eighteen years since M. Grignon had taken this name. Then Brother Mathurin told him clearly that he was called Grignon de Montfort, and that he came from Montfort-la-Cane. "So he is my brother?" replied the religious. "Yes, certainly," said Brother Mathurin. Then the Father, with loud exclamations, expressed great surprise at the detachment of his brother, and was annoyed that he had not recognised him. The following day, when M. de Montfort went into the sacristy of the Dominicans to say Mass, his brother embraced him warmly, and reproached him for not having made himself known. Then the servant of God said to him: "What are you complaining about? I called you my dear brother; well, are you not? Could I give you any more tender token of my friendship?" After this, the sacristan made honourable amends by giving him the most beautiful vestments, and he extolled his virtues everywhere.

M. de Montfort then found M. Leudugé, a Vicar General of Saint-Malo, who was giving missions in the neighbourhood of Dinan. He asked if he might join him and several other Breton missionaries who were working with him. He easily obtained this permission, but, through humility, he wished only to teach catechism to the children, preferring this task to that of preacher, because it was less striking in the eyes of men. After this first mission, he undertook, with the permission of the superiors, to give one to the soldiers garrisoned in Dinan, and he so touched their hearts that they broke into tears at each sermon, and showed all the signs of solid repentance and sincere conversion.

In the same place, he also established a group of charitable people to take care of the poor, distributing bread and soup every day. He had a large image of the Blessed Virgin made in Dinan, before which there was a candle burning continuously, and people went there to recite the Rosary with much devotion. The reputation of M. de Montfort's zeal, and the talent he had for winning souls for God, quickly spread in the diocese of Saint-Malo, with the result that requests came in from everywhere for him to give missions there. He gave one in Saint-Suliac, two leagues from Saint-Malo, and at Bacheret, where he gave a retreat to more than two hundred members of the Third Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic.

## CHAPTER V

*He passes through Montfort-la-Cane, his birthplace.*

*The agreeable and edifying circumstances of his journey.*

M. de Montfort had been asked to give a mission at La Chèze, a parish of Saint-Brieuc, where he was to work with M. Leudugé.

His way there led through Montfort-la-Cane, his birthplace. He had an uncle living there, but, because of the detachment he exercised towards all his relations, his normal state, he did not want to stay with him at all. At a quarter of a league from Montfort, there was also a good widow, who had formerly been his wet-nurse, and who was still living. He wanted to go and sleep at her house, but, to test her charity towards the poor, he sent Brother Mathurin who was still his travelling companion, *Comes peregrinationis*, to ask her, in the name of God, for shelter for a poor priest and his companion. He waited a stone's throw away from the house for her reply.

This good widow was not at home. Brother Mathurin found only her son-in-law, who was not prepared to show hospitality towards two unknown persons who would give no names; for it was M. Grignon's principle that he did not want anyone to be charitable to Montfort, but rather to Jesus Christ in his person, setting aside all human points of view. His own points of view were perfect, but not everyone had the same, *non omnes capiunt verbum istud*.

Going on their way, they came to the home of a tenant farmer nearby to ask him to put them up for the love of God, even if it were just with a handful of straw. This tenant farmer refused them very nastily. Then they went to knock on another door, where they were treated just like Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, for no-one was prepared to give them lodging, *non erat eis locus in diversorio*. They were preparing to sleep outdoors when M. de Montfort was inspired to go a few steps further to ask for the same favour from a man who was very poor and very old. He received them with open arms for the love of Jesus Christ, in whose name M. de Montfort asked for a bed. This man shared with them his bread, his water and his bed.

The following day his wet-nurse, having learnt that the one her son-in-law had turned away was M. Grignon, came to throw herself at his feet, begging his pardon for what they had not received at her house. Her neighbours did the same thing. And so he took the opportunity to tell them that their charity towards their neighbour must be more divine than human and more supernatural than natural. They ought, in exercising it, to look less to the creature than to the Creator, a thing which they had not done. "For," said he, "if yesterday evening I had asked you for shelter in the name of the priest Grignon de Montfort, you would have given it. I asked you for it in the name of Jesus Christ, your God and mine, and you refused me. This is a great sin you committed, not against me, but against Jesus Christ."

## CHAPTER VI

*He goes to give a retreat to some young women in community,  
having scolded them for their lack of charity.*

Leaving La Chèze, he went to give a mission in Plumieux, a neighbouring parish. He worked wonders there too. From there he went to Saint-Brieuc, the capital town of that diocese, to give a retreat to a group of young women of a secular community, who had asked for him. Before his arrival, he sent Brother Mathurin ahead of him to test their charity by asking for a piece of bread for a poor priest who was passing that way and for himself. The portress replied that they could give nothing, as they were themselves poor. Not happy with this reply, M. de Montfort himself went and asked the portress for something to eat for the love of Jesus Christ, but she received him no better than his companion. M. de Montfort insisted, saying: "Well, Sister, I am only asking for a piece of bread; no matter how small it

is, I will be happy with it. I am asking it in the name of God; can you refuse me?" But the portress was adamant and would not bend at all.

While Monsieur de Montfort and this young woman were holding this conversation about a piece of bread, the priest who had arranged for him to come to give the retreat to this community appeared on the scene. Since there was no grill in this house and no cloister, he said to the portress: "What is this, Sister? Why are you keeping M. de Montfort outside for so long? Why do you not open the door to let him come in? He has come to give the retreat in your house." At this, the portress replied: "You are mistaken, Sir; it is a priest who is asking for alms." "No," said the priest, "I am not mistaken, it is M. de Montfort." Then the young woman, covered in confusion, made many excuses, opened the door to him and led him to a good clean room, where they soon served him a magnificent meal.

Monsieur de Montfort took the opportunity, from this incident, to scold the assembled community. Telling them what had happened, he said to them in an apostolic tone: "You have no charity, dear Sisters. What? Would you refuse a piece of bread asked of you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, and yet serve up a big meal, which you have not been asked for, to a poor sinner? In this, you are lacking in both faith and charity."

After giving the retreat to the members of this community, who appeared to have been very edified and very happy with it, he gave five or six more to all the women and young girls of the town, following which he got them to have a solemn procession, carrying a magnificent cross. The cross was surrounded by golden rays, on each of which were written, in large letters, sentences drawn from Sacred Scripture designed to encourage Christians to carry their own crosses.

## CHAPTER VII

*He goes to give a mission in Moncontour and in Montfort.*

*His detachment with regard to his family.*

After this he went to preach in Moncontour, where on his arrival he found a large group of boys and girls gathered for a public dance. The holy man knelt down in the midst of this crowd of playful youngsters, calling out in a loud voice: "Those who are on God's side, let them get down on their knees to appease God's anger." A number of them obeyed him, asking for mercy. Others just laughed at him. However the servant of God spoke to them in such a firm tone that even the most arrogant and the most proud among them were obliged to bend the knee like the others and confess their blindness. For M. Grignon made them see the great evil involved in holding public dances, and that this was one of Satan's pomps, which they had renounced in their Baptism, but which the evil spirit used to lay a snare for their innocence, and make them go down to hell.

After the mission in Moncontour, which enjoyed the same success as the others, he went to Montfort, his own birthplace, to try to sanctify his countrymen, knowing full well that the Son of God had said that no-one is a prophet in his own country, and that the Gospel tells us that even the Saviour could do no miracles in Nazareth, his home-town, ch. 6, v. 5, *et non poterat ibi virtutem ullam facere*. He wanted to pass for a stranger in Montfort, and as if he had never had any parents, for his father and mother, having heard that he was undertaking a mission in Montfort, hurried there from Rennes, not only to have him stay with them, but also to provide the necessary food for the whole time of the mission. But he had no wish to go and

stay in their house. He took a small abandoned room near a wood for his sleeping quarters, and forbade his parents to give him any provisions: neither bread, nor wine, nor meat, threatening to send back the slightest thing they might send to him. However, all the missionaries who came with him lacked for nothing, and he said that he wanted to abandon himself to Providence in his own country as elsewhere; and that he would not look upon anything given him by his relations as one of the free gifts of Providence. In fact, God did provide for all their needs in abundance. He even fed all the poor people of the town and the surrounding areas. The people of Montfort and the neighbouring places flocked in droves to the mission services, where he produced no less fruit than in all the others.

## CHAPTER VIII

*He goes to Nantes. He joins the Jesuit, Fr. Joubart.*

*Some students insult him. He gives a number of missions in the diocese.*

Monsieur Grignon was in Nantes at the beginning of the year 1708. There, with the consent of the Bishop, he joined the Jesuit Father Joubart, who had a great talent for missions. They began with a mission in the parish of St. Sambin<sup>18</sup> in one of the town's suburbs. Since M. Grignon preached there as he usually did, with a truly apostolic force, against all the vices of every class of people, there were some students who, having got mixed up with some villains from whom they had learnt scandalous ways, made up their minds to kill him, lying in wait for him one evening on the road he would have to take. M. de Montfort, who feared only God and sin, was warned of their wicked plan, but he did not let that stop him from going out and getting on with his business. When these wretches saw him, they set upon him with fury. The people, seeing that they wanted to murder him, dragged him away from their hands, and chased them, some throwing stones at them and others using sticks.

M. de Montfort, seeing that the students were in greater danger of their lives than he had been, stood in front of those who had come to his defence, and said to them: "My dear children, don't do them any harm, leave them in peace. They are more to be pitied than you or I." In this way he appeased those who wanted to defend him. From St. Sambin, he went on to St. Donatien, and gave some retreats to the Penitents. Later he was in Valette, five leagues from Nantes, Cambon, Pont-Château, Vertou, St. Fiacre, Crossac, Béré, Messillac, Arbignac, Serrac, Landemon, St. Sauveur, La Bretière, Larmandière, St. Christophe-sur-Roc, and Bougnay<sup>19</sup>. He travelled all over several other parishes in the diocese of Nantes, as the Spirit of God led him and followed after him, bringing about a multitude of reconciliations, restitutions and conversions. And, although he had no funds for his missions, nor any assured lodging or provisions, whenever he went into a place to begin and abandoned himself to divine Providence, he never lacked for anything. People brought money and food from all sides. The result was that, not only were all the missionaries well fed, but he was able to arrange for soup to be made for the poor of the parishes where he was staying. He also engaged pious young women who were dressmakers to make clothes for them. Providence, in whom he trusted totally, provided in abundance for all his expenses, through the alms of the faithful and through unclaimed restitutions. So much so that there was no lack of parish-priests asking him to come and instruct, convert and comfort their flocks, because they had to provide only lodgings.

## CHAPTER IX

*Monsieur de Montfort is persecuted in Nantes.*

*Some soldiers try to take him prisoner, because he had destroyed a game which was an occasion of anger and blasphemy for them.*

*His joy in the midst of crosses.*

M. des Bastières writes: One day, as I was walking through the Place St. Pierre in Nantes, around four o'clock in the afternoon, I met M. de Montfort being taken to the chateau by some soldiers, followed by a great crowd of people who were making a dreadful noise. He was bare-headed, with his beads in his hand, saying the Rosary aloud, his face smiling and rosy, and walking along at such a pace that the soldiers had a hard time keeping up with him. However, they did not get him to the chateau, because one of his friends, coming across him by chance, rescued him from their hands. He was very unhappy about this, saying that he had been deprived of an honour he had aspired to for a long time, namely to be a prisoner for the love of Jesus Christ.

A few days later, I asked him why they were treating him like this, and what he had done to be taken away so ignominiously. He replied in a simple way, telling me the story in these words: "I was coming from the community of St. Clément, when, passing by way of the Motte St. Pierre, I saw some soldiers fighting with some workmen, uttering dreadful oaths, enough to make heaven and earth tremble. Crowds of people of all ages and both sexes were gathering round to witness this tragic spectacle. I was there, too, but with a spirit very different from the curiosity which was attracting this crowd. Going into the middle of this furious multitude, I got down on my knees, and several people followed my example. Having said an *Ave* and kissed the ground, I got up and threw myself headlong into the midst of these furious people who were knocking each other senseless with sticks and stones. I separated them, though with great difficulty. The workmen withdrew immediately, even though they were the stronger, and the soldiers remained on the battlefield.

"As I was going away, I saw a table on which there were black and white marks. I asked what this meant, and was told that it was a game called 'black and white', which was the cause of daily quarrels and similar battles. I turned it over and broke it with kicks.

"When the soldiers to whom it belonged saw it in pieces, and learnt who had broken it, they came towards me with diabolical fury and, setting upon me like fierce lions, some took hold of me by the hair, others tore my cloak, and they all threatened to pierce me through with their swords if I did not pay them for the gaming table I had just broken.

"I asked them how much it had cost them, and they replied that they had paid fifty pounds for it. I told them I would gladly give them fifty million pounds of gold if I had it, and all the blood in my veins, to have all games of chance like the one I had broken burnt. These words got them so terribly angry with me that I thought they were going to injure me and cover me with blows.

"But one of the soldiers said to the others: 'Let us not hit him; it will only bring unhappiness upon us. Let us rather take him to the chateau: M. de Miane, the governor, who allowed us to have this game, will give us justice.' So they brought me to the place where you met up with me, and where, unfortunately, I was rescued from their hands."



M. des Bastières continues: Afterwards I asked M. de Montfort whether, during this annoying episode, he had had no fear that he might receive a mortal blow, or at least that he might be thrown into prison. He replied, laughing: “Not at all; that would have given me enormous joy, but I am too great a sinner to deserve such a great grace. I deliberately went to Rome,” he added, “to ask our Holy Father’s permission to go to foreign countries on a mission to the barbarians and the pagans, in the hope of finding among them an opportunity to shed my blood for the glory of Jesus Christ, who shed all his blood for me. Our Holy Father refused me this grace, because I was unworthy of it, and allowed me only to go to all Christian countries.”

## CHAPTER X

*He gives a mission in the parish of La Chèze in the diocese of Nantes.*

*The parish-priest is opposed to it. Horrible calumnies are uttered against him.*

*His patience. He falls sick. He is cured in an extraordinary manner.*

The first mission I gave with M. de Montfort, writes M. des Bastières, was in La Chèze, a parish in the diocese of Nantes. He gave it by order of M. l’abbé Barrin, one of the Vicars General of the Bishop, an intelligent and very influential man. The parish-priest objected with all his might, but in the end had to give in to the authority of his superior, but did so only with great difficulty. Unable to resist the powerful demands of M. l’abbé and of several other people of consequence, who knew how much this parish needed it, the parish-priest nevertheless did not let that stop him from persecuting him for the whole of the three weeks that the mission lasted. He did everything he could to prevent his parishioners assisting at the services held each day, the sermons among others. Several people did not show up at all. Many went only very rarely. But the majority were very faithful. The parish-priest was so annoyed by this that, one day, after the morning’s sermon, when all the people were gathered in the church, weeping, so touched were they by the great truths they had heard from the lips of M. de Montfort, the parish-priest appeared standing in the middle of the high altar, dressed in surplice and stole, and gave a short exhortation, or rather poured out a vehement stream of abuse against the preacher, taking as his text the words of the saviour: *misereor super turbam*, in St. Mark, chapter 8. This flock of people fills me with compassion, he said, and then continued his discourse saying: “I find myself obliged, my dear parishioners, as your pastor, to warn you charitably that you are wasting your time coming to this mission. You will learn here only trivialities. You would be better off staying at home and working to earn a living for yourselves and your children. That is what I exhort you to do with all my heart.” He said many more shabby things, which aroused the pity of all who heard them.

Meanwhile M. de Montfort, who was still in the pulpit, fell to his knees and listened to this discourse with his eyes cast down and his hands joined. As soon as it was over, he got up, left the pulpit, bowed deeply to the parish-priest, and came to get me where I was sitting. He said to me: “Let us sing the *Te Deum*, my dear friend, to thank our good God for the charming cross he has been pleased to send us. I am filled with a joy I cannot describe to you.” We sang the *Te Deum* together before the Blessed Sacrament, and afterwards he said to me: “This mission is fiercely opposed, but I hope that, because of this, it will be so much the more fruitful and filled with blessings.”

In fact, adds M. des Bastières, I have not seen, in all the other missions I gave with M. de Montfort, a greater number of sinners converted.

A few days later, the parish-priest, his curate and several other priests, unhappy with this scene, attacked M. de Montfort as he was coming away from the evening sermon and passing through the cemetery, throwing all the most vile insults at him, calling him a robber, an impostor, a charlatan, a disturber of the peace, and adding that he only gave missions to enrich himself at the expense of the poor, and that he seduced simple people with his spells. M. de Montfort listened and suffered these horrible calumnies with a confidence, joy and patience that charmed all the people present, without uttering a word in reply, *cum malediceretur non maledicebat, cum pateretur non comminabatur*. Petr. I. ch. 2. When these gentlemen tired of uttering all this abuse, they left, voicing terrible threats, and saying they would pursue him everywhere he went. And that was the only true word they said on this occasion. Then M. de Montfort, who until then had kept silent, felt obliged, for the honour of his ministry and to justify his conduct, to say to them with much moderation and gentleness: “Messieurs, I appeal to the just judgment of the Judge of the living and the dead, against all the falsehoods you have just spoken against me.” And, leaving them, he added: “I pray to the Lord that he will make you all saints. I beg you to forgive me all the pain I have caused you without meaning to. Good-bye, Messieurs!”

To add to all this mortification, M. de Montfort fell ill during this mission, about two weeks after it began. His illness seemed at first to be a dangerous and mortal one. He was attacked by a violent and continual fever and a very painful stomach ache. It is surprising that, in this state, he did not miss a single day of the services of the mission: he preached and heard confessions as though he were in perfect health. I saw him several times – adds M. des Bastières – go up into the pulpit, shaking with fever and suffering the pangs of a very violent stomach ache, with a face like one dead. You would think at first that he would not have the strength to say a single word. Yet I do not remember ever having heard him preach with more strength and unction, nor in a more moving way, than when he was suffering most, for he caused all his hearers to break into copious tears. He touched them in the depths of their hearts. Yet the sickness which was to get worse left him at the end of the mission in a most extraordinary way. This is how it happened.

The day after the closing of the mission, M. de Montfort wanted to carry out the ceremony of the planting of the cross. The weather was terrible. It rained almost all that day, and the roads were full of water and mud. The place where the cross was to be erected was quite far from the town. Nevertheless, M. de Montfort ordered the people to carry it barefoot, and, to encourage them to do so, he joined action to word and took off his own shoes, and immediately more than two hundred men came forward barefoot to have the honour of carrying the cross.

Although M. de Montfort had a fever at that moment, and was overburdened with sickness and fatigue, nevertheless he helped them to carry it, barefoot and bare-headed, to the place where it was to be erected, disdaining, one might say, the ravages of the weather, the rigours of the season and sickness itself.

As soon as the cross had been erected, M. de Montfort blessed it and then preached with a surprising vigour. A number of people, of both sexes, who were quite well before this ceremony, and assisted at it, fell seriously ill because of it. It was M. de Montfort alone who, being ill before the cross was erected, recovered his full health. I am sure there are no doctors who would prescribe such a remedy to cure fever and stomach ache.

Two or three weeks after this mission, M. des Bastières continues, I had the honour of visiting M. l’abbé Barrin, to whom I gave an account of all that had happened. Afterwards he told me that a certain falsely devout person, given over to wickedness and full of the spirit of darkness, who had been bribed, came looking for him to complain bitterly of M. de Montfort,

saying that he was the greatest hypocrite on earth, that he seduced the little people, that it was only the spirit of avarice that directed his actions, that his morals were very corrupt and, in a word, he had solicited her to sin in the Sacrament of Penance. This wretched woman had barely finished vomiting these abominable calumnies, when Abbé Barrin gave her such a scolding that she had not been to see him again. But she had the effrontery to go and speak of this to the Bishop of Nantes, who, having been forewarned by M. l'abbé Barrin, had her shamefully ejected from his palace, and forbade her to come before him ever again, or he would have her thrown into prison.

## CHAPTER XI

*He goes to give a mission in the parish of Cambon.*

*An attempt on his life is planned. He is preserved from death.*

*He has the church repaired.*

Monsieur de Montfort then gave a mission in Cambon, says M. des Bastières, which enjoyed the same success as all the others. He and I were due to travel to Pontchâteau, and the day for the journey had been decided upon. But, the evening before our departure, about seven o'clock in the evening, a woman from Cambon came looking for me and told me, weeping, that she had just heard some very sad news that concerned us, M. de Montfort and myself, personally. When I asked her what it was, she told me her story in these words: "I know you are to leave tomorrow for Pontchâteau. But be very careful about going there that day, for five armed men are going to lie in wait for you on the road to murder you." I asked her was she really sure of this, and how she had come by it; and did she know the people who had taken the decision to carry out such a wicked plot. She replied: "The thing is only too true; I learnt it from the men themselves. They were near the door of my house hatching their plot, not realising that I was so near them. I heard them saying to one another, 'Let us be there without fail, tomorrow at four o'clock in the morning, at such and such a place (which I don't remember now), and let us put new balls in our pistols so as not to miss. For my own part,' said one of these wretches, 'I will attack this B. de Montfort<sup>20</sup>. I want to smash his head in.' As for the rest," she said, "I do not know these wretches at all, but I am warning you of their wicked plan, so that you can stop them carrying it out."

I went hot-foot – continues M. des Bastières – to warn M. de Montfort, who laughed at me and at the warnings of this good woman, saying that this wasn't the first such warning he had been given, and that they just wanted to frighten us. I told him it was a matter of prudence not to expose ourselves to the risk; that rashness was not a virtue, and that in such a case of doubt one must take the surer course. He took my advice, and the following day I set off for Nantes, while M. de Montfort stayed a few days longer in Cambon. I have since learnt for certain, and I cannot doubt it, that those wretches had lain in wait for us in the place we would have to go through, from five o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening.

The moment I arrived in Nantes, news of this plot having spread around the town, I was asked if I had come back from the dead. This greeting surprised me, so I asked for an explanation of the puzzle, and was told that the parish-priest of Cambon had said for certain that we had all been killed on the road, that it was believed we were no longer alive, and that Masses had been said for the repose of our souls.

M. de Montfort took a bold step during the mission in Cambon, where he showed that he was completely without human respect, no respecter of persons. This parish is in the diocese of Nantes, about two leagues from Pontchâteau. We gave the mission there, says M. des Bastières, in the year of the bad winter, that is, 1709, during Lent, when the cold was at its most severe. The church is a big one, but at that time it was in a pitiable state. Two weeks after the opening of the mission, M. de Montfort made plans to carry out all the repairs in it, a great number of them, and much needed, because the church was completely stripped of tiles. One day, having finished his morning sermon, he got all the women and girls to leave the church, and told the men to stay there, telling them he had something of great importance to say to them. When the women had left the church, he closed the doors, and gave a little talk on the decoration of temples consecrated to the worship of the true God. He kept it short, but was very touching, and he asked his listeners if they would like to contribute, each according to his capacity, to the repairing of their church. They all answered that they would do so with all their heart. "Since that is the case," said he, "my dear children, let eight of you stand on each tombstone, four on those that are not so heavy, and two of you on each paving stone."

This order was immediately carried out, and then he told them: "Take the stone on which you are standing, and carry it into the cemetery." This was done in a moment, and within half an hour, the church was stripped of its paving stones.

The following day after his sermon, as on the previous day, he got the women to leave the church. Only the men remaining, he exhorted them not to fail to come the following day to pave the church; to bring masons, stone-cutters, lime and sand, and to bring along all the tools necessary to carry out this task. He was exactly and promptly obeyed. It took hardly another day and a half to finish the job, there were so many workers. Then he had the church whitewashed, and ordered that the belt or band of material on which were the arms of M. the Duke of Coislin, the lord of Cambon, should be completely removed. This move was all the more bold in that he could not have been ignorant of how jealous of such rights are the lords who found churches. In fact, the seneschal of Pontchâteau, of which Cambon is a dependency, hearing about this action, took himself the following day to the site, with several other officers of the jurisdiction. They attacked M. de Montfort in the cemetery, as he was leaving from his morning sermon, and threatened to bring him before the law-courts; they spoke in the strongest terms in the world calculated to intimidate the most fearless of men. But M. de Montfort did not seem at all put out, nor repentant about what he believed he was doing for the glory of God. And, up to the present, it is not known whether anything of the sort would have happened. It is even probable that Cardinal de Coislin, who was a very pious person, would not have disapproved of the zeal, however indiscreet it might seem, of a missionary whose only aim was the glory of God and the honour of his church, whose interests he would have preferred to his own, since he had, in any case, other better titles to uphold these.

## CHAPTER XII

*He gives a mission in Crossac, a parish in the diocese of Nantes.*

*There he brings about the abolition of an abuse which had crept in,  
of burying all the dead of the parish inside the church.*

After the mission in Cambon, he gave one in the parish of Crossac in the same diocese. Apart from the spiritual fruits produced by it, he did something very memorable, which astonished everybody. This parish, says M. des Bastières, had no pastor when we went there. The church was very dirty and was paved only in the sanctuary. Almost the whole of the nave was ploughed like a field in furrows, and served as a cemetery for all the parishioners, nobles and commoners, great and lowly, rich and poor, all of whom claimed the right, from time immemorial, to be buried there. No matter how much the Bishop of Nantes and his Vicars General opposed such a great abuse, one contrary to the canon law and the practice of the Church, they were never able to finish the affair. Having imposed censures on the inhabitants of Crossac in vain, they took them to court. The matter went before the Parliament, but a contradictory ruling was given in favour of the parishioners of Crossac, based on the fact that they had always been allowed to be buried in their church, and they won their case with expenses.

M. de Montfort, having heard of this, preached with all his energy against this abuse, and made them realise that throughout the primitive church the Popes, bishops, emperors and kings had been buried only in the cemeteries, or at best in the church porch; and that churches were meant to enclose only the Body of Jesus Christ and those of saints. He showed that, in former times, canonisation of saints was carried out only by the transfer of their sacred bones from the cemeteries in which they had been buried into the churches where they were exposed for public veneration; and that their custom of having themselves buried in the holy place was purely an abuse, and a kind of profanation. God lavished so many blessings on his words, that all who heard him wept bitterly for their blindness up to that point. M. de Montfort, profiting by their good dispositions, made them promise him that they would never again, from then on, have themselves buried in the church. And, after the sermon, the chief ones among them gathered with him in the sacristy, where they summoned a notary who drew up an act by which they renounced the use of the ruling they had obtained in the Parliament of Brittany, and all promised to choose the place of their burial in the cemetery.

Immediately after this act was signed, Monsieur de Montfort set them to work to pave the church, whitewash it, and carry out all the necessary repairs.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *The Pontchâteau mission.*

*He has a Calvary built, which is destroyed by order of the royal Court.*

The most famous of all the missions he gave in the region of Nantes, and the most talked about, was that in Pontchâteau, eight leagues from Nantes. Monsieur de Montfort, seeing the fervour of all the people of the neighbourhood and all the parishes where he had preached, set out to build a Calvary in honour of Jesus Christ crucified, on a small hill in the parish of Pontchâteau, with views all round up to two leagues, both over land and sea. No sooner had he made known his plan than all the people eagerly offered him their services for its execution. For fifteen months they came from all quarters, from twelve to fifteen leagues away, to work there: men and women, boys and girls, up to more than three hundred persons. Each of them brought along their own provisions and tools to carry out the work. And what greatly increased their fervour and made them at every opportunity put their hand to the task, was the fact that they saw M. de Montfort at their head, digging the ground, and moving and carrying big stones. They all sang hymns and talked about pious subjects while they worked.

All around this Calvary, first of all, he had them dig ditches twenty feet wide and as many deep, and he had erected on the summit of the hill, three crosses of prodigious height, the one in the middle being at least 40 feet high, so that it could be seen from further away and would inspire the adoration of the people around. He wanted to build there fifteen chapels where there would be life-size representations of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. Three had already been built when the enemy of Jesus Christ, foreseeing that this place representing the Calvary would bring about further victories over him and overcome his traps, aroused some zealous people who, on fine pretexts, carried word to the Court that this Calvary would simply be a retreat for robbers who would ravage the neighbourhood. This was why King Louis XIV, always keen to promote the good of his subjects and to prevent even seeming evils in his kingdom, gave orders for the Calvary to be demolished and the crosses removed. Straightaway the inhabitants of the surrounding parishes who had been working on it, were ordered to destroy it. This was not done without difficulty and the shedding of tears, when the poor people saw themselves obliged to obey. To put an end to the blasphemies uttered by the soldiers, and to prevent them profaning the cross which they were going to cut down by putting an axe to the foot of it, the good people preferred to take it down themselves, so as to preserve it and give it back to M. de Montfort, rather than see it broken to pieces. Thus this work was destroyed in less than a week, that had taken more than a year to build, and that anyone but M. de Montfort would not have succeeded in doing for twenty thousand écus. We are assured, even, that the said remains which are still in place are worth more than twenty thousand pounds. Even though there was a great scarcity of food during 1709 when M. de Montfort was having the Calvary built, nevertheless he found ways to feed a multitude of poor people who, without him, would have died of hunger. But, since one of the missionaries who worked with him has sent us a highly detailed account of all that happened during this mission and at the destruction of the Calvary, we propose to report it here in his own words, for the edification of the reader.

### **Account of the Calvary at Pontchâteau**

*Monsieur, in answer to your request for an account of the Calvary at Pontchâteau, you should know that while M. Grignon was on a mission in the diocese of St. Briec, led by M. Leudugé, a scholar and canon of St. Briec, the missionaries had a great crucifix erected, seven feet high. There was no-one who was willing to pay the workman. M. Grignon begged from door to door, collecting eighty pounds which he gave to the workman, so that the crucifix remained his property. From that moment on, he had the idea of a Calvary that he wanted to build, and he searched continually for a suitable place to do so. Coming to the diocese of Nantes, he helped Father Joubart, a Jesuit, to complete a mission in St. Similien, which is on the outskirts of this town. There M. Grignon drew great numbers by his extraordinary way of preaching. Moving on from there, he gave missions in Cambon, Bené, Crossac and Pontchâteau, parishes near a moor which is about one league and a half around, in the form of the surface of a mushroom, that is to say the centre is elevated, while the edges or borders slope downwards, but with a very gentle slope. He had the idea of building a Calvary on the highest point of this moor. This was about 1709, at the end of July. While giving the mission in Pontchâteau, he spoke about his plan to the priests and people from the pulpit, and made them see the advantages they would gain from this Calvary. He engaged a number of peasants, as a matter of devotion, to help him dig a ditch around, so as to prevent, as he said, beasts from coming near the cross which he wanted to erect in that*

place. But, seeing that a much greater number of people were turning up, he conceived the idea of building, not just a ditch, but a moat around the Calvary.

He took a rope and drew a circle 400 hundred feet in circumference. The second ring was about 500 feet round. So the hill, made with the soil taken from the moat, was 133 feet wide, while the moat was 15 feet wide and 500 feet in internal circumference, and 600 feet round the outside, where he raised a terrace at both ends of which he had small trees planted to decorate this path. Coming to Nantes, he asked me insistently to go with him to give the mission in Missillac, which is half a league distant from the Calvary, on the edge of the said moor. While we were giving this mission, we went once a week, on our rest-day, to encourage the people to work there. The first time I was there, there were already as many as sixty cartloads of soil taken from the ditches to begin the mound. Normally during this mission I saw four or five hundred people working there, some digging the soil, others loading it, and others again carrying it in baskets, all content with a piece of bread which they carried in their pockets, and drinking the muddy rainwater which was in the ditches. He had them look for a tree to form the foot of the cross, and when they found a good one fifty feet high, he wrote two or three times to the person to whom it belonged without getting any reply. So he went himself to this person to ask him to give him this tree which was a chestnut. He spoke with enough eloquence to extract a hesitant consent. Fearing that this might be revoked, he had it cut down that very evening by two carpenters whom he had brought with him, and he had it dragged by twelve pair of oxen to the Calvary, again that same evening. It was a master-stroke, for there was not another like it in the whole Province.

From this mission we went on to Herbignac, two leagues from the Calvary, to which we returned once a week on our rest-day. I noticed that there were even more people than before. You could count more than two hundred people of both sexes from different places. After this mission we were at Camois, three leagues from the Calvary. Afterwards we went to the village of Asserac, where the mission took place in Lent 1710. The moat began to be deep, and the mound made of the soil taken from the ditches was quite high, because the support of the people was growing day by day, so much so that once I counted about five hundred people and easily a hundred oxen to pull the carts, as the crowd worked with surprising valour, so for example I saw four men experiencing great difficulty in loading a stone in the basket of a girl of 18, who carried it with joy up the mound. I saw dragged out of the moat, stones weighing as much as two barrels of wine, with just one or two ropes. All this was done with such order that you would think there was someone giving them orders, singing hymns in such a beautiful way that I seemed to be listening to a heavenly harmony, when they were, among other places, on top of the mound which was rising from the ditches. I saw all kinds of people working there, gentlemen and ladies of quality, and even several priests carrying baskets out of devotion. I saw people coming from all over the place: there were some from Spain and even from Flanders.

From the mission in Asserac, after resting a little at the Calvary, we went to give a mission in St. Donatien, a quarter of a league from the town of Nantes. We were unable to go to the Calvary during this mission. But as soon as it was finished we returned there, and I noticed that the people were working with just as much affection as before. Their payment at the end of each day was to be allowed to pay their respects to the crucifix which was in a small cave covered with shifted soil, in which you could not see without a candle. Also to be seen there were the figures of the Blessed Virgin, St. John and St. Mary Magdalene, and the two thieves: a spectacle which, only visible by the glow of a lamp which was normally kept lit, aroused the people to compunction, bringing tears to their eyes.

*After spending some time there, we went to give the mission in Bougnais, three leagues from Nantes. This mission was very edifying, among other things because of the closing procession, which drew easily ten thousand people. During the previous mission we had had made fourteen banners in white satin, an aulne and a half long and an aulne wide, which were used to distinguish the various groups of people in the procession. The crowds were led to a vast plain on the banks of the Loire, where there was a very rich altar of repose for the Blessed Sacrament.*

*From this mission M. de Montfort went back to the Calvary. This was in August 1710. The mound having been completed, a wall was built on the summit, five feet high, and twenty-four feet in circumference, which fell down at the first rain because it was built only on unstable soil. On top of this wall were placed wooden pillars, which carried all round the mound a rosary chain, with beads as big as bowls. In the centre of this circle were erected three crosses: the middle one, made from the beautiful tree I spoke about earlier, was painted red, and at its foot was a small chapel surmounted by fifteen steps made from very strong wood, which were used for climbing up to the foot of this cross all around. On the right of this there was a green cross, and on the other side a black one. On the red cross was fixed the figure of Christ, eight feet high, and the Holy Spirit was placed at the top. On the green cross there was put the good thief, who was brought in his triumphal chariot accompanied by a great number of angels at the end of a beautiful procession carrying banners, which started half a league away. On the black cross was placed the heart-breaking image of the bad thief. At the foot of the cross were placed the Blessed Virgin, St. John and St. Mary Magdalene. On the gate of the encircling wall there was a pipe filled with water, which flowed out through the mouth of a serpent, representing the bronze serpent of the Old Testament. At the entrance to this gate, there was supposed to be an Ecce Homo in the space between this circle and the 400 foot one.*

*The mound was only made of shifted earth. The plan was to make a pathway on the mound, in the form of a snail's shell, to go up to the Calvary. At the bottom of this path were to be built three chapels, each with its own cell and little garden, in which would be represented the fourteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the addition of the cave we have already spoken about, which would have been the fifteenth. Around this circuit there was a wall 400 feet in circumference, around which was planted a beautiful Rosary of pine trees, with cypress trees to divide the decades, so that if one were in the alleyway between this wall and the moat one could say one's whole Rosary on these trees, going round the Calvary. A section of these trees had already grown to ten to twelve feet in height. There was only one entrance, facing the crucifix. On either side of it there were two gardens in the moat, each 15 feet in area, one called the Earthly Paradise, and the other the Garden of Olives.*

*This Calvary was to be blessed on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 14th September 1710. Everything was already prepared for this great feast. Four excellent preachers had been appointed to preach to the processions assigned to the four corners. All the small towns in the neighbourhood would not suffice to lodge the pilgrims. Some of M. Grignon's own family were among this number.*

*At four o'clock in the evening of the day before this feast, a rector arrived sent by the Bishop, to forbid the blessing, which forced M. Grignon to go to Nantes, travelling all night despite all that might be said. He arrived at six in the morning, and sought out the Bishop, who forbade him to bless it even though everything was prepared. In fact, the whole moor was filled with people from morning till night. The appointed preachers arrived, and two of them preached. That day there were more than four or five hundred pounds given in offerings, despite the fact that there was no blessing.*



*M. Grignon did not get back until the following day towards 11 o'clock. While I returned to Nantes the following Sunday, he began a mission at St-Molf, which is four or five leagues distant from the Calvary. The following Tuesday, the Bishop sent me to find him, and told me that he had an important piece of news to communicate to M. Grignon, and that he must come to see him straight away. He gave me a letter addressed to him, in which he set out his wishes, and which I delivered into his hands. His reading of it brought tears to his eyes. Then, having returned to Nantes, he was forbidden to go back to the Calvary. He made a retreat in the Jesuits' house, and two weeks later, the order came to destroy the Calvary in question, which was an object of admiration for the whole country, for it could be seen for seven or eight leagues around. Its height, measured from the bottom of the moat to the Holy Spirit which was at the top of the cross, was about one hundred feet. When I told the people during a sermon that it must be destroyed, all my hearers broke into tears, and there was universal desolation. M. Grignon based his hope that this Calvary would continue in being on a number of signs, among others one reported by an eighty-year-old peasant and two of his children who were about sixty years old, who came to me for confession and who told me they had seen where the Calvary stood. At that time, nearly forty years before, at midday, in clear weather, there had been crosses surrounded by banners that descended from heaven on that same spot, and they added that at the same moment there was such a loud noise in the air that the beasts who were on the moor fled into the neighbouring villages, and that this ended with a multitude of voices which created a pleasant harmony, and the whole thing lasted about an hour. They added that a number of people had said that they experienced the same thing. The second sign was a great number of miracles said to have been worked in distant countries by means of soil carried away from all parts of the Calvary. A list of these miracles, more than one hundred and fifty of them, was brought to Nantes.*

*I had heard, some time previously, of a wicked plan which was said to be well attested, by a certain person who, by his own authority, claimed the right to prevent the construction of the Calvary. On seeing this, I wrote a letter to the Bishop of Quebec, who was then in Paris, begging him to use his influence with Cardinal de Coislin, who was the lord of this moor. A few days later I received a reply, in which Monsignor de Coislin asked this gentleman to let the missionaries, M. Grignon and M. Olivier, continue to build the Calvary, which he did. However, he looked for another way. He wrote a letter to M. de Châteaurenaut, in which he informed him that the missionaries were getting everyone to follow them; that, under the pretext of devotion, they were making a fortress surrounded by a moat and underground chambers; that enemies could occupy it in the event of an invasion in that area. The contents of this letter were sent on to the Court, which then gave orders to a certain person of distinction who came to the Calvary accompanied by a number of ladies, who were received very coldly by M. Grignon because they did not kneel to adore the crucifix. He saw this gentleman taking measurements of the moat and the underground chambers, but did not have the prudence to ask him why, though he was greatly alarmed by it. I myself saw the description written. But, after the blow had fallen, I got this person to see that he would have done better, in writing his description of the whole Calvary, to use more gentle terms, saying that they were neither a moat nor underground chambers in the sense of a fortress.*

*The Court gave orders to Monsieur de Despinose, the commander of the local militia, to knock down the Calvary and put the soil back in the moat. He ordered the surrounding parishes to send a certain number from each parish with tools. And he took care to have a company of his militiamen come to execute the orders of the Court. In the first days, according to his orders, four or five hundred people came, and he ordered them to knock down the Calvary, which they were very surprised to hear. But before they set to work, they knelt down weeping. Despite all his blustering, he could get no further for two days. On the*

*third day, he decided to bring a saw to cut down the big cross, which would have broken the figure of Christ as it fell. Then the people offered to go up the cross to take down the figure of Christ, and those of the two thieves, without breaking them; he agreed to this. I heard that he said that he could not believe that the descent from the Cross in Jerusalem was a sadder sight than that. Everyone was on their knees while the others played the part of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. All the figures were carried with great care into a house, first of all in Pontchâteau, then later in Nantes, where they remain in a chapel, still honoured by the people. The wooden crosses, however, were carried off by the peasants, who since then have put them back. After three months they had not been able to pull down half of the mound, even though they forced a great number of people to work at it. It seemed as though the men had arms of iron to build it, but arms of wool when it came to destroying it. Today you can still see the mound and the ditches almost complete.*

*This description will suffice to give you an idea of this Calvary which was so famous. I recommend myself to your holy prayers, and am, with respect, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant, G. OLIVIER, priest and Apostolic Missionary. Given at Nantes, this sixth day of May, seventeen hundred and twenty-one.*

## CHAPTER XIV

*The holy use made by M. de Montfort of this mortification.*

*He succours the poor of Nantes during the great flood,  
and establishes a house for the incurably sick*

M. de Montfort felt very deeply the mortification caused him by the destruction of his Calvary, but he uttered a word to no-one but the Lord who wanted to test him. He went to make a retreat at the house of the Jesuits in Nantes, during which, far from complaining or showing his displeasure, he kept a profound silence, so that the Jesuits, who were told of what had happened only three or four days after he entered their house, could not believe that it was true, because he had said nothing about it to them. During his retreat he busied himself with writing a hymn about the overthrow of the Calvary, a hymn which shows clearly the state of his heart, which was unbreakable in the midst of all the most mortifying things that happened in his life. In this he was imitating the Blessed Virgin who stood, that is, was firm and constant on Calvary, at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ her Son: *stabat juxta Crucem Mater Jesu*. Despite such profound humiliations as these, M. de Montfort remained in Nantes until the beginning of 1711. The flooding there was so great, and the river so overflowing, as it was elsewhere, that several houses were overwhelmed. The current was so fast and so impetuous that no-one dared brave the waters to carry provisions, in the suburb of Biesse, to the many poor people who were surrounded on all sides by the water, and who were dying of hunger for want of food. M. de Montfort, full of zeal and charity, spoke to the boatmen with such power and efficacy that he got them to carry him to the houses of these poor people, to bring them food, and everyone who saw the peril to which he was exposed without perishing cried miracle.

The charity of M. de Montfort, always attentive to the needs of the poor no matter what their situation, made him notice with pain that there was nowhere in the town to take in those who were incurably sick or invalid, because they were not admitted to any of the hospitals. This encouraged him to hire a small house to take in a few in this category, who were living without any assistance, and who were more to be pitied because they could not

even go begging for their livelihood in the town. He got one of the Daughters of Wisdom to come from Poitiers to take care of it, and this house is still in existence. This is how the saints do things. The more they are mortified in one place, the more abundant fruit they produce, and so resemble the grain of wheat of which the Saviour speaks in the gospel, which would produce no shoots unless it were dead and withered in the ground.

## Book Four

### CHAPTER I

*He goes to give a mission in the diocese of Luçon.*

*A parish-priest rejects him. Then he goes to La Rochelle.*

M. de Montfort, following the gospel advice, seeing that he was persecuted in one place, fled to another. Leaving the diocese of Nantes, he went to that of Luçon, where Messire François de Lescure, a doctor of the Sorbonne, educated at the Saint-Sulpice seminary in Paris, and later the Vicar General of the Bishop of Albi, and named bishop of Luçon by Louis XIV in 1702, invited him to come at the end of 1711. The first mission he was to give was in the parish of Saint-Hilaire. The parish-priest had even announced it one Sunday from the pulpit at High Mass. But God, whose will it was that his servant should never be without humiliations, wherever he went, allowed the parish-priest of Saint-Hilaire, who apparently had heard what had happened to M. de Montfort in the diocese of Nantes, not only to not permit him to preach in his church, but even to refuse him lodging in his house, even though he was wet through and very tired from the bad roads he had to come by, and night was approaching; in fact he dismissed him very rudely. The servant of God, not in the least put out, went to an inn in the village to ask for shelter, but the innkeeper, seeing that there was not much profit to be made from lodging a poor priest, also refused him, so that M. Grignon, blessing God for all this ill treatment, was getting ready to sleep in the open when a poor woman from the neighbourhood, seeing him go past the door of her lodgings, asked him where he was going at such a late hour. M. Grignon replied: "My good friend, I am looking for someone who is willing to put me up tonight for the love of God." Then she asked him to enter her house with his companion, saying: "I may be poor, but I still have a little bread and some straw that you can use." So, according to the gospel, this poor woman received the reward of a prophet for having welcomed a prophet, and the parish-priest was deprived of it through his own fault.

So it was that he began his first mission in the diocese of Luçon at La Garnache, and from there he went to La Rochelle, where Messire Etienne de Champflour, the bishop of La Rochelle, had invited him. This prelate, a man of great piety, had also been educated in the Saint-Sulpice seminary in Paris, and having been for a number of years the dean of the cathedral church of Clermont in the Auvergne, and Vicar General of the bishop of Clermont, was named bishop of La Rochelle by Louis XIV, on his own merits alone, in 1702, after the death of Messire Charles-Magdelaine Fréseau de La Fréselière, an Angevin who had done great things in a short time in this diocese. M. de Montfort, who was well known to this holy bishop, first came to La Rochelle towards the middle of 1712. As he was, as usual, on foot and having no money, he did not hesitate to look for an inn where he could rest and eat. But, since he had no horse, he was refused at the first one he approached. He was taken in with reluctance at another, for the same reason. That evening, while they were partaking of a very frugal supper, his companion asked him: "Father, you have no money, so who will pay for us tomorrow?" "Don't trouble yourself, my child," said M. Grignon, "Providence will see to it." The following day, he asked the innkeeper to come up to his room to talk with him. The bill came to twelve sols. M. Grignon said quite simply that he had no money, but asked him to

take his staff as a pledge, and said that he would shortly send him the money. Since the staff was worth much more than the twelve sols, the innkeeper willingly took it. A few days later, a charitable person, hearing what had happened, redeemed the staff and restored it to Monsieur de Montfort.

## CHAPTER II

*He goes to give a mission in the parish of L'Houmeau.*

*He returns to La Rochelle, where he gives four of them.*

The Bishop of La Rochelle did not think it right that he should first give a mission in the town where he lived. He sent him to the parish of L'Houmeau, two leagues from La Rochelle, to see what success he would have before exposing him to a larger audience. God showered so many blessings on his labours that the Bishop of La Rochelle, convinced of the worth of this holy missionary, and convinced that all the humiliations he had suffered were not the result of his own imprudence, but rather were a proof of his virtue, and a reward for his zeal and his apostolic labours, engaged him to come back to La Rochelle, where he gave four missions one after the other. The first was in Saint-Louis, the second to the soldiers of the barracks, the third to the women and the fourth to the men. At first he preached in the churches. But the great crowds of people who came to his sermons were so enormous that, however spacious they were, the churches were too small to hold them all. He had to preach, therefore, in the courtyard of the hospital and other places. He was even obliged to borrow the Dominican church because it was very big. The contradictions which accompanied this apostolic man wherever he was, were not lacking in La Rochelle any more than elsewhere. Not only did the worldlings declare themselves against his morality, which did not suit them at all, but even priests and religious tried to decry him, making him out to be a fool and an extravagant man. But, if there was cause for annoyance from this quarter, there was consolation from another quarter, from the fact that he had led a great number of sinners back to the path of virtue from which they had departed. He brought about there many conversions, restitutions and reconciliations. Among others, a man of quality, who laughed at him and spoke disparagingly of his conduct and his sermons, experienced an interior reproach so vivid and so urgent that, the following day, very early in the morning, he went to find M. de Montfort and asked his pardon, saying that he had been unable to sleep all night, so great were the reproaches of his conscience.

The greatest obstacles, which would have put off any other missionary but M. Grignon, never prevented him from undertaking or carrying out the work of God, and it often happened that he carried through with success undertakings that, to all human appearances, should not have succeeded.

## CHAPTER III

*He gives a mission to the soldiers of La Rochelle with great success.*

We have already said that the second mission M. Grignon gave in La Rochelle was that for the soldiers in the Dominican church. God endowed it with such extraordinary success that the majority of them broke down in tears and gave sure proof of the change

taking place in their lives. The result was that people who had only come to his sermons to amuse themselves and laugh at him, began to come along to be edified, and everyone agreed that Monsieur de Montfort preached like an apostle. Madame la Comtesse de Chamilly, the wife of the governor of La Rochelle, hearing of the marvellous fruit produced by the mission to the soldiers, sent along a young girl, Maure, who was living with her, and who had a very beautiful voice, to sing hymns during the mission. Such a wonderful change in the soldiers gave M. de Chamilly such a great esteem for the missionary that he did him the honour of inviting him several times to eat at his table. The procession which he arranged at the end of the mission was one of the most devout. All the soldiers walked in it barefoot, carrying a crucifix in one hand and a Rosary in the other. An officer walked at their head, also barefoot, carrying a kind of flag or banner of the cross. All sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The cantors, from time to time, intoned these words: “*Blessed Virgin, obtain for us...*” And the choir would respond: “*the love of God.*” And this response was made in so touching a way, each one with his eyes on his crucifix, that all those who were present found themselves moved by the sight.

## CHAPTER IV

*He erects crosses at the end of his missions.*

*Several people testify that they saw crosses appear in the air during this ceremony.*

Monsieur de Montfort, as his custom was, had two crosses erected in La Rochelle at the end of his missions, one at the Porte Dauphine, and the other at the Porte Saint-Nicolas, outside the town. The first was of stone, the second of wood. The one erected at the Porte Saint-Nicolas, the wooden one, was carried there with great solemnity, with all the people singing hymns, alternating with the clergy. An extraordinary thing happened, says M. des Bastières, during this ceremony. When the cross had been erected, M. de Montfort preached with his customary great zeal on the love of crosses and suffering. He had a wonderfully numerous audience, for not only the inhabitants of La Rochelle, but also people from all around had come to assist at so pious a spectacle. A moment after he had gone up into the pulpit, a terrible noise came from the midst of the audience. I thought at first, M. des Bastières tells us, that the Protestants were going to take us over. But I was agreeably surprised to hear people shouting: “*A miracle, a miracle! We can see crosses in the air.*” I looked up into the sky for a long time but could see nothing. I went up to M. de Montfort and asked him if he could see anything, and he replied that he could not. The shouting of the people lasted for at least a quarter of an hour. More than a hundred people, both clergy and laity, all worthy of credence, have certified to me that they saw that day a great number of crosses in the air, and we should not be surprised if God made them visible to some and not to others; this was perhaps to strengthen the faith of those who were wavering on the mystery of Jesus crucified, while the others did not need this external sign. A similar sight appeared to the emperor Constantine, to arouse his courage against his enemies, and to get him to embrace the Christian religion. Besides, we should not be astonished if a number of people saw these crosses, without the others seeing any. It is said, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Our Lord appeared to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, without being seen by any other persons but the apostle. *Audientes quidem vocem, neminem autem videntes.* Acts 9.7.

## CHAPTER V

*Some people lie in wait to murder him.*

*He escapes death in a very strange way.*

A very strange thing happened to M. de Montfort, says M. des Bastières, while he was giving the missions in La Rochelle, something which proves that God was watching in a special way over the life of this apostolic man. This is what happened.

Towards the end of the men's mission which he was giving in the Dominican church, M. de Montfort asked me one evening to accompany him to Saint-Louis. We were there for half an hour at the most. On our return journey, he wanted to go to see his sculptor, M. Adam, to see if he was working on the orders he had given him, and he asked me to take him there, not knowing himself the way there. To take the shortest route, we had to go down a street in La Rochelle which was very narrow and dark. It was winter and after seven o'clock in the evening. When we arrived at this street and were about to go down it, M. de Montfort told me that we were lost. I tried to persuade him of the opposite, but was unsuccessful. He just would not go down there. We had to go back the way we had come and walk as far again as we had already done to avoid this street.

After we left M. Adam's house, I asked him why he had been unwilling to go down the street which was the shortest way to go to see his sculptor. He replied: "I don't know, but when we arrived opposite that street, my heart became cold as ice, and I was completely unable to go on."

This mystery, which was so inscrutable, was unveiled for me, continues M. des Bastières, some years later, in a very clear way. I was on my way back from Nantes to La Rochelle, when I met up on the road with seven cavaliers, all from different parts of the country, who were following the messenger. Although they had no idea that I knew M. de Montfort, every day at dinner and bed-time, two or three of them would unfailingly bring him up in conversation and say things about him that should only be said of the greatest villains in the world. If he had committed the most atrocious and unheard-of crimes, they could not have treated him more unworthily. I took his side all the time, but not as forcibly as I might, for fear that they would say even worse things against his honour and reputation. And I took care not to let them know that I was one of his disciples.

The last night of our journey, which was at Le Poiré, seven leagues from La Rochelle, these gentlemen did not go to bed at all, and neither did I, since we had to board a boat at midnight to go over to Marans. Nevertheless they withdrew after supper to an upstairs room, while I took a downstairs room immediately below them, where I could easily hear what they were saying. Not content with all the outrageous things they had said to me at supper against M. de Montfort, they took him once again for the subject of their conversation. There was no insult that they did not bring up against him, and they said to one another: "He is worse than all the demons of Hell, he is a hypocrite who seduces all the little people." "One would be doing a great service to the State if one were to destroy this wretch," said one of them, "and if I were to meet him in an out-of-the-way place, I would run him through with my sword."

On this topic, one of them told the following story. "I was in La Rochelle," said he, "when this anti-Christ was giving a mission in Saint-Louis. Two of my friends and I went one day, by arrangement, to listen to him. As soon as we entered the church, we could not stop ourselves laughing. He heckled us, shouting at the top of his voice: 'Who are these three men who have just come in with their powdered wigs? The devil has roused them to impede the

fruit of this mission. Let them get out right now, or I am going to leave the pulpit.' Then he stopped for a moment. We went out and he began preaching again. Had we taken him at that time, we would have done away with him. Since then we tried a hundred times to meet him alone and out of the way. We would surely then have settled his account. We heard one day, by chance," they added, "that he was due to go one Sunday evening with Brother Mathurin to visit M. Adam, the sculptor, and that he was to go down this little street in La Rochelle. We were there from seven o'clock in the evening, and we waited for him until eleven o'clock, but he did not come at all." One of the company asked him what he would have done had he gone that way, and he replied: "We would have smashed his head." "And what would you have done," asked one of them, "to Brother Mathurin?" He said: "We would have sent him to hell with his master."

This story proves that M. de Montfort, in company with all apostolic men, was subject to calumny, insults and all kinds of ill-treatment, and that the Lord was good enough to deliver him from them, just as much as them. *Multae tribulationes justorum, et de omnibus his eripuit eos Dominus.* Psalms.

## CHAPTER VI

*He calls the priest, M. Vatel, in an extraordinary manner,  
to help him in his missions.*

During his stay in La Rochelle, M. de Montfort won a number of souls for God, and made some admirable conquests for Jesus Christ. The case of M. Vatel, who joined him, was one of the most extraordinary. This is the story of it. Messire Adrien Vatel, a priest of the diocese of Coutances, had come a short time before from Paris to La Rochelle, to embark on a boat, to go over to the islands, there to work for the conversion of the unbelievers. He had even made a contract with the captain of a vessel who had advanced him three hundred pounds to buy books and vestments for saying Mass. M. Vatel, however, had some difficulties regarding his vocation, because he was afraid that his mission to those countries was not properly authorised. He had consulted different people in Paris, to find out from whom he had to get authorisation. Since he had lived for some time in the community of the Holy Spirit in Paris, he went to seek out the Archbishop of Paris, to ask his blessing and all the faculties he needed to work in these islands. The Archbishop had given them to him, as far as he could. But M. Vatel, not content with this mission, had sought another from the Archbishop of Rouen, his Metropolitan, who granted him the same as the Archbishop of Paris. Yet, even with all this, he was not at all happy. He had consulted religious from various orders, who all told him that he had not received from these Archbishops sufficient faculties to work in those far-off countries, which did not come under their jurisdiction at all; and that he would have to have faculties from the Pope who was the universal bishop of the whole of Christendom, as he is called by St. Gregory, *Episcopus Catholicus*. But M. Vatel's conscience was not satisfied with this response. For he was afraid that these religious, who conduct missions in all the places he wanted to go to, might want to prevent him from working there out of a spirit of jealousy. In his perplexity over all this, he went to look for M. Grignon in La Rochelle. At that moment M. Grignon was reading a letter from a priest who had promised to come and work with him, and who was now making his excuses. When M. Vatel had told him of his difficulty, M. Grignon replied: "Good, Monsieur; here is a priest who has let me down. God has sent me another one. You must come with me, and we will work together." M. Vatel replied that that was not possible, because he had already entered



into a contract with the captain of a vessel, who had advanced him one hundred écus to buy what he needed. "You are in difficulties," said M. Grignon, "but the Bishop of La Rochelle will give the money back at the same time." He took M. Vatel to the Bishop, who, having listened to the arguments from both sides, went to get a hundred écus from his cabinet, and gave them to M. Vatel to take to the captain. The Captain, very displeased that M. Grignon had thus taken away the chaplain of his ship, began swearing that he would kill him wherever he found him. When M. Grignon heard this, he said a prayer for him, and went to see him. He embraced him, and was reconciled with him, and they were henceforth the best friends in the world. From then on, M. Vatel worked with M. Grignon with much success in his missions, and is one of the priests of the Company of Mary.

## CHAPTER VII

*He makes a number of foundations in La Rochelle  
for the good of his neighbour.*

During his stay in La Rochelle, which lasted nearly three years at different times, M. Grignon established a number of things in the town to perpetuate the fruits of his missions. The first was a confraternity in honour of the cross of Our Lord, the rules and statutes of which were approved by the Bishop, who speaks of them in the certificate he gave in these words: "There is a confraternity of Daughters of the Cross established by the late M. de Montfort in La Rochelle, which is still in existence and is directed by M. des Bastières, who takes care to gather them together every month, and to give them a short talk on their obligations, to encourage them in their piety. They often approach the sacraments. Given at La Rochelle, this second day of September, Seventeen hundred and twenty. *Signed*, Etienne, Bishop of La Rochelle." And it should be noted that there are still more than sixty persons in this confraternity.

At the end of a mission, M. Grignon wrote a circular letter to the members of the confraternity and to the Friends of the Cross, which was printed in Rennes with the necessary approval, in which he tells them, among other things:

*Friends of the Cross, you are like crusaders united to fight against the world; not like Religious who retreat from the world lest they be overcome, but like brave and valiant warriors on the battle-field, who refuse to retreat or even yield an inch. Be brave and fight courageously. You must be joined together in a close union of mind and heart, which is stronger and far more formidable to the world and to hell than are the armed forces of a great nation to its enemies.*

*Evil spirits are united to destroy you; you must be united to crush them. The avaricious are united to make money and amass gold and silver; you must combine your efforts to acquire the eternal treasures hidden in the Cross. Pleasure-seekers unite to enjoy themselves; you must be united to suffer. You call yourselves "Friends of the Cross." What a glorious title! I must confess that I am charmed and captivated by it. It is brighter than the sun, higher than the heavens, more magnificent and resplendent than all the titles given to kings and emperors. It is the glorious title of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. It is the genuine title of a Christian.*

*But, if I am captivated by its splendour, I am no less frightened by its responsibility, etc.*

Then he gives rules for the Friends and the members of the Confraternity of the Cross, that they should keep.

1. To suffer all kinds of ills, no matter where they come from.
2. To suffer indifferently, not picking and choosing.
3. To suffer patiently, with no murmuring or complaining.
4. To suffer joyfully, without sadness or grief.
5. To suffer in a holy way, without vanity or human respect, etc.

The second establishment he made in La Rochelle was the foundation of charitable schools, for teaching boys, especially the town's poor ones, for no fee. To this end, the Bishop hired a house (which has since been purchased outright), and there he put four teachers, at whose head was a priest who presided over their small community, and who instructed and heard the confessions of the children. This school is still in existence, thanks to the liberality of this holy prelate. M. de Montfort did the same for the young girls. A pious woman, seeing the great good done by M. Grignon in La Rochelle, was so touched by it that she gave him a house, for the duration of his life, on the outskirts of the town in the parish of Notre-Dame, where he could go and stay during the holidays; and a number of individuals competed with one another to provide him with furniture such as the prophet had, as it is told in the Book of the Kings: namely, a bed, a table, a chair and a candlestick.

M. Grignon, hearing one day that there was a big gathering of boys and girls who were dancing in one of the suburbs of the town of La Rochelle, carried away by his usual zeal against dances, went there with a certain cleric; and going into the hall, he went down on his knees in the midst of the dance, and said aloud the *Ave Maria*. This posture and prayer, so unexpected at such a gathering, took the assembly by such great surprise that everyone separated at once and fled. Two lads were so frightened by it that they fainted and fell to the ground. A cleric who is worthy of credence and who was present there, told me of this.

## CHAPTER VIII

*He goes to the Ile d'Yeu, in the diocese of Luçon. He sets sail.*

*He is pursued by pirates and is saved from them as if by a miracle.*

*Afterwards he goes to Sallertaine.*

A short time after the mission M. de Montfort gave for the men of La Rochelle in the church of the Dominicans, says M. des Bastières, he warned all those who had been helping him to get ready to leave for the Ile d'Yeu, in the diocese of Luçon, an island which is completely surrounded by the sea, and where the people are very wild because they have almost no communication with the rest of men. We were due, adds M. des Bastières, to set sail from La Rochelle. The day of our departure was fixed, but M. Clémenson, at whose house we were staying at the time, warned us that he knew for sure that we had all been betrayed into the hands of the Grenezéens<sup>21</sup>. M. de Montfort was not put out at all by this warning. I myself paid serious attention to it, and I pointed out to him, as strongly as I could, the extreme danger to which he was exposing us and all those who were due to accompany him. He did all he could to persuade me that what we had been told, far from having any foundation, gave no indication of being true. He said that the enemies of God and of our

salvation had invented this deceit to frighten us and prevent us from going to this island for the conversion of sinners, as we were called to do. He added that, if the martyrs had been as cowardly as we, they would not have gained the crown of glory they now enjoyed in heaven. I replied that I had neither the courage of the martyrs nor his own, but that I would always be grateful that I had not believed him in Cambon in an almost identical situation. I told him: "You may set sail when you please, but, for myself, I will not follow you, and I will take some other route to join you." Seeing me so resolute, he went along with my feelings. We delayed our departure for several days, fortunately for us, for we soon learnt that the boat which had been due to take us, leaving at two o'clock in the morning, had been captured that same day by a pirate from Grenezay<sup>22</sup>, and that the captain had been very surprised when he did not find us on board; he first of all asked the master of the boat, who was now his captive, where the two priests were who had been due to go over to the Isle-Dieu<sup>23</sup>, to which the master replied that they had stayed in La Rochelle. "That's too bad for you," he replied. "I would have been content to take them and would have sent you back home with a great reward, but since you do not have them, you will lose your boat and all your merchandise." It was a sailor, a relation of the master of this boat, who told us this story I have just related.

We were advised to go to Sables-d'Olonne, with the assurance that we would find there some rowing-boats that would take us over to Isle-Dieu. We followed this advice, but when we arrived we found no-one who was willing to take us over. They assured us that, for the past two weeks, the island had been infested on all sides by pirates from Grenezay, who were prowling all around. We were obliged to go to St-Gilles, three leagues from Sables. But all the sailors there said the same thing as those of Sables, and refused to take us. The result was that we were on the point of returning to La Rochelle. M. de Montfort seemed to be extremely sad, while I was filled with incredible joy. But before leaving, he made one final attempt and went to see the master of a rowing-boat, to whom he made such supplications and beautiful promises, assuring him that we ran no risk whatever and that we would not be captured, that the good fellow at last consented to take us.

So the following morning we had to go aboard. But when we were three leagues out to sea, we saw two pirate vessels from Grenezay, bearing down on us, all sails set. The wind was against us and we had only oars to propel us. All the sailors cried out: "We are captured! We are captured!" And these poor folk were uttering lamentable cries, enough to rouse the pity of the most hardened hearts. Meanwhile, M. de Montfort was singing hymns with all his heart, telling us to sing with him. But, since we were more inclined to cry than to laugh, we maintained a gloomy silence. Then M. de Montfort said to us: "Since you cannot sing, let us say our Rosary together." We recited it with him, with as much fervour as we could; and as soon as it was finished, M. de Montfort told us all: "Fear nothing, my dear friends, our good Mother the Blessed Virgin has heard our prayers, we are out of danger." We were however already within range of the cannon of these enemy ships. So one of the sailors cried: "How are we out of danger? The enemy is upon us and ready to sink our boat. Let us get ready rather for a journey to England." Then M. de Montfort replied: "Have faith, my friends, the wind is going to change." And in fact it turned out exactly as he said. A moment after he had spoken, we saw the two enemy ships go about, and the wind changing completely, our boats drew apart and we began to breathe again and to rejoice. We sang out the *Magnificat* with willing hearts in thanksgiving.

At last we arrived safe and sound. We were perfectly well received by the inhabitants of Isle-Dieu, but very badly by its governor and all his friends, who persecuted M. de Montfort the whole time the mission lasted. That did not prevent the inhabitants of the island from profiting very much from all the exercises they attended. At the end, a cross was erected to serve as a monument to posterity that a mission had been preached in that place.

After the mission in Isle-Dieu, M. de Montfort went to give one in the parish of Sallertaine, in the same diocese of Luçon. This being over, he had a cross erected as usual. But Monsieur de Camilly, the governor of La Rochelle, for fear that the king, who had had the Calvary at Pontchâteau knocked down, might be just as unhappy with this cross, sent some soldiers to take it down, even though it was very far from being erected on such a Calvary. So much so that M. de Montfort could say with St. Paul, wherever he went, that he was crucified on the crosses he had erected. *Christo crucifixus sum cruci.*

## CHAPTER IX

*He gives a great number of missions in the dioceses of La Rochelle and Saintes.  
He is subjected to a very severe humiliation in the parish of Vanneau.*

Leaving La Rochelle, Monsieur Grignon went to give missions in the same diocese, with the Jesuits, Fathers Collusson and Doye, in the parishes of Nozay, La Jarrie, La Croix Chapeau, Tairé, Saint-Vivien, Isle-Daile, Vérinne, Saint-Christophe, Saint-Medard, Taugon, La Rode, Courton, Saint Sauveur, and Nuillé<sup>24</sup>, and everywhere in those parts his work was accompanied by abundant graces, miraculous cures, and especially very humiliating crosses. He suffered one of these, among others, in the parish of Vanneau, in the diocese of Saintes, and it was one he felt very severely. Here is what happened.

The parish-priest of Vanneau, hearing of the great fruits that attended the missions of Monsieur de Montfort, wanted to invite him to his parish to so that his parishioners might share in the blessings which this apostolic man drew down. Having obtained all the necessary faculties for this from his bishop, Monsieur de Montfort made his way there with joy, with the intention of winning souls for God. But the devil, jealous of his success, and unable to bear the thought of being robbed of his spoils by the conversion of so many sinners, caused the Bishop of Saintes to hear, through his emissaries, that M. de Montfort was a seducer, an eccentric and a hypocrite, who did more evil than good wherever he went. That was why this prelate, thinking he was doing a service to God, eighteen days after the mission began in Vanneau, sent a notification to M. de Montfort and all the priests working with him, of a general prohibition of all priestly functions. "We had already," says M. des Bastères in his memoirs, "heard all the general confessions. The following day we were to begin to absolve those penitents who were well-disposed, in preparation for their general communion. This was a lightning strike for M. de Montfort. It reduced him to tears, and he told us that he had never in his life suffered any mortification that he felt so deeply. We received our sentence a little after midday, and we spent until evening discussing what line we should take; finally we decided to leave the following day for La Rochelle. But the parish-priest of Vanneau, a wise and very pious man, persuaded us to stay until he could return from Saintes, where he wanted to go to impress upon the Bishop the inconvenience his suspension was going to cause, and the damage which would be done to his parishioners. M. de Montfort agreed to this, and the parish-priest set out immediately, and, although it was 15 leagues from Vanneau to Saintes, he made such good haste, his love of his flock's salvation having given him wings, that he was back by 5 o'clock the following evening, bearing for the missionaries a prolongation of their faculties until the closure of the mission. This news gave them as much joy as the first news had given them sorrow, and it is unbelievable how many extraordinary conversions this mission brought about, and with how many blessings it was accompanied."

## CHAPTER X

*He makes a journey to Paris, where he gives a mission.*

*He goes to the Ile d'Oléron. He returns to the diocese of La Rochelle,  
where he continues his labours with the same blessings.*

Leaving the diocese of Saintes, M. de Montfort paid a short visit to Paris, as though to relax by visiting his old friends. But the fire of his charity would allow him no rest, and so he had always to be in continual movement. In Paris he gave a retreat to the Religious of the *Ave Maria*. Then he returned to the diocese of La Rochelle. He went over to the Ile d'Oléron, to Moussay, and afterwards he was in La Séguinière for the first time in 1713. There he found a parish-priest after his own heart, completely dedicated to his duties, called Pierre Kentin, an Irishman<sup>25</sup>. It was he who told me that the mission given in his parish, produced such wonderful fruit which persisted for eight years afterwards with the same fervour, and that the Rosary is still said every evening in his church, and three times on Sundays and feast days. Five decades are said at the first Mass, five decades at two o'clock in the afternoon after catechism, and five more decades after Vespers. So on those days, the whole Rosary is said. And this good parish-priest also told me that he thought there was not a house in his parish where the Rosary was not said in common or in private every day of the year.

He also had a ruined chapel in the parish of La Séguinière rebuilt, and dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin.

After this he went to La Rochelle, where he gave a retreat to the Sisters of Providence. From there he went to Le Gué-d'Alléré, Saint-Amand and Marennes, incessantly running apostolic races, with no rest or moment of relaxation. He was like those mysterious clouds to which the Holy Spirit compares the apostles who fly, so to speak, from one end of the world to the other, spreading everywhere the light of the gospel truths and the fruitful waters of grace, to fertilise the countryside and soften the most hardened hearts. The burning zeal of M. de Montfort was like fire. The more he was given upon which to exercise his activity, the more he wanted, and he would never say 'enough'.

## CHAPTER XI

*He returns to La Séguinière. He goes to Mervent.*

*He delivers a possessed person.*

*There he causes the church to be rebuilt.*

A year later he came back again to the same parish of La Séguinière, where he made a retreat, at the end of which he went to spend a week at the chateau belonging to the Mesdemoiselles de Beauveau, relations of the late Bishop of Nantes, ladies of great piety. They kept him there for eight or ten days to let him rest, along with four or five missionaries who accompanied him. From La Séguinière he went to Saint-Amand, where he found a woman who was rightly believed to be possessed by a devil, since she suffered so much from strange convulsions, movements and extraordinary agitation. She had brought sorrow on her whole family for a very long time. M. de Montfort performed over her the exorcisms prescribed by the Church, and although she had no understanding of Latin, she replied to

everything he asked her in that language. He offered the Holy Sacrifice to God for her, and prescribed some exercises of piety to which she was faithful, and a few days later she was delivered from the devil. Her husband came to thank M. Grignon for the signal grace he had received from God by means of his prayers.

From Saint-Amand, he went to the parish of Mervent, where he found the parish church almost in ruins, so much so that there was no longer a roof on the nave, and very often the parish-priest was in danger of not being able to say Mass because of the wind which blew in from all sides, and the water which fell on the high altar. According to his custom, M. de Montfort undertook the re-building of this church. He preached strongly on this topic, so that not only the inhabitants of the place, but also people from round about, furnished him in abundance with all that was necessary to realise this great work: some giving money, others wood, some providing carts, others again lime and sand. In the same parish there was a poor young woman who for six weeks had been afflicted by such a swelling in her eye that it was as inflated and large as that of an ox. She was suffering very acute pain and could not sleep, day or night. She presented herself to M. de Montfort who took pity on her and blessed some water, as he usually did, and gave her some to rub on her eye. She had no sooner done so than she felt some relief, and the following night she was completely cured. The cleric who accompanied him on this mission told me that this really was true, and that he had witnessed it himself.

## CHAPTER XII

### *He goes to give a mission in Saint-Jean-de-Fontenay.*

Monsieur Grignon, going to give a mission in Saint-Jean-de-Fontenay, in the diocese of La Rochelle, began with the women, and had great difficulty excluding all the men, no matter how hard he tried, so great was their eagerness to listen to him. But if God accompanied his preaching everywhere with abundant graces: *Dabo verbum Evangelizantibus virtute multa*, he also gave the preacher very heavy crosses to carry. For he had a number of very humiliating things, and some very great contradictions to suffer during this mission. We can do no better than to hear of them from Monsieur des Bastières, who was an eye-witness, and has written to us in these words.

I am surprised, Monsieur, that no one has informed you of what took place in the mission at Fontenay. Yet a remarkable thing happened, which I shall remember all my life. I do not think any of those who, like me, were eye-witnesses of it, can ever forget it. I am going to give you a short, but very faithful account of it, in which there is certainly no exaggeration, any more than in the others memoirs I have already sent you.

It was in 1714, in September, as far as I recall, that the late M. de Montfort gave two missions in Fontenay-le-Comte.

The first was for the women, the second for the men, after which he gave a retreat to the Sisters of Notre-Dame in the same place. Nothing extraordinary happened during the mission for the men, nor during the retreat for the Sisters. It was only during the mission for the women that there occurred a truly tragic scene which fulfilled my greatest fears.

Monsieur de Montfort, at the start of this mission, forbade all the men and boys to take part in the services he was to hold, promising them he would give a special mission for them, during which he would, in the same way, forbid all the women and girls to attend.

At that time, there were some cavalry in Fontenay, in winter quarters. Their Captain or Colonel, who was called, if I am not mistaken, M. du Menis, asked M. de Montfort to allow the soldiers to assist at the women's mission, giving as his reason that he believed they would have to leave Fontenay before the men's mission began. Monsieur de Montfort willingly gave his permission, and nearly all the cavalymen assisted at almost all the exercises, for nearly two weeks. They were faithfully there, morning and evening, showing an exemplary modesty. But unfortunately a most surprising and unforeseen catastrophe occurred, which prevented any of these soldiers from completing their mission.

About four o'clock in the evening, as I was hearing confessions in the sacristy, I suddenly heard a terrible noise which frightened me. I went out of the sacristy and entered the church. The women gathered there were uttering cries to make you tremble. I thought at first that some woman had been taken ill and that they were taking her outside. But then I heard, a few moments later, the voice of M. de Montfort, shouting at the top of his voice: "Women, come here!" At the same time I heard someone else shouting: "Soldiers, come here!" You would have seen, at that moment, all the women leaving their places and running to the aid of M. de Montfort, with incredible haste, uttering terrible cries, or rather yells. The soldiers also ran to the voice of their Captain who was calling them. I thought then that they were cutting M. de Montfort's throat. I was so afraid that I was more dead than alive. I went back into the sacristy; two soldiers came in as well. I asked them what was happening in the church. They told me in a trembling voice that all those who were there were going to be overwhelmed, and begged me to be a friend to them. I asked them what service I could possibly render them in such a dreadful situation. They said: "Bear witness that we were in no way involved in the murders that are going to be done." "Willingly," said I, "but how are we ourselves to escape the fury of the murderers?" "Our captain," they replied, "only bears a grudge against M. de Montfort and the women." They closed the door of the sacristy and barricaded it as best they could. We stayed locked in there for just under a quarter of an hour. As soon as we could hear no more noise, we went back into the church where a profound silence reigned. I saw M. de Montfort in the pulpit, and went as near to him as I could: he seemed to be smiling, but his face was as pale as a dead man's. Nevertheless he preached for nearly an hour, with as much spirit, power and unction as if nothing had happened. The blessing after the sermon having been given, M. de Montfort wanted to leave the church, but all the women were against it, crying loudly that the soldiers were waiting for him in the cemetery to kill him. He went out, nevertheless, but with great difficulty, preceded, surrounded and followed by a great crowd of women. In fact, Monsieur du Menis and his soldiers were waiting for him in the cemetery, with drawn swords in their hands. He passed through the midst of them with intrepid courage, getting off with some insults thrown at him as he passed. The crowd of women escorted him right up to the Providence, and stayed a long time at its door to prevent the cavalymen from entering. I stayed in the church for more than an hour after M. de Montfort left it, as I had been led to believe that they had it in for me as much as for him, and that, if I went out, I would be shown no quarter. Since this was not true, I passed through the midst of the soldiers, certainly not without fear, but trembling like a dead leaf. No-one said a word to me.

I had no sooner reached the Providence than I made enquiries from more than twenty people as to how the quarrel had come about and who had begun it. Almost everyone told me a different story, so after supper, I addressed myself to M. de Montfort during the recreation period. I begged him to tell me how all these things had happened. He gave the following account.

"I went as usual to the church towards four o'clock in the evening to preach. On going in, I saw a gentleman that I did not know at all, leaning on the holy-water font, with his hat on, taking snuff and laughing – with whom, or at what, I do not know. I went up to him and

asked him to leave the church, because I was giving the mission only for the women. He replied very brusquely that he would not leave, and asked me who I took him for. He said that he had just as much right as I to stay in the church, and that, in short, he was as good a Christian as myself. 'All right,' I said to him, 'stay for today, but do not come back tomorrow; I will be giving a mission especially for the men after this one, at which you can assist.' 'I will come back in spite of what you say,' he replied in great anger, 'churches are not made for dogs, but for Christians, and I have at least as much right as you to go there.' 'Monsieur,' I said, 'do not say anything unseemly.' It was then that he swore by the Holy Name of God in an execrable manner, throwing atrocious insults at me and threatening to run me through with his sword, putting his hand on his scabbard several times without drawing his sword altogether. I went down on my knees and kissed the ground, asking pardon of God for the horrible blasphemies this impious man had just been spewing forth against him. When I got up, some women came to me and pushed this gentleman, trying to make him leave by force. He flew into a more than diabolical rage and set upon me like a roaring lion, took me by the throat, and punched me twice in the stomach with such force and violence that I thought I would fall down in a faint. It was at that moment that I called the women to come to my aid. The man let go of me when he saw them coming with noisy haste to my side. He called his soldiers who came to his aid. I have no idea what he said to them. The women surrounded me and gripped me so tightly that I thought I would be smothered. The soldiers left the church with their captain. I had the doors closed and told the women to go to their places and keep silent, which they did right away."

The cavalrymen stayed in the cemetery throughout the sermon and the blessing, making a great noise the whole time. The trumpet was continually sounded as though calling the soldiers to combat. It was after seven o'clock in the evening before they finally withdrew altogether.

Monsieur du Menis left that same day for l'Hermenault, where the Bishop of La Rochelle was for the moment. A number of soldiers accompanied him there. I have no idea what complaints they made against M. de Montfort, but they were back the following day. They had no sooner dismounted than they came, still in their boots, to the Providence and demanded to speak to M. de Montfort. We were at table, but as soon as he was told, he went to meet them. I was quite afraid to follow him, and did not go completely downstairs from where I was. I saw three or four gentlemen, among them the Captain of the cavalrymen. It was he who presented M. de Montfort with a letter, saying that it was from the Bishop. Of all the conversation they had with one another, I heard only these words: "Your brutality nearly caused your own death and that of all the women who were in the church. I was on the point of ordering my men to tear you all in pieces. However, this revenge would only have cost me my life. I am commanded by the Bishop to tell you to go to see him at once." M. de Montfort spoke with him for nearly seven or eight minutes, but so gently and in such a low voice that I could hardly hear anything.

However it was not M. de Montfort who went to l'Hermenault, but the parish-priest of Saint-Jean, where we gave the two missions in Fontenay. M. de Montfort was completely acquitted of all the falsehoods and calumnies that these gentlemen had uttered about him to the Bishop. The battlefield remained his, and he continued victorious in the battle. What pained him most was to see that their Captain took away from him a trumpet which was used for the singing of hymns in the church. The trumpet, taken into a neighbouring house while the people were busy singing the praises of God, would play profane tunes as though to taunt him. Unable to bear this impiety, he complained of it in public, but was unable to make them cease, for all that.



As he was preparing, as his custom was, to erect a cross in the parish of Saint-Jean, he went himself with one of the craftsmen to look for a suitable place to put it. He chose a rise near the town so that it would be seen, as he said, from further away. The parish-priest, annoyed that he had not told him of this, considered it more apt to put it in a hollow, because this rise was near an inn, and he was adamant that it should be placed there. M. Grignion, fearing that it would not be as honoured in that place as in the other, was really sorry about this. But in the end he gave in to the wishes of the parish-priest. The craftsman who had chosen, along with him, the other site, was not of the same opinion. By way of rebellion, he had the cross moved into an inn as soon as it had been painted. When M. Grignion heard about this, he complained bitterly about it, and told him off for this kind of profanation involved in carrying this cross into a profane place. This caused him so much pain that he could not stop himself saying, as he erected the cross: "O poor cross, you have been well and truly crucified!" He was also prevented from building a sort of small chapel, in which he wanted to place a beautiful crucifix which he had bought for that purpose.

During this mission he suffered another painful affront, for, having lit a candle in front of the statue of the Child Jesus, a priest came along himself and extinguished it, thus showing disapproval of his behaviour.

In the procession which was held at the end of this mission, he got thirty-three poor men to walk, dressed in honour of the thirty-three years that Our Lord lived on earth.

The Rosary is still said every evening in this parish, and when the bell has been rung to summon the people, it is tolled sixty-three times in honour of the sixty-three years it is believed that the Blessed Virgin lived on earth.

Knowing that the poor are usually more concerned about collecting alms from the faithful at the door of the church than about listening to the sermons preached therein, and unable to bear the thought of their being deprived of the word of God, he employed a ruse which achieved his aim. He borrowed a great cauldron which he had filled each day with potage, and as they left the catechism which he conducted in St-Nicolas, he gave two spoonfuls of this to each one. By this means he attracted all the poor to attend his catechism classes, and he converted them to the point where, in place of the swearing that was usually heard from their lips every day before this mission, now there were only hymns coming from their mouths. And they themselves made a collection to build an oratory, where each evening they said prayers in the market hall, and often went from there in procession to the cross erected by M. Grignion. And the poor were not the only ones to act in this way. The children, too, made crosses of wood and went there in procession, singing hymns they had been taught. Every Sunday, a wonderful crowd of people would gather there to say the Rosary. Several went barefoot to imitate the humiliations of Our Lord. This devotion continues to this day, and few people pass before the cross without stopping to say their prayers on their knees.

The people held Monsieur de Montfort in such veneration that, whenever he passed by some place, they would run up to ask his blessing. God rewarded him for all his sufferings, in proportion to what he suffered during the mission in Fontenay, for he granted him two special graces. The first was the conversion of a heretic woman, followed shortly after by that of her sister. The second was the vocation of M. Mulot, who joined with him to follow him in all his missions, in the manner which we will now relate.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *He calls Monsieur Mulot. The wonderful circumstances*

*of his vocation to the missions.*

The parish-priest of St-Pompain, ten leagues from Fontenay, who was called M. Mulot and was a good and very zealous man, had had the intention for some time of having a mission preached in his parish. He set his eyes on a certain Religious of a holy Order, who had much grace and talent for the giving of missions. But Messire Pierre Mulot<sup>26</sup>, his brother, who was also a priest and living with him, dissuaded him, saying that he advised him to ask M. de Montfort to come and give the mission in Saint-Pompain, because he knew that God's grace went with him everywhere, and that the fruits of his missions lasted much longer in the places where he had been than in other places where other missionaries had worked, either because he had more abundant grace, or because he made use of very holy practices to perpetuate the fruits of his missions: little schools, the establishment of the Holy Rosary, the White Penitents and other confraternities. The result was that the parish-priest of Saint-Pompain said to his brother that, since God had given him this idea, he should please go himself to put the proposition before M. de Montfort, who was at that moment in Fontenay, although he had until then been very doubtful about him on account of his extraordinary zeal, and the fact that a number of parish-priests and others criticised him, because he seemed to them eccentric and ridiculous. M. Mulot went straightaway to ask M. de Montfort to have the goodness to come and give a mission in his brother's parish. The servant of God told him that he could not grant his request because he was overwhelmed with work and, besides, he had promised three or four missions to parish-priests who had asked before him, and that, in a word, he could not expect him to undertake the mission in Saint-Pompain before those he had promised. M. Mulot was not put off, and was so insistent that M. Grignon, looking straight at him, replied in a firm tone of voice: "If you are willing to follow me and work with me for the rest of your days, then I will go to your brother's place, but not otherwise."

Monsieur Mulot replied modestly: "You are making it impossible, Monsieur, for my request to be met, for I have been paralysed down one side for a number of years, I have a chest complaint and I suffer headaches which prevent me from sleeping, day or night. What would you do with such a missionary? I would be more of a hindrance than a help to you." M. Grignon, no doubt seeing into the depths of M. Mulot's heart and the plans God had for him, replied: "It does not matter, Monsieur; all your infirmities do not stop me saying to you, as Our Lord said to St. Matthew, *sequere me*, that his will is that you follow me. All your ills will disappear once you start working for the salvation of souls, and you must make a start with the mission in Saint-Pompain."

Monsieur Mulot, though surprised at this proposal, believed the holy man and followed him to the mission in Saint-Pompain. And, no sooner had he gone into the pulpit and the confessional to reconcile sinners, than he felt his ailments diminishing, and his health was so well restored in a few days that he followed Monsieur de Montfort in his missions for nearly three years, without any inconvenience. M. Grignon took him for his confessor, and it was he who assisted at his death. He was the first, along with M. Vatel, on whom he set his eyes for the establishment of that congregation of twelve priests that he called the Company of Mary, to continue his missions and apostolic labours – a congregation which still exists and which is growing day by day, as we shall tell at the end of this story.

#### CHAPTER XIV

*He gives a mission in Vouvant. A possessed woman is brought to him.*

*The fruit he draws from this.*

*He wants to build himself a place of solitude in the forest.*

From Saint-Jean-de-Fontenay, Monsieur Grignion went to the parish of Vouvant. On his arrival, there was brought to him a pious young lady who to all appearances was possessed, so that he could perform for her the exorcisms prescribed by the Church. He undertook this task, and made the devil obey almost everything he commanded him. One day among others, a number of young libertines, having learnt that M. Grignion was going to exorcise this young lady in the presence of only one cleric, furtively climbed up into the bell-tower, without the possibility of either the possessed person, or anybody else, knowing this by ordinary means. But, as soon as she entered the church, she said to Monsieur Grignion: "You think you are alone with me, but you are mistaken; there are some people hidden in the bell-tower who want to listen to what you say to me and what I reply to you." Monsieur Grignion looked into this and found it to be true. Preaching in the evening after this had happened, he asked all those listening to him to undertake a general fast, that God might be pleased to deliver this young woman from possession by the devil. Everyone agreed. The young men who had hidden in the bell-tower, struck by the fact that they had been discovered in a way which did not seem to them to be natural, themselves undertook this fast in a strict way, though they admitted that they had never done the fasts prescribed by the Church, even though they were of an age to do so and had the necessary strength. M. Grignion, seeing that it would need much time to carry out the exorcisms necessary to deliver this young woman from slavery to the wicked spirit, and that, because of this, the devil would enjoy himself and cause him to lose much of the time he should have been giving to the conversion of souls, sent her away with salutary advice on how to make good use of such a painful situation, so dangerous and yet so meritorious for salvation. And God permitted this young woman, who appeared to be completely possessed, to become herself a missionary, because the devil was forced by God's orders to make known, to a number of people sunk deep in mortal sin where they had been living for a number of years, the deplorable state of their souls. And these people were converted, did penance, and changed their lives; which can certainly be ascribed to the fervent prayers of Monsieur de Montfort. During this mission, and the one in Mervent, Monsieur Grignion went from time to time into the forest of Vouvant which was nearby, to meditate, far from the noise, in the middle of the woods, on the holy mysteries of our religion and on the truths he must proclaim to the people. There he found a very secluded spot between two mountains, at the foot of which the river ran and where there were a number of small springs.

His idea was to build in this place a small hermitage, where he could go from time to time after his missions to make a retreat and to prepare himself afresh for his work for the salvation of souls. He had no sooner begun the task than a number of people came to help him. Some dragged rocks, others made mortar, while still others went to fetch water from the river. But one might say that no-one worked harder than he. He worked hard enough to cut out of the rock a space big enough to hold a bed, a table and a chair. He had a room built of masonry which served as a vestibule to this cave. But the water which dripped from the rock spoilt this work. His plan still was, had he stayed there longer, to have a small chapel built there and to erect a great cross. The people, since his death, go there to pray to God before a small picture of the Blessed Virgin which has been placed there in a small niche.

## CHAPTER XV

*Monsieur de Montfort gives a mission in Saint-Pompain with wonderful fruits.*

*He organises there an edifying procession of penitents,  
and sends them on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Saumur.*

The mission in Saint-Pompain was among those undertaken by Monsieur Grignon which enjoyed the greatest fame and success. For, not only did he establish there a band of penitents, as indeed he did everywhere, the principal aim of which was to keep them away from debauchery and taverns on Feast days and Sundays, but he also established there a society of virgins who were obliged to make a vow not to marry for a year; the aim of this was to keep them away from worldly gatherings such as balls, dances and mixed company. The bishops could dispense from this vow. While there he preached with such power against an abuse which was prevalent in several parishes, of holding fairs on feast days and Sundays, that he had the joy of seeing seven or eight of them, both in Saint-Pompain and elsewhere, transferred to other days which were not rest-days. At the end of the mission, he preached a retreat, as his custom was, for the men, who were so seized by the fire of God's love and the desire to do penance that they suggested they should make a pilgrimage on foot to Our Lady of Saumur. At first he refused permission, so as to test their perseverance, but they were so insistent on obtaining this grace that at length he agreed. There were thirty-six of them who made this pilgrimage.

Monsieur de Montfort did three things to forestall and prevent abuses which might occur on the road. 1°. He put two priests at their head to lead them. 2°. He gave them a rule to occupy them in a holy way throughout their journey. 3°. He prescribed the aim they should have in this devotional exercise, which was to ask of God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the avoidance of sin, a good death, and holy missionaries to prolong the fruit of his missions. This rule is so wise and devout that we thought we should recount it at the end of this chapter, to serve as a model for similar occasions, even though it was twenty-one leagues from Saint-Pompain to Saumur on roads which were very bad because it was in March and they were three days on the journey. The majority walked barefoot, sometimes singing hymns, sometimes saying the Rosary, or conversing on pious subjects, and stopping in all the places they passed through, such as Thouars and the various villages, to go into the church and adore the Blessed Sacrament. They had reading during their meals, and the majority slept on straw in barns since they could not all find beds in the inns. The richer among them contributed to the expenses of the poorer ones. One of them who suffered from gout took a horse to ride upon, getting off from time to time to let those who were most tired ride on it, while all the others held him up under the arms to help him to walk. Entering into the villages, they walked two by two, singing hymns with great modesty, looking neither to right nor to left, but keeping their gaze downcast.

Some parish-priests, touched by such a devout spectacle, came to see them in their lodgings and offered them their purses. In this order they all entered the town of Saumur. All the inhabitants came to their doors and windows to watch them pass. Touched by such an edifying spectacle, no-one could withhold their tears. The pilgrims made their confession and received Communion at Notre-Dames-des-Ardilliers, and returned home in the same order as they had come. Their journey lasted seven days and the mission ended with the erection of the cross. And, though there was heavy snow, these penitents did not hesitate to walk to it barefoot.

## CHAPTER XVI

*The Rule he gave to the pilgrims, to be observed along the way.*

*The aim he proposed, to ask God for holy missionaries. 27*

1°. You will make this pilgrimage for the following intentions: Firstly, to obtain from God through Mary's intercession good missionaries, who will follow the example of the apostles by complete abandonment to divine Providence and the practice of virtue under the protection of our Lady.

2°. Secondly, to obtain the gift of wisdom in order to know, love and practise the truths of our faith and to lead others to Christ.

3°. You will not have anything to distinguish you from others, except your modest demeanour, your holy silence, and your continual prayer. You could, however, without making yourselves conspicuous, have a rosary in your hand and a crucifix around your neck to show that you are on a pilgrimage and not making an ordinary journey.

4°. In the villages and towns you will walk two by two to edify, but in the country you will keep together and not separate into groups except through necessity or obedience. If through fatigue anyone falls behind, the others in their charity wait for him and, if necessary, put him on a horse, thus keeping each other as members of one body.

5°. On the journey they will sing hymns, say the Rosary or engage in silent prayer. They will not speak to each other except for one hour in the morning about ten o'clock and again after dinner between one and two o'clock.

6°. The day's time-table is as follows:

1. As far as possible they will stay in the same inn; the weaker men will sleep in beds, the more penitent on hay and straw. They will observe silence and say the evening prayer together.

2. They will all get up at daybreak when the superior gives the signal. They will say together the *Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, the commandments of God and the Church*.

3. Then if the church in the place where they have spent the night is fairly near, and they do not have to go too much out of their way, they will visit the Blessed Sacrament and sing the *Tantum Ergo* with its prayer.

4. As they resume their journey they will sing hymns and say the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, then they will keep silent for half an hour meditating on the Passion and Death of our Lord.

5. Meditation finished, they will say the first Rosary in two choirs. To facilitate this, they will try, as far as possible, to walk in twos or fours.

6. After the Rosary they will sing hymns for about an hour until, at a signal from the superior, they will converse together on good subjects until dinner, unless they are passing through a town or village when they will again sing hymns.

7. If there is a church close to where they stop for dinner, they will pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament before going to the inn.

8. At the inn, if it is possible, they will either all go to an upstairs room or group together in a room on the ground floor. They will kneel down and after having sung "*O Holy Spirit, give us your light,*" and said a *Hail Mary*, they will sit at table.

9. When grace has been said, one of them will read a short passage to which they will listen in silence. At the end of the reading, the superior, whom they obey for the love of Jesus Christ, will give them permission to talk.

10. Before leaving the inn, they will sing "*Mother of God, you are our Mother,*" and "*Lord, graciously reward our benefactors,*" then they will say a *Hail Mary*.

11. After dinner they will take recreation for an hour while walking, at the end of which the superior will give the signal for the second Rosary which they will say, as above, in two choirs, for the edification of those along the way who see and hear them. Finally they will take a light meal and go to bed, as was said above.<sup>28</sup>

6°. Unless they are prevented by sickness they try to fast during the whole pilgrimage.

7°. They will never leave the group nor do anything out of the ordinary without the permission of the one whom they have chosen as their leader and superior. Thus they will be blessed more by their obedience than by their penance.

8°. About a quarter of an hour before arriving at Saumur, they may take off their shoes and go into the Lady Chapel barefoot, two by two, singing hymns. But if they arrive in the morning when Mass is being celebrated, they must stop singing at the door. At the end of Mass or in the evening when the office is not being sung, the superior may ask permission of the sacristan to say the Rosary aloud and to sing hymns before the statue of our Lady. If this is not permitted they will be content to pray silently for as long as the superior wishes. No one must leave without necessity or without his permission. In this way they will all together defeat God's enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh, in their united effort to separate and subvert the pilgrims.

9°. All the pilgrims will go to Confession and each will receive Holy Communion at least once and all the group together will receive Communion at ten o'clock the day after their arrival. They will spend the rest of the day at Saumur, not sight-seeing like tourists, but praying and thanking God like genuine penitents.

10°. They will leave the following day after having been to Mass and again receiving Holy Communion, provided they have not committed any serious sin and have obeyed this rule and their superior.

11°. The superior will allow them to go just once to buy devotional articles but they must return to the inn and not go elsewhere.

12°. After Mass on the day after their Communion, and half an hour's prayer, they will leave the town of Saumur, walking two by two, singing hymns. They will ignore the jeers of the irreligious; their only answer will be their modesty, their silence and their songs of spiritual joy.

13°. If they make the pilgrimage in this way, I am sure they will be seen to be worthy of God, of angels and of men; and they will obtain from God through the intercession of his Blessed Mother great graces not only for themselves but for the whole Church of God.

14°. It would be fitting that they do not mention the names of the missionaries who have drawn up this present rule so as to ensure that the glory go to God alone; since he alone inspired this undertaking, he alone must be the reward.

15°. On their return they will render an account of all the trials they have had to face as well as everything else that has happened to them, and in thanksgiving a solemn High Mass will be offered for them.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Plan for a society of missionary priests, under the title of 'Company of Mary'.*

Monsieur de Montfort, following the example of Jesus Christ, wanting to provide, before he died, successors to his zeal, so as to render the fruits of his work stable and lasting, *ut fructus vester permaneat*, gave thought to how he might establish a society of missionary priests, under the title of the 'Company of Mary', who would go from town to town and from hamlet to hamlet, lighting the fire of charity which, through human weakness, usually dies down or is even extinguished after missions.

Following the example of St. Ignatius Loyola, who established the Society of Jesus in the century before last to instruct the youth and to conduct missions in the New World, he wanted to gather together some priests under the title of 'The Company of Mary', in our own century, to work for the salvation of all the peoples of this kingdom. His plan for this is so beautiful and perfect that, if it succeeds, as there is every reason to hope judging by the happy beginnings one can already see, it might be said that it will be a miracle which far surpasses all those that are said to have already been performed through the intercession of M. de Montfort.

But, since his written project is very long, we have come to the conclusion that we must present here a brief analysis, so as to provide an exact idea of it to the public, while reserving the right to have it printed in its entirety, if God should continue to pour out his blessings on it as he has already begun to do.

Monsieur de Montfort places first of all, at the start of his written project, a prayer which is both fervent and eloquent, which begins with these words: *Memento, Domine, congregationis tuae, quam possedisti ab initio.*<sup>29</sup> "Remember, Lord this Congregation which you have possessed from all eternity. You have made it your own from the beginning, *ab initio*, when your mind dwelt on it before time began. You made it your own from the beginning, *ab initio*, when you held it in your hand as you created the world out of nothing. You made it your own when you took it to your heart while your dear Son, dying on the cross, bedewed it with his blood, consecrated it by his death and entrusted it to his holy Mother's keeping. Establish your empire on the ruins of that of your enemies. *Tempus faciendi, Domine, dissipaverunt legem tuam*: it is time to act, O Lord, they have rejected your law. It is indeed time to fulfil your promise. Your divine commandments are broken, your Gospel is thrown aside, torrents of iniquity flood the whole earth carrying away even your servants. The whole land is desolate, ungodliness reigns supreme, your sanctuary is desecrated and the abomination of desolation has even contaminated the holy place. God of Justice, God of Vengeance, will you let everything, then, go the same way?

"All the blessed in heaven cry out for justice to be done: *vindica Domine Sanguinem justorum*, and the faithful on earth join in with them and cry out for mercy. All creatures, even the most insensitive, lie groaning under the burden of being used as instruments for men's sins: *omnis creatura ingemiscit*. Remember to give your mother this new company so

that you may renew all things through her and bring the era of grace to a close through Mary just as you began it through her. *Da Matri tuae liberos, alioquin moriar*: to this end, increase the number of those who call her Mother and serve her. *Liberos*, men who are free with the freedom that comes from you, detached from everything, without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends as the world and the flesh understand them, without worldly possessions to encumber or distract them, and devoid of all self-interest.

*Liberos*: men who are free but still in bondage to your love and your will; men after your own heart who, without taint or impediment of self-love, will carry out your will to the full and, like David of old, lay low all your enemies, with the Cross for their staff and the Rosary for their sling. *Da mihi liberos*: men as free as the clouds that sail high above the earth, filled with the dew of heaven, and moving, without let or hindrance, according to the inspiration of the Spirit. *Ubi erat impetus spiritus illuc gradiebantur*.

*Da mihi liberos!* Clerics always available, always ready to obey you when those in authority speak, always ready to be on the move and to suffer with you and for you. *Da mihi liberos!* True children of Mary who, like a Dominic of old, will range far and wide, with the holy Gospel issuing from their mouths like a bright and burning flame, and the Rosary in their hand. In this way, they will crush the head of the serpent wherever they go and ensure that the curse you have laid upon it of old will be fulfilled to the letter: *inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, etc.* True it is, indeed, great God, as you yourself have foretold, that the devil will lie in wait to attack the heel of this mysterious woman, that is, the little company of her children who will come towards the end of time. There will be great enmity between the blessed posterity of Mary and the accursed issue of Satan, but it is a wholly divine enmity, of which you are the authors, *ponam inimicitias*. The children of Belial will wage war against the children of your blessed Mother and afflict them with persecutions which will have no other outcome than to make more manifest, in a striking manner, the power of your grace, their courage and virtue, and the reality of your Mother's authority. *Pluviam voluntariam segregabis, Deus, haereditati tuae et infirmata est, tu vero perfecisti eam* (Ps 67.10). What is meant, Lord, by this abundant rain that you have stored up for your languishing heritage, if not these holy missionaries, Mary's children and disciples, whom you are to gather together, weak as they are, and make perfect for the good of your Church; whom you will cause to be mysterious channels receiving the salutary and voluntary waters of your grace, to flow into the hardened hearts of sinners and to fertilise the countryside.

*Dabis verbum Evangelisantibus virtute multa*: you will cause the words of your Gospel to be proclaimed by simple and uncouth people, such as your apostles were, and prodigious fruits will be seen as a result of their missions, *virtute multa speciei domus dividere spolia*. Their society will carry off the spoils of hell, and they will share the merit of this among themselves. And while the majority of the churchmen of the clergy remain buried in the sleep of idleness, they will be like doves who will carry on their zealous wings the whiteness of silver, that is, the purity and gold of charity in their hearts; or the missionaries will possess the sublimity of the dove's flight, the purity of doctrine and the gold of charity. *Si dormitatis inter medios cleros, pennae columbae deargentatae et posteriora dorsi ejus in pallore auri dum discernit caelestis reges super eum nive dealbabuntur*. And in the same measure as there are sinners who are slaves of the devil, the God of heaven will make of them as many kings, who are able to subdue their passions; and where before they were blacker than coal, they will become whiter than snow; and, more than all that, they will be borne upon the mountain of God, *mons Dei*, which is the Blessed Virgin, *mons pinguis*, a mountain full of grace, *mons coagulatus*, a mountain whose foundations, that is, whose beginnings in life, are more perfect and more elevated than the top of the highest mountains, *fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis mons in vertice montium*.



“Let me then, Lord, raise the cry of alarm: ‘Fire! Fire! Help! Help! The House of God is on fire! Souls are perishing in the flames! The sanctuary itself is ablaze! Help our brother who is being murdered. Help our children who are being massacred. Help our kind father who is being done to death!’ Allow me, Lord, to cry out with Moses, seeing so many golden calves and idols being worshipped throughout the world: ‘If anyone has the Lord’s cause at heart, let him stand side by side with me.’ *Qui est a partibus Dei, stet mecum*, or with the king-prophet: *quis consurget mihi adversus malignantes, aut quis stabit mecum adversus operantes inequitatem*. Let all those worthy priests who are to be found throughout the world, those still in the fight, like the missionaries, and those who have withdrawn to deserts and secluded places, let them, I say, come and join us, and with the cross as our standard, let us form a strongly disciplined army drawn up in lines of battle. Let us make a concerted attack on the enemies of God who have already sounded the call to arms: *sonuerunt et multiplicati sunt*. He who dwells in heaven will laugh them to scorn, *qui habitat in caelis irridebit eos*. The God of battles has only to rise up to scatter his enemies, *exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus*: Arise, Lord. Why is it you appear to be like one asleep? *Exsurge, Domine, quare obdormis?* Create this bodyguard of hand-picked men from the body of your Church, the body of your adorable Son, to defend your fold, so that there will be but one sheepfold and one shepherd, *fiat unus pastor et unum ovile*.”

*Nota. We do not give here the Rules of the Company of Mary as we promised, because they are too long. We reserve the right to have them printed apart, if it seems right.*

## CHAPTER XVIII

*Monsieur de Montfort goes to give a mission in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre.*

*He writes to the superior of the House of Incurables in Nantes.*

*He falls ill. He makes his will. He dies.*

*The circumstances surrounding his death and burial.*

After the mission at Saint-Pompain was over, M. de Montfort left to begin another in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, in the diocese of La Rochelle, at the beginning of April, 1716. And, because he had not lost sight of the new establishment he had made in Nantes for poor invalids, he wrote the following letter to the superior there, as soon as he arrived<sup>30</sup>.

*From the mission in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre,  
4 April 1716. May Jesus and his Cross reign forever!*

I count on the inexhaustible wealth of the motherly divine Providence which has never failed us in all we have undertaken for the glory of God and I reply quite frankly that I think you ought to obtain the lease for the house in question provided that the persons who are going to care for the poor incurables have the following qualities:

1. They must rely entirely on the unknown and invisible help of divine Providence whether they are rich or poor or whether they have any learning or not. They must not rely on any human help or their own natural talents.

2. They must all follow the same rule in its totality and punctually and have the same spiritual director. If any of the ladies has money and special qualifications she must not

expect any privileges, say, exemption from community life or the rule, or the right to choose another director.

3. Finally, if this is God's work, they must be ready to suffer all kinds of crosses cheerfully. For this is the house of the Cross and it must not be given any other name. The first thing you must do is to erect a cross, with the Bishop's permission, so that the name, the grace and the glory of the Cross will always be associated with this house. Erect a very simple cross in the middle of the garden or the courtyard until funds can be found to provide a better one. This cross is the first item to be taken into the new house. Ask our good priest friend to bless it or to send someone to bless it.

When I heard about this new foundation at Nantes, I considered sending you two Daughters of Wisdom who are working among the poor in this diocese. One is about forty years of age, I believe, and both are suitable for this work. Let us pray that God may make his holy will clear to us.

Dear Lord, how very few really obedient, prudent and self-sacrificing young ladies are to be found today! They are all so self-sufficient, or rather each one feels that she is, even if she does not say so openly.

I think young women who present themselves to join the two already mentioned and have the above-mentioned qualities, should be accepted even if they come from other parts of the country. They would be more suitable for the beginning of this new foundation, if it is to be founded on "living stones".

I greet with great respect Monsieur Du Portail and those good people who have joined us in this charitable work so dear to the Heart of Jesus who suffered more than any of us.

If the Bishop of Nantes agrees (and I would not arrive without his permission) I will be in Nantes on the evening of the 5th of May. I am enclosing a short letter to his Lordship. I send respectful greetings to Fr. Barrin and ask him to take my letter to Fr. de Vertamont to present it to the Bishop. If the latter refuses to allow me to stay in Nantes for two weeks resting from my missionary work - and I will go there only if I receive permission to say Mass - then I will know for certain that it is not God's holy will that I go. In submitting to a prohibition, I truly and firmly believe, as if it were an article of faith, that everything will go even better with you than if I were present.

I beg the prayers of all the "Friends of the Cross" so that God will not punish my sins and refuse true conversion of heart to all the poor who listen to my preaching.

Sincerely yours in Jesus and his holy Mother. I greet all the Guardian Angels of the city of Nantes and yours in particular.

Humility! Humiliations! Humiliations! Thanks be to God for them. *L. M. Grignon.*

He was so exhausted and tired as a result of his apostolic labours, and even more from the mortifications he continually imposed on his body, that he fell seriously ill, and recognising well enough that his sickness was mortal, he wished to make his will on the fifth day of his illness. As this will is couched in very edifying terms, and contains some extraordinary details, we give it here in its entirety.

I, the undersigned, the greatest of sinners, will that my body be buried in the cemetery and my heart under the step of the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

I confide to his Lordship the Bishop of La Rochelle and to Father Mulot my small pieces of furniture and my mission books, to be preserved for the use of the four Brothers who joined me in a life of obedience and poverty; namely, Brother Nicholas of Poitiers, Brother Philip of Nantes, Brother Louis of La Rochelle, and Brother Gabriel, who is at present with me, for as long as they continue to renew their annual vows, and for the use of those whom divine Providence will call into the same community of the Holy Spirit.

I give all the statues of the Calvary and the cross to the house of the Sisters of the Incurables at Nantes. I have no private money belonging to me, but there are 135 pounds belonging to Nicholas of Poitiers to pay for his keep after he has finished his stay with us. Fr. Mulot will give the following monies from the common fund: ten crowns to James, if he decides to leave; ten crowns to John, if he also decides to leave; ten crowns to Mathurin, if he decides to leave and not renew the vows of poverty and obedience. If there is anything remaining in the purse, Fr. Mulot will use it like a good father for the Brothers and for himself.

As the house at La Rochelle is reverting to its natural heirs, there will only be left for the community of the Holy Spirit the house at Vouvant, which was given to me by Madame de la Brulerie by an agreement, the conditions of which Fr. Mulot must fulfill; and the two pieces of land given by the Lieutenant of Vouvant's wife, and a small house given by a good lady of rank. If there is no possibility of building there, it should be put at the disposal of the Brothers of the community of the Holy Spirit to conduct charity schools. I give three of my banners to Our Lady of Patience at La Séguinière, and the other four to Our Lady of Victories at La Garnache, and to every parish of Aunis where the Rosary is still being said I give one of the banners of the holy Rosary. I give to Fr. Bouris the six volumes of sermons of La Volpilière, and to Fr. Clisson the four volumes of the "Catechism for Country People." If there is anything owing to the printer, he can be paid from the fund. Should there be anything over, Fr. Vatel must be given what belongs to him, if his Lordship decides that this is right.

This is my Last Will, and I make Fr. Mulot my executor giving him full right to dispose as it seems good to him of the chasubles, chalice and other church and mission articles, for the benefit of the community of the Holy Spirit. Written during the mission at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, this 27th day of the month of April, one thousand seven hundred and sixteen. All the pieces of furniture at present at Nantes are for the use of the Brothers who run the school, as long as the school remains there. *Signed:* Louis Marie Grignon.

As he was lying, as his custom was, on straw alone, his confessor obliged him under obedience to take a mattress. His illness, which lasted seven days, proving a match for all the remedies he might be given, he saw well enough that his last hour was come. He asked for the sacraments of Penance, Viaticum and Extreme Unction, which he received with much piety. He had small iron chains put around his feet, his arms and his neck, wishing to die, as he had lived, as a slave of Jesus living in Mary. He took in his right hand the crucifix which he had carried to Rome, to which our Holy Father the Pope had attached a plenary indulgence at the moment of death, and in his left hand he took the statue of the Blessed Virgin which he always carried on his person. He tenderly kissed these two images, one after the other, calling on Jesus and Mary.

Some hours before he died, the people gathered in crowds at the door of his room, demanding to go in to receive his blessing. Hearing a noise, he asked what it was, and on being told, he asked those who were standing around him to let them in. The people were no

sooner in his room than they fell to their knees, asking for his blessing with tears and sighs. He told them he was not worthy to bless them, that he did not have this power. Then M. Mulot, his confessor, said to him: "Bless them, Monsieur, with your crucifix; it will then be Jesus Christ, not you, who gives them his blessing." This he did, but the room being too small to hold all the people, it was necessary to have them come in by groups, as many as three times. Then Monsieur Grignon, gathering all the strength left him, began singing two verses of a mission hymn:

*"Come, dear friends,  
Let us make our way to heaven;  
Whatever we gain in this world,  
Heaven is worth much more."*

A moment later he seemed to sigh, then he roused himself, trembling and shaking, and he said at the top of his voice: "in vain you attack me, I am between Jesus and Mary," whose images he was holding, "*Thanks be to God and to Mary*, I have come to the end of my life; it is done, I will sin no more." And at that moment he died with great calmness and peace, on 29 April 1716<sup>32</sup>.

The news of his death had no sooner spread abroad than there came from all sides, even from as far away as Nantes, a multitude of people to assist at his burial, so many that we are assured that there were more than ten thousand who already invoked him as a saint, touching his body, some with their Rosaries, others with handkerchiefs, everyone asking for something that he had used. He was buried in the chapel of Our Lady in the church of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, and since that time there have been great gatherings of people there, coming every day to his tomb to call upon the merits of Monsieur Grignon before God, and almost all say that their prayers have been heard, that they have received miraculous cures through his prayers.

## CHAPTER XIX

*The body of Monsieur de Montfort is exhumed,  
and found to be incorrupt, eighteen months after his burial.*

Eighteen months after the death of Monsieur de Montfort, some people filled with zeal for the honour of this servant of God, asked permission of the Bishop of La Rochelle to have the tomb taken up, so that another of marble might be erected on four pillars with an epitaph engraved in letters of gold. The Bishop of La Rochelle gave his consent, but forbade any public cult in his regard, as appears in the letter he wrote to Madame de Bouillé, a woman of substance, on 31 July 1718, in these words.

"I am very edified, Madame, by the sentiments you express for the memory of Monsieur de Montfort. I also entertain very advantageous sentiments, which I believe are acceptable in God's eyes. Having lived with such holiness as he did, there is reason to believe that God has shown him mercy and placed him among the ranks of the Blessed in heaven. It is true, Madame, that I forbade any public religious cult to be offered to him, such as making offerings to him, or making wax images of his feet, hands and arms, etc., at his tomb, or carrying out any public ceremonies of this nature, because, the Church not having yet recognised him as, or declared him a saint, he cannot, without abuse, be offered any public worship. But one may well have a private devotion to him, going to his tomb without making

offerings, and recommending intentions to his prayers. I find no fault in that – quite the contrary. I find no fault, either, in the fact that one might treasure something that he used, or even some wood from his coffin. In short, Madame, I approve private devotion that might be shown towards this illustrious dead person, and the confidence shown in his prayers and his intercession. But I condemn public worship and those public practices of piety which may and should be shown only to those Saints recognised by and declared to be such by the Church. I have the honour to be, Madame, your very humble and obedient servant. Etienne, Bishop of La Rochelle.”

Permission having been given by the Bishop of La Rochelle, the tombstone was lifted, as was the wooden lid of his coffin, to see if his body was intact, and if his face was recognisable. The dean, the parish-priest of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, assures me that he was not willing to carry out this kind of exhumation in daylight, and that he allowed only a few people into the church during the night, because he was afraid that the body which had been in the ground for eighteen months, might give forth an insupportable smell. But he declares that the men who were the first to go down into the grave, having told him that, far from their smelling any bad odour, the body was giving forth only an agreeable smell, as though it were incense, he had the curiosity to go down himself. Moving very close to the corpse, he smelt no bad odour. This surprised everybody, and encouraged several persons to tear pieces from his soutane and his alb. He assured me also that his face was whole and very recognisable, in no way disfigured. Then the body was covered with earth, and there was placed over his grave the marble stone, with this epitaph engraved upon it in gold letters.

*Traveller, What do you see?  
 A light quenched  
 A man consumed by the fire of Charity  
 Who became all things to all men  
 Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort  
 If you ask what was his life:  
 There was none more holy;  
 His penance: none more austere;  
 His zeal: none more ardent;  
 His devotion to Mary: none more like St Bernard.  
 A priest of Christ, he showed forth  
 Christ in his actions, and preached  
 Him everywhere in his words.  
 Indefatigable, he rested only in the grave.  
 Father of the poor,  
 Protector of orphans,  
 Reconciler of sinners.  
 His glorious death was the image of his life;  
 As he had lived, so he died.  
 Ripe for God he passed to heaven  
 April 28th 1716  
 Aged 44 years<sup>33</sup>.*

## CHAPTER XX

### *The Society of several priests*

*who begin to put into effect the project of Monsieur de Montfort,*

*under the title of the Company of Mary.*

Messieurs Mulot and Vatel, who had been called to the missions by Monsieur Grignon in such an extraordinary way during his lifetime, as we have seen, believed that they had to continue the same functions after his death, and to enter into his whole way of looking at things. With this in mind, the Prior and parish-priest of Vihiers, obtained for each of them a benefice with a good enough revenue, on which there depended two houses in a large market-town where they could retire during the summer, when the people, being occupied with the gathering of their harvests, could not assist at the mission services. But these fervent missionaries, recognising that in this case they would not be following the intention of their zealous founder, kept these benefices for only a few months. They resigned and gave them back to those who had presented them, for fear that they would not otherwise be sufficiently abandoned to Providence. They even made a vow of poverty, and God, as a reward, inspired two virtuous parish-priests to promise that they would lodge them and see to their upkeep whenever they were not on mission, until such time as they had a fixed residence. More than this, these two parish-priests, with the approval of the Bishops of La Rochelle and Poitiers, presented a supplication to the Pope aimed at asking His Holiness's approval of their missions and requesting plenary indulgences. Here is a copy of this supplication:

*Most Holy Father, Messieurs Pierre Garnier, priest, prior and parish-priest of Saint Martin de Mellé in the diocese of Poitiers, and Jean Mulot, priest, prior and parish-priest of Saint-Pompain in the diocese of La Rochelle, being greatly edified by a small number of pious and virtuous clerics, who were trained and inspired by the late Messire Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, a very worthy priest and apostolic missionary, who died in the odour of sanctity, and who are trying to walk in his footsteps and, seeing the abundant harvest but the small number of workers, have given themselves for two or three years now, to the delight of, and with the approval of the bishops, to very fruitful missions which they are still continuing to give;*

*In pointing out very humbly to Your Holiness that the above-mentioned clerics, in order to devote themselves totally to the salvation of souls, have renounced all benefices and made a voluntary vow of poverty, living only on the charity of the people, giving what remains to the poor, and having no place to retire during harvest-time, the above-mentioned priors, in support of their zeal, have associated themselves with them and committed themselves to supplying them with a place of retirement during the aforesaid harvest-time; to succouring them in time of illness; to feeding them, maintaining them and taking them to those parishes where they may judge, with the advice and agreement of the bishops, that their mission would be necessary; until such time as divine Providence, which is the foundation of their mission, to which they are completely abandoned, and which visibly showers blessings on their labours, should obtain for them a place of rest where they may all gather to work during their holidays, especially for their own sanctification.*

*This is why, most Holy Father, the above-mentioned priors, with the consent of their bishops, have recourse to Your Holiness and implore you very humbly to approve this nascent mission and all those who are associated with it, who it is foreseen will be quite numerous in a short time, under the title of the New Apostolic Missionaries of the Community of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of giving missions in the dioceses to which they will be called; and to be pleased, most Holy Father, to this end, to accord them your faculties and plenary indulgences; especially for the renewal of Baptismal vows which they cause to be done in every mission and which is the greatest fruit of the aforesaid missions. And, so that through*

*this renewal the original spirit of Christianity may be renewed, they beg you, most Holy Father, to grant plenary indulgences to all those who will renew each year the said Baptismal vows, and they send you, to this end, a copy of the little contract which they use, that Your Holiness may approve it, add to it or take away from it whatever you deem fit.*

*Since the above-mentioned missionaries devote themselves principally to giving missions in country parishes, far removed from the towns and places where the Reverend Dominican Fathers live, they also humbly beg Your Holiness to allow them to establish in every parish the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary, which everyone seeks to embrace, and which M. de Montfort renewed a short time again with great fruit; and to accord them the same indulgences as are accorded the Reverend Dominican Fathers. The above-mentioned missionaries, having experienced in previous missions the good that is brought about by the confraternities of Penitents, Virgins, and Brothers and Sisters of the Cross, whose sole aim is to wean the men away from debauchery and the young women from soirées, dances and gatherings, to bring both groups to frequent the Sacraments; beg a plenary indulgence four or five times a year when they gather for the edification of the whole people. They humbly request Your Holiness to grant, if you judge fit, indulgences for the Holy Name of Jesus, which they distribute at the end of each mission, as a reward for faithfulness in listening to the Word of God.*

*They also beg Your Holiness to grant a plenary indulgence for the reception of Communion offered for the deceased at the end of each mission.*

*Further, they beg the continuation of the plenary indulgence granted by Your Holiness to a crucifix possessed by the late M. de Montfort, in favour of those who kiss it at the hour of death.*

## **APPROBATION**

*Of the Bishops of La Rochelle and Poitiers.*

ETIENNE, by the Providence of God and the favour of the Apostolic see, Bishop of La Rochelle: We certify to all whom it may concern that Messieurs Adrien Vatel, Hilaire Toutan, Cyprien Aumon and René Mulot, all of them priests, devote themselves with much piety, zeal and edification to the giving of missions in the parishes of our diocese confided to them by us, and to our knowledge there produce much fruit, and that God showers abundant graces and blessings on their labours and on the exemplary life they lead. Given at La Rochelle, this first day of August 1719. *Signed*, † ETIENNE, Bishop of La Rochelle. Witnessed by Monsignor ROULLEAU.

We, the Bishop of Poitiers, certify in the same way that the said Messieurs Adrien Vatel, Hilaire Toutan, Cyprien Aumon and René Mulot, missionary priests, have preached in several parishes of our diocese with much fruit and edification, which draws people from all quarters to conversion and perseverance in Christian piety, by the graces and blessings that God showers on their labours and on their exemplary life. Given at Poitiers, this eighth day of August 1719. *Signed*, † JEAN-CLAUDE, Bishop of Poitiers.

## **CHAPTER XXI**

*Monsieur Le Valois joins Messieurs Mulot and Vatel,*

*prompted by an extraordinary thing that happened  
to a picture of Monsieur de Montfort.  
Messieurs Toutan and Guillemot do the same.*

Monsieur Le Valois is a priest of the diocese of Coutances in Normandy, who had been living for ten years in the community of the Holy Spirit in Paris, where he gave coaching in philosophy and theology to the poor clerics whom Monsieur des Places, a priest of great piety, had gathered there so as to train them in the principles of the soundest doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and the maxims of the clerical state.

As Monsieur Le Valois was full of esteem for Monsieur de Montfort, who during his lifetime kept up good relations with the directors of this house and gave it an image of the Blessed Virgin which is still kept there, he had in his room a picture of Monsieur de Montfort, fixed to the wall. A certain cleric belonging to the house, who was believed to be obsessed, went into his room and, seeing the picture of Monsieur de Montfort, took it and tore it into three pieces, one of which was thrown into the yard, a second remained in the room, while the third, which contained the head, was picked up by a young man who was then in the community of the Holy Spirit, with a view to drawing it.

A few days later, Monsieur Le Valois having returned from a walk, on going into his room, which had been locked during his absence, he himself holding the key, was surprised to see the picture of Monsieur de Montfort replaced very neatly where it had been before, with very faint lines, like scars, where it had been torn, so much so that it was difficult to pick out the breaks. At the same time, he smelt a sweet smell which was coming from the picture, and which lasted for several days. He told another priest, his next-door neighbour who had seen the torn picture, about this, and he also smelt the same smell. All the other clerics, more than fifty of whom were residing in that same community at that point, experienced the same thing, affecting both their sight and their sense of smell. And it should be noted that a number of other pictures which were fixed near that of Monsieur de Montfort, and which had also been torn in the same way, were not replaced at all. This event took place three years ago, at the end of the Pentecost season. The marvel was certified by 13 witnesses worthy of credence, on 8 November 1721, among them Monsieur Bouic, the superior of the community of the Holy Spirit in Paris, and Messieurs Detehar, Caris, Thomas, Heguy, Dotassini, all of them priests, etc.

This wonderful thing made such an impression on Monsieur Le Valois that he made up his mind to follow up the idea he had had for some time to join Messieurs Mulot and Vatel, the successors of Monsieur de Montfort, to give missions together with them. And so, having given away all the money he had to the poor, he set out on his way, abandoned to the care of Providence, to begin his apprenticeship in the apostolic life, begging hospitality from all the parish-priests of the towns he passed through. Thus he arrived in his own birth-place in the diocese of Coutances, to bid a final farewell to his relations, and to put his domestic affairs in order. Then he went on into Poitou, where he found Messieurs Mulot and Vatel giving a mission in Nueil-sous-Passavant. He spent just one or two days with them, then went on to the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where he made a novena to ask him to commend his undertaking to God, and to ask for the apostolic spirit, in order to work for the salvation of the people. Then he went back to join these two fervent missionaries in the mission they had begun in Niort.



Monsieur Toutan, the prior of Villiers-en-Bois in the diocese of Poitiers, gave up his priory, which was worth at least 600 pounds, and also went to find them to work with them.

The vocation of Monsieur Guillemot to these same missions, is scarcely less wonderful. He was parish-priest of Contré in the diocese of Poitiers, close to Saint-Jean-d'Angely. Having heard tell of the great fruit produced by the missions given by these three priests, he resigned his post as parish-priest which was worth at least 800 pounds in rent, and went to offer to work with them. Thus their number at present is five, not counting the four coadjutor Brothers spoken about by Monsieur de Montfort in his Will, who, having made vows of poverty and obedience, go with them everywhere, busying themselves with the giving of catechism, with teaching and cooking for the missionaries. And what is more surprising, it was not these gentlemen of whom we have been speaking who went looking for these parish-priests; but it was rather these parish-priests who, inspired by God, begged to be received into their Company.

## CHAPTER XXII

*Two establishments are created in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre:*

*one for the priests of the Company of Mary,  
and the other for the Daughters of Wisdom.*

Since what happened after the death of M. de Montfort seems just as wonderful as what he did during his life as a proof of his sanctity, we believe we must omit no circumstance of all this. The fame of the miracles which came about at his tomb, produced the idea in two people of quality and piety to create two establishments in the town of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre where he died, to preserve his memory and perpetuate the two institutes he had in mind, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The first of these establishments is designed to serve as a place of rest for the missionaries of the Company of Mary, during the period of their holidays when they cannot work at giving missions, the parish-priests of Mellé and Saint-Pompain having committed themselves only to feeding them until such time as they would have a fixed abode. Monsieur de Montfort had predicted a long time before he died that it would be a lay-person who would bring this about. In fact, a gentleman from Anjou called Monsieur the Marquis of Magnanne, highly distinguished by his birth and even more so by his piety, was inspired two years ago to go and visit the tomb of M. de Montfort, and at the same time to buy a house in the town of Saint-Laurent to accommodate the missionaries; which he has since done, paying all the expenses of land and purchase, indemnities and mortgages. The house was ready to receive them this year, 1722. He furnished them with all that was necessary for their food and subsistence.

This pious gentleman went last year to la Rochelle to put his plan to the Bishop, who highly approved of it, as did the Bishops of Poitiers and Luçon, who happened to be there at the time for the consecration of Monsignors de Foudras and de Bastignac, the first as coadjutor bishop of Poitiers, and the second as Bishop of Tulle. Madame de Bouillé, a woman of great piety and the dowager widow of Messire de Colasseau, the lord of Machefolière, marvelling at the grace which followed in the footsteps of M. Grignon in his missions, is the one who met all the expenses of buying furniture for, and maintaining in the same town of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre a house for the Daughters of Wisdom, founded by M.

de Montfort. There are now seven of them living there, teaching more than sixty young girls, and planning to take in poor sick people, when Providence has furnished the means to board and feed them. Madame de Bouillé has even promised to join them when she has provided for her two daughters.

## Book Five

### *Concerning his special virtues*

#### CHAPTER I

##### *His faith*

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. As it is the principle and the foundation of all other Christian virtues, it is also the rule and the measure of them. The more faith one has, the more one hopes in God and the more one loves. M. de Montfort's faith was lively, pure and simple: lively, operating through his works; pure, far removed from any suspicion of error or novelty; simple, accepting all the truths revealed and proposed by the Church, without any hesitation or reasoning. He could not abide those so-called strong minds who prefer their own judgement to that of the Church, and who are unwilling to place their understanding under the yoke of faith.

He always chose his directors from among those communities which profess to welcome, with humility and simplicity, the decisions of the Holy See. He was not prepared to let the workers, who laboured in the missions with him, argue about contemporary matters, nor treat in their sermons of curious questions or things too refined. And he asked them to preach in a simple and natural manner, which would be understandable by, and within the reach of the people, in imitation of the Apostles, of whom it is said in the Acts that by a simple exposition of the mysteries of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Saviour, they converted from three to four thousand persons. It was by faith that M. de Montfort brought about the conversion of so many sinners, *fides tua te salvum fecit*. It was through faith that he had such a great love for the poor, in whose person he saw Jesus Christ. It was by faith that he preferred poverty to all the riches of the earth.

It was by faith that he found all his happiness in carrying the cross of the Son of God, suffering insults, mistrust and humiliations. It was by faith that he undertook so many journeys and gave so many missions, in order to destroy the reign of sin and establish the reign of Jesus Christ in the souls of sinners; because this virtue showed him their worth, created in the image of god and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. In a word, all his actions, all his thoughts, all his words and all his sufferings were inspired by a most lively faith, and he himself lived by faith. *Justus ex fide vivit*.

#### CHAPTER II

##### *His confidence in God*

##### *and his abandonment to Divine Providence.*

Monsieur de Montfort was, in the arms of Divine Providence, like a child at its mother's breast, letting itself be carried wherever she wishes, not thinking of the morrow, sure that it will always find in her its resources and the nourishment appropriate to its age and its needs. And in this spirit, he often said with the prophet, *Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit*. And in order to be even more dependant on this Providence, he made a vow of

poverty: he would possess nothing as his own. And he was never willing to accept any sum of money to cover the expenses of the more than two hundred missions he gave in various dioceses, although the offer was made to him several times. All those I had the honour to give with him, says Monsieur des Bastières, which numbered forty or more, were given at the expense of Providence, which always furnished him so abundantly with food that, after having taken from it what was necessary for himself and his missionaries, he always found something with which to feed a great number of poor people and to clothe them. It is true that for the first two or three days we would be lacking in a number of things. But as soon as Monsieur de Montfort had declared publicly from the pulpit that he and the missionaries were living on the alms of the faithful, and that they would freely offer all their Mass intentions for the benefit of those who contributed to their board, then Providence showed itself so much in our favour that people brought food from all quarters and in such abundance that not only were we all fed, but so were all the poor of the parish and the neighbourhood, and often there was enough left over to fill several baskets, just as happened in the wilderness after the multiplication of the five loaves. For I have seen several times as many as fifty large loaves left over from our meals for each day, and from those of the poor people who were always very numerous, since I have counted as many as two hundred daily in several parishes where I gave missions.

Two things, continues M. des Bastières, struck me more than others on this question and seemed to me to be quite extraordinary. The first is that M. de Montfort gave more than eight missions when I was with him in parishes that were so poor that even the richest among their inhabitants had scarcely a piece of bread to live on. Yet it was in these very places that Providence was most liberal in our regard, for the missionaries as well as the poor people were treated better there than anywhere else. The second thing is that, it being usually my task to bring the poor people to the place where they would be fed and to serve them at table, it happened five or six times that I did not have a morsel of bread to give them, and that there was none in the house of Providence where the missionaries were lodging. The first time this happened I informed Monsieur de Montfort, who did not seem in the least embarrassed and told me simply to bring them to the usual place and that Providence would provide for their needs. I carried out his orders, not knowing where bread might come from for us, nor whether it might come down from heaven. Nevertheless I made them sit down at table, with nothing to place before them, which very much mortified me, because there were nearly two hundred people there waiting for the pleasure of seeing these poor people who were very hungry get something to eat. I made them wait while there was a short reading, during which I went into the house of Providence, where I was very surprised to find a great quantity of loaves and other provisions, come from I knew not where. I had them taken immediately to our poor people who that day received a double portion. A similar thing happened five or six times to my knowledge.

Monsieur Normand<sup>34</sup>, the King's procurator in Poitiers, certifies that M. de Montfort lived only on Providence; that normally he was never concerned about eating; that often at midday he would take nothing for dinner. He says that when he was still quite young, M. de Montfort kept him one day in his room with a number of students until the evening, speaking to them of God, and that all of them having intimated that they needed to eat, he replied that he had nothing to give them, but that Providence would provide. In fact, without his making any move to have food brought, there was sent to him at that moment more food than they needed to satisfy their hunger.

When Monsieur de Montfort had need of a mule to carry his mission equipment, that is, his hymns, his books, his images, his Rosaries and his banners, he approached a merchant who said that he would sell him this mule for eighty-seven pounds. Monsieur Grignon

replied: “You will have to give me credit, then, for I have no money.” The merchant agreed and promised to bring him this beast on such and such a day at the place he would tell him. He did so without fail, and assures me that he was very surprised to find that, on his arrival with the mule, in the village where Monsieur de Montfort was giving the mission, a number of people who were unknown to him, who had heard of the deal, came to meet him. One gave him an écu, another one hundred sols, a few as much as ten pounds, all of which they put into his hand or in his pockets; and when he went into the house of one of his friends, he counted up all the money that had been given him, and found he had received eighty pounds, and this friend gave him seven pounds to bring the total to the amount for which he had sold the mule.

The more Monsieur Grignon abandoned himself to Divine Providence in this way, the less Divine Providence abandoned him.

His thoughts and words on this subject are no less admirable than his actions. This is what he wrote to his uncle, Monsieur de la Vizeule Robert, in Rennes, in two letters, the first of which is dated 26 September 1694, and says: “I ... have to tell you of a death. It is that of Fr. de la Barmondière, my superior and director... He was buried last Sunday, mourned by the whole parish and by everyone who knew him. He lived a saintly life and died a holy death. It was he who founded the seminary here and had the kindness to receive me for nothing. I do not know yet how things will go, whether I shall stay or leave, as his will has not yet been made known. Whatever happens I shall not be worried. I have a Father in heaven who will never fail me. He brought me here, he has kept me here until now and he will continue to treat me with his usual kindness. Although I deserve only punishment for my sins, I never stop praying to him and rely completely on his providence.”

It was not long before Monsieur Grignon experienced the loving and fatherly care of this same Providence, and he wrote of it to this same uncle on 11 July 1695, in these terms<sup>35</sup>: “My dear uncle, May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts! This letter brings you my very best wishes and is to let you know that Providence has placed me in the Little Seminary of Saint-Sulpice through the kindness of Madame d’Alègre. She is the lady Mademoiselle de Montigny told you about, and Mademoiselle Le Breton lives with her. This lady has given 160 pounds a year for the maintenance of a student for the priesthood. After the death of Fr. de la Barmondière the sum was passed on to the Little Seminary of Saint-Sulpice where, however, the fee is 260 pounds. Madame d’Alègre told Mademoiselle Le Breton and the superior of the Little Seminary that she wanted me to have the place she was helping to provide. Madame d’Alègre heard Mademoiselle Le Breton talking about you and asks you to offer Mass for her at our Lady’s altar. I would heartily beg you to do so. As this money is not enough to cover the fees at the Little Seminary, God in his loving Providence, without my ever having thought of it, has provided me with a benefice of about 100 pounds, a few miles from Nantes, from which I will also be provided with a title. Please in my name thank almighty God for the graces he has given me, not just for the temporal blessings, which are not important, but for the eternal ones. May he not enter into judgement with me, for I do not do justice to his graces; I do nothing but offend him day after day.” A short time later, Monsieur de Montfort renounced this benefice, convinced that it would prove an obstacle to the general abandonment with which he wished to live.

While he was in Paris at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, he asked a virtuous layman called Monsieur Valier to go and buy him at the second-hand clothes shop an under-garment of elk-skin, which would last longer, and gave him thirty sols to make this purchase. The layman told him that he would not get such a garment for that amount. “Go on,” said M. de Montfort, “don’t worry; if they want more for it, Providence will provide, and you can then give the thirty sols to the first poor man you meet.” In fact, the shopper returned and told him

that he had got nothing, and that they had laughed at him when he offered only thirty sols for something that was worth two pistoles, so he had followed his advice and given the thirty sols to the first poor man he met in the street. "Good," said Monsieur Grignon, "while you were busy doing me this act of charity, a person brought me two pistoles. Here they are. Would you please go back to the shop-keeper and buy me a garment."

We could tell you of a hundred other similar things, but to avoid being too long, we will content ourselves with these.

### CHAPTER III

#### *His great love for God, and his prayer.*

The theologians tell us that the love of God produces three effects in the hearts of those who burn with it: benevolence, readiness to oblige, and thanksgiving. The love which Monsieur de Montfort had for God prompted him to go about the universe making known his Holy Name, and bringing all creatures to love Him. If his superiors had not prevented him, he would have gone to the ends of the earth to make known his greatness among the infidels. He did everything to please God. He thought and spoke only of God, and acted only for him. And since he knew that even God is not busy for all eternity, and that he takes his delight only in the grandeurs and perfections of his essence and those of his Word, *in quo mihi bene complacui*, he was often so thrilled and carried outside of himself in contemplation of the beauty and goodness of God that sometimes in his meditations he let fall transports and impulses of love which surprised those gathered about him.

At other times, he appeared to be asleep, and when he was asked what he was doing in his prayer, he would reply: "I was between Jesus and Mary, I believed that both were in my heart, one on the left and the other on the right. I was trying to show them my gratitude for their visiting me." Often he came away from prayer with his face all afire; and the words he uttered at that moment were like so many fiery shafts and arrows, setting light to the hearts of those who heard him: "Oh!" he would say, "what unhappiness! God is not loved at all, because he is not known at all." "He appeared," says Monsieur Crebron, the parish-priest of Le Lude, who lived with him in Paris for a long time, "to be so calm and so recollected in all his actions that I am convinced he never lost sight of God, and never moved out of his presence<sup>36</sup>. One Sunday, about ten o'clock in the morning, I went to ask him for some notebooks which I needed. I think he was at his meditation, for when I knocked at the door of his room, he came to open it and his face seemed luminous to me at that moment, and shining with a more than natural light. I often spent my recreation with him. His greatest pleasure at that moment was to speak of God and of the Blessed Virgin, and he spoke of them in so edifying a way that you could not leave him without feeling yourself inspired by zeal and fervour. He was gay at recreation, but not distracted, and it was easy to see in his manners and his conduct that the love of God concerned him infinitely more than all the games one used to play."

Monsieur des Bastières assures us in his memoirs, that he often heard him say in the pulpit: "Ah! you sinner, if you only knew how good God is and how lovable, you would never offend him. The greatest misfortune is not to know you, O God, and the greatest torture is not to love you. Oh! my sweet Jesus, make me love you more and more each day. Oh! my good Mother, when will I have the consolation of seeing you, not as in an image, but really? I alone owe you more than all the world; I would have been lost a long time ago without you."

“It would be impossible for me to repeat all the edifying things I have heard him say during his meditations,” continues M. des Bastières. “Truly I do not know how many meditations he made each day. I believe that the number was countless. Apart from the meditation we made in common, I have seen him make one before saying Mass, and one afterwards. This latter served him as thanksgiving, and he would make another before preaching. So he could well have been making five each day during the mission season. Perhaps he made even more at other times. Apart from the one in the morning, which lasted half an hour, I cannot say how long the others lasted. He always made them on his knees. I was never able to learn what the more ordinary subjects of his meditations were. Sometimes I would find him in his room, face down on the ground, with his arms in the form of a cross. I do not know if he remained for long in this humiliating posture, nor if it occurred frequently, because I would go out immediately, and it was only by chance and by surprise that I discovered him in this state. Outside the mission season, I heard him a number of times getting up around midnight. After giving himself the discipline to the point of drawing blood, he would make a meditation. This lasted a long time, for after sleeping well, I would hear him still sighing and speaking from time to time in a low voice, but I could not hear him well, being too drowsy with sleep. I was often obliged to go and look for him to preach, because he took too long in coming. I would find him in his room still on his knees, his hands joined, with a crucifix and his little statue of the Blessed Virgin in front of him. It didn’t matter how I spoke to him and told him that the people were getting impatient; he did not answer at all, and made no more movement than an inanimate statue. I would say to him sometimes with impatience: ‘Are you alive or dead?’ Sometimes it was more than half an hour before he came after I had warned him.”

He always began his letters with the words: *May the love of God reign in our hearts.* And he undertook nothing unless it was for the glory and the love of God. And whenever he did not succeed in his undertakings, he would say that he hoped they would bring the same reward as if he had enjoyed the greatest success in the world, because he had been seeking only the good pleasure of God in beginning them.

Father de la Tour, his Jesuit confessor, says that his life was one continual recollection; that he had a supreme gift for meditation and contemplation; that his zeal equalled that of the apostles, and that with this sense of the presence of God and this recollection, he was indefatigable in the work of the missions. Often he would pass four or five hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He taught everyone to do the same. He created a little society of students in the town of Poitiers, that he gathered together from time to time, to teach them how to make a meditation. He would get them to practise it in his presence, and would give them subjects for meditation to be made at home.

## CHAPTER IV

### *His conformity to the Will of God.*

To want what God wants, and in the way that God wants, and to suffer with joy every annoying thing that happens, is to be happy even in this life. And this was the disposition Monsieur de Montfort was always in. Nothing bothered him except sin, for which he had an irreconcilable hatred. He was always calm of spirit, all the time and no matter what the occasion. Whether he was successful or not in his undertakings, nothing was capable of discouraging him or causing him pain.

All the persecutions he endured, all the insults he received, the bodily ills, all the humiliations he suffered during his life, none ever upset him nor drew from his heart or his lips the slightest complaint or the slightest objection. His will was always so perfectly united with the Will of God that he was unshakable and unafraid in all the adversities that came upon him, accepting them as coming from God, without whose order or permission he was convinced nothing came about in the world, according to the saying: *Non est malum in civitate quod non fecerit Dominus*; and in this he was like a rock in the midst of the sea, that the most furious waves and the most horrible storms cannot shake nor budge. “If anything,” says Monsieur des Bastières, “had been capable of intimidating or defeating Monsieur Grignon, it would have surely been when the soldiers were carrying him off to prison. But far from it causing him any bother, or his being annoyed by this, he was going with joy, saying his Rosary, and his sole sadness was not to have been counted among the scoundrels.

One day,” continues M. des Bastières, “he received a letter while we were at dinner. Having read it, he raised his eyes to heaven and said these words of Job: *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit, sit nomen Domini benedictum*. I begged him to share with me the news he had just learnt, and he told me with a smile: ‘It is the death of my father; I recommend him to your prayers.’ And he went on with his meal, showing no sign of sadness. I asked him, next day, why he had seemed so unfeeling at the death of his father; he replied that a venial sin was a greater evil than the destruction of the whole universe, and that it was much better to weep over sin than over the loss of all one’s relations, because this was useless and it was even a dangerous thing to set oneself against the Will of God.”

“When the Bishop of Nantes,” adds Monsieur des Bastières, “acquainted him with the orders of the Court for the destruction of the Calvary at Pontchâteau, he accepted them with an admirable tranquillity, and submitted to them as though they had come from heaven. As soon as Monsieur l’Abbé Barrin heard the news, he went to the bishop’s palace to find out the truth. The bishop showed him the letter, under the royal seal, that he had received, and told him that Monsieur Grignon had accepted the orders of the King in a manner which charmed him; and added that he was either a great saint or the greatest hypocrite in the world. But there is no doubt that he received this blow as the greatest saint would have done, for he went off immediately to make a retreat with the Jesuit Fathers, a retreat which lasted two or three weeks.

The first time I went to see him in his solitude,” says M. des Bastières, “I thought I would find him overcome with grief. I prepared myself to do all I could to console him, but was very surprised to see him more gay and much more content than I was; I was in more need of consolation than he. I said to him, laughing: ‘You look strong and generous. Provided you are not just putting it on, well done!’ – ‘I am neither strong nor courageous,’ he replied, ‘but thanks be to God, I am neither pained nor grieving; I am content.’ – ‘You are pleased, then,’ said I, ‘that they are going to destroy your Calvary?’ – ‘I am neither pleased nor angry,’ he replied, ‘the Lord allowed me to have it built, and today he is allowing it to be destroyed. May his holy name be blessed. If this thing depended on me, it would last as long as the world does, but since it depends directly on God, let his will, not mine, be done. I would rather, O God,’ he cried, raising his hands and his eyes to heaven, ‘die a thousand deaths than ever set myself against your holy Will.’

“Such was the conformity of Monsieur Grignon’s will to the Will of God, at a moment which he must have felt deeply. I doubt if you could find a greater or more perfect conformity.

“At the end of the mission in Crossac,” adds Monsieur des Bastières, “I left to go to Nantes, without letting him know at all. Hearing of my departure, he thought that I had



abandoned him for good, and at that same time one of the lay brothers turned against him and accused him of the most atrocious injuries. He wrote the following verse of a hymn on this subject, inserting it among those he had already written on conformity to the Will of God:

A friend is unfaithful to me,  
Blessed be God! Blessed be God!  
A servant rebels against me,  
Blessed be God! Blessed be God!  
God does or allows everything,  
Which is why I am happy with all.”

## CHAPTER V

### *His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.*

All priests should have an outstanding devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament. Monsieur de Montfort possessed this virtue in the highest degree. He used to say Mass with an angelic piety, and often with abundant tears. And whenever he had to undertake some important thing for the glory of God, he would go and spend his nights at the foot of the altar, to commend it to Jesus Christ. Whenever he arrived in a parish where he was to give a mission, the first visit he made was to the Blessed Sacrament. He would go into the church and there make a meditation which would often last more than an hour. He would never pass in front of the door of a church without making a genuflexion at times when he was in a hurry. At other times, he would go down on both knees to adore Jesus Christ immolated on the altar.

Towards the end of every mission, he never failed to make a public act of reparation in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, with a rope around his neck and a lighted candle in his hand. At those times he would preach with such power and unction that one would have had to have a heart of stone not to weep bitter tears over one's sins. His hearers would immediately break into tears and sighs. Wherever he went, he would establish confraternities in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, to provide adorers day and night. And for this reason he formed an association with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, who have a house in Paris in the Rue Cassette, and who were founded to make honourable amends to the Blessed Sacrament, day and night, one after the other, with a rope around their necks and a burning torch in their hands. By means of this association, he made all those whom he enrolled in these confraternities, sharers in all the indulgences which the Holy See has granted to these holy Sisters, and in all their good works. At the end of his missions, he would arrange general processions in which the Blessed Sacrament was carried as though in triumph. You could never see anything more well-ordered, not more devout than the walking of the clergy and people who took part in crowds. We will speak further of this further on.

## CHAPTER VI

### *His zeal for the repairing and decoration of churches.*

We might apply to Monsieur de Montfort those words of the prophet: “Zeal for your house devours me,” *zelus domus tuae comedit me*: for, as Monsieur des Bastières tells us, “I

do not remember that he ever undertook a mission without having considerable repairs made in the parish churches, or in private chapels, especially when they were dedicated to God under the title of the Blessed Virgin. He had the chapel of Our Lady of Victories, in the parish of La Garnache in the diocese of Luçon, completely rebuilt; it is said that many miracles took place there, and still do. It was he who was responsible for the magnificent restoration of the parish church of Taugon-la-Ronde, the chapel of St. John the Evangelist in the town of Poitiers, the whole church of Mervent, and the chapel of Notre-Dame de Toute Patience in La Séguinière in the diocese of La Rochelle.

He had the floors paved and the churches completely white-washed in Cambon, Pontchâteau, Crossac, Vanneau and many other places in the diocese of Nantes. He would have all the vestments repaired and the altar-linen bleached in the churches where he gave missions. If they were not in good enough repair, he would have new ones made. He also arranged for magnificent tabernacles to be bought, and for those that were not gilt to be gilded. He himself would take on the task of cleaning the altars, the church walls, the sacred vessels and the statues and pictures of the saints, and he would do all this dressed in a surplice, singing hymns or reciting the Rosary with the people who were helping him. He would gather up all the church vestments which were not worth repairing, to make ashes for the first day of Lent.”

He would always take with him on his missions, a painter or a sculptor, to re-paint or re-make the pictures and statues of the saints which were not in good repair or were badly made. In his will he left 150 pounds to provide for the training of Brother Nicholas as a sculptor for this purpose. He also had many sacristies built. He could not bear to see the arms of people of quality embroidered on chasubles and other church vestments, or painted on the walls. This was what made him, with no human respect, have the band of material bearing arms in the church of Cambon effaced. Nor could he bear to see people buried in the churches, which are meant only to house the body of Jesus Christ, or the relics of the saints. So he made the inhabitants of Crossac, in the diocese of Nantes, give up their custom, and the right they claimed to have by a legal decision to all be buried in their parish church.

## CHAPTER VII

### *His devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

After Jesus Christ, the greatest object of the piety of Monsieur Grignon was the most worthy Mother of God. He told a person worthy of confidence that she was so present to his spirit, and so deeply graven in his heart that he was incapable of moving or acting except in her, through her, and for her, after God<sup>37</sup>. Not only did he himself recite every day, as well as the Divine Office, all fifteen decades of the Rosary, but he had it recited in all his missions, and he gave scarcely any when he did not, after the example of Saint Dominic, establish the confraternity of the Rosary, convinced as he was, with this great saint, that this prayer is an effective means to draw down the grace of God into hearts, and there destroy the reign of sin. And, what is more surprising, and even marvellous, he had the custom, despite all that he had to do, of making three hundred genuflexions every day, at different times, before some image of the Blessed Virgin, greeting her each time with a special prayer of praise, such as *Virgo singularis Mater misericordiae, etc.* He carried a statue of Our Lady at all times on his person, about half a foot high, encased in a sort of little chapel, and every time he prayed to God, whether reciting his breviary or the Rosary, or making his meditation, he would have

this statue in his hands or on a table, and from time to time he would kiss its feet with such tenderness and devotion that often he would burst into tears.

Apart from the fifteen decades of the Rosary, he used to recite every day the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, and many other very edifying prayers that he had drawn from Saint Bernard, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Anselm.

He also distributed little pictures of the Blessed Virgin to all who asked him for them, and he would explain, with much piety and unction, the mysteries honoured in the fifteen decades of the Rosary. He had fifteen banners made, gilded and magnificent, on which these mysteries were represented, and he had them carried in his processions. He also had pictures of the same Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries, painted in a very devout manner, with the purpose of explaining them to the people in the church.

He preached openly on the Immaculate Conception, and inspired in his hearers a fine idea of all the virtues of the Mother of God, above all her purity and virginity. He spoke in praise of this in all his missions, and tried to bring the young women to the practice of this virtue to honour that of the Blessed Virgin. To this end, he would have them consecrate themselves, after his own example, to the God of all purity, in a very special way, getting them to make, with the bishop's permission, simple vows of virginity for a year, or else of not marrying at all. Often there would be more than sixty who would be enrolled in this way in each parish, whom he would get to wear a white veil in processions and on certain feasts of the year. And these young women followed exactly the rules he gave them, which consisted especially in avoiding the company of persons of the opposite sex, and not attending worldly gatherings, such as dances and wedding feasts; frequenting the sacraments and practising strict modesty in their clothing and their conversation. Since worldly folk spoke out strongly against this association, we will make a defence of it at the end of this treatise.

He used to establish, in all the parishes where he gave missions, the devotion of the Holy Slavery of Jesus living in Mary, based on the words of the prophet-king: *Ego servus tuus et Filius ancillae tuae*; and those of St. Paul, *formam servi accipiens et habitu inventus est homo*. This practice brought down many crosses on Monsieur de Montfort, and many graces on his hearers. He himself was enrolled in the confraternity of the Holy Slavery of Jesus living in Mary, and this is the reason that he often signed his letters with these words: Louis Marie Grignon, unworthy slave of Mary, or slave of Jesus living in Mary.

He wrote, in just three days, a book on the advantages of this slavery<sup>38</sup>, which was judged an admirable work, and he wore the chains of the devotion right up to his death, to indicate his submission to and dependence on the Son of God and his Holy Mother. "I know," says Monsieur des Bastières, "a very great number of scandalous sinners whom he inspired to adopt this devotion, and to say the Rosary every day, who were completely converted and whose behaviour is now very exemplary. And it would be impossible to count the number of people, of both sexes, whom he got to change their lives by this means."

Whenever he spoke of the Blessed Virgin, whether in public or in private, it was in terms so strong and so touching that the hearts of his hearers were softened. He would uplift everybody and surpass himself, and this happened normally every Saturday. Although often in his discourses he tried to speak in a simple and natural manner, so as to suit the level of the people, he was incapable of taking a low level in the expressions he used when they concerned the praises of Our Lady. His words were sublime and almost supernatural. Every Saturday of the year was for him a solemn day which he kept like Sunday, in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and on these days he would fast regularly and drink nothing but water.

He made many pilgrimages on foot to chapels dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, to ask her aid; places such as Our Lady of Loreto in Italy, Our Lady of Chartres, of Saumur, and so on. And he had built, from the foundations up, a number of chapels in her honour in various places under these titles: *Notre-Dame de Toute Patience*, *Our Lady of Mercy*, *Our Lady of Victories*, and *Queen of All Hearts*.

While he was in Poitiers, he arranged for the purchase, during the mission in Montbernage, of a barn which he had done up, to place in it, on an altar, a life-size statue of the Blessed Virgin, around which the people gathered in crowds every day to recite the Rosary, which they also did at all the gates of the town and on all the bridges, where there are small oratories dedicated to Our Lady. He persuaded all the people to have recourse to her, and he wrote one day to his uncle in these words: "Tell my brother Joseph that I beg him to work hard at his studies and he will be one of the best in his class. Tell him that to achieve this he must seek the help of the Blessed Virgin, who is his good mother. If he continues to show devotion to her she will not fail to supply all his needs. I recommend my sisters to do the same."<sup>39</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

### *His devotion to the Souls in Purgatory.*

He had a very tender devotion towards the souls in Purgatory, and an extraordinary respect for cemeteries. At the end of each mission he would hold a solemn service for the benefit of the deceased of the parish who were in Purgatory. He used to offer Mass three times a week for all the faithful departed, and on those days he would offer all his exercises of piety for their intention. He would say the Office of the Dead and the seven psalms. He would increase his usual mortifications, and he would often commend the faithful departed to the piety of the faithful in his public discourses. He would have as many Masses said for them as he could, and he would advise his penitents to offer to God, for them, all their prayers and other good works that they did every Monday of the year. He would have been happy to see all Christians practising this holy devotion.

He could not bear to have animals entering the cemeteries. He used to have them walled or enclosed with ditches. We have come across parishes where those responsible for the maintenance of the church and its grounds would assign the cemeteries to individuals for pasturing their beasts, and also churches where wine was made and which were used as cellars. He completely abolished these criminal practices wherever he found them in force, because they are contrary to the respect due to these holy places.

## CHAPTER IX

### *His implacable hatred of sin.*

Monsieur Grignon, being convinced by his faith that mortal sin, or sin which brings death to the soul, is the greatest evil in the world, the sovereign evil in the way that God is the sovereign good, the unique evil which is the source of all evils, made war on it to extremes. While there was no kind of crime that he would not wish to do away with, he nevertheless attacked five kinds in particular that he believed, with reason, to be the source of all others,

namely: blasphemy, gambling, dancing, drunkenness and impurity. And it was the zeal he exercised against all these sins that drew down on him persecution, calumny, insults and contradictions on the part of the devil, the world and the flesh, whose empire he wanted to utterly destroy: *ut destruerat eum qui habebat mortis imperium, id est, diabolum.* Heb 2.14.

One day when he was passing through the Place Royale in Poitiers, he heard an army officer taking the holy name of God in vain; he was carried away with zeal and spoke to him so severely, treating him as a wretch, that, though he was with other brother officers, he inspired in him, there and then, such a fear of divine judgement on blasphemers that he forced him to his knees in the street, kissing the ground and asking pardon for his crime. This would appear incredible if we had not known this officer, one of the most determined in his regiment, and if a number of people worthy of credence had not testified to the fact and certified its truth.

He was filled with burning zeal against drunkenness and debauchery. One day, someone came to warn him that there was a great gathering of impious persons in a tavern, uttering execrable oaths, insulting the passers-by, having already fought with one another two or three times that day, which was a Sunday. Monsieur Grignon went alone to find them, because no-one was willing to go with him, fearing that they would be ill-treated by these wretches. He went into this place of abomination, and found five or six tables full of young people. Some were singing, or rather howling, others were dancing to the sound of oboe and accordion. Some of them were blaspheming against the holy Name of God in a horrible manner, others were quarrelling and hurling atrocious insults. Monsieur Grignon got down on his knees in the midst of this frenzied mob and said a *Hail Mary*. Then, getting up, he began by seizing the oboes and accordions, breaking them into pieces, and turned the tables over with everything on them. You have never seen people so astonished. Yet nine or ten of these wild fellows drew their swords against him, but he stood before them, his face firm, his Rosary in one hand and his crucifix in the other. They were so stunned by this unforeseen spectacle that they sheathed their swords and fled precipitately. All the rest, just as surprised, followed after them, so that he remained alone in the house with the inn-keeper, who was so dismayed by what he had just seen that he said not a word, but listened quietly to the correction Monsieur Grignon addressed to him, telling him that he shared in the crimes committed by the drunkards to whom he had served drinks.

Monsieur de Montfort could not abide dances and gatherings of people of different sexes, and he prevented them as much as he could, because they are normally the cause or the occasion of a multitude of sins. Here is one of the most significant examples. While he was in Nantes, the Sunday after the feast of Saints Donatien and Rogatien, the patrons of that town, he was passing by the Motte de Saint Nicolas around five o'clock in the evening, on his way back to the Providence where he was staying, when he spotted a large crowd of people on this Motte, and asked what was the purpose of this numerous assembly. He was told that it was boys and girls who were dancing together. He felt an interior urge to go and seek them out to get them to quit their dances. Having pushed his way through the crowd with great difficulty, he found himself in the midst of more than a hundred people of both sexes, who were dancing to the sound of a fife. He tried seven or eight times to separate them and dissipate the crowd, but they immediately joined hands again, and M. de Montfort found himself still in the middle of the crowd. Then these young people broke into terrible fits of laughter, and in an impious manner, began singing a hymn which was usually sung at a mission, dancing around Monsieur Grignon, who, not knowing what else to do, took his Rosary in his hand and, raising his arms to heaven, cried out as loud as he could: "If there are any friends of God in this company, let them kneel down with me." He had no sooner uttered these words than all the dancers, male and female, and all the onlookers, got down on the ground and, difficult

though it is to believe it, recited a decade of the Rosary with Monsieur Grignon. Afterwards, he gave an exhortation against dancing, showing them that it was a proximate occasion of a multitude of sins. His words had such an effect on them that, in an instant, their profane songs were turned into tears.

Profanation of feasts and Sundays was also a cause of sensible affliction to him. That is why he did all he could to prevent fairs and markets, and to stop gatherings, on these days. While he was preaching one day in a certain parish, he heard that a fair was to be held on the feast of the Patron Saint. Some days before, he gave a discourse against such a pernicious abuse, exhorting his hearers not to attend this fair, telling them that if it were held on that day, he would chase them away, as Our Lord in former times chased out the buyers and sellers from the Temple, even if it cost him his life. Not much notice was taken of this warning, for, the patronal feast having arrived, he was preaching, as his custom was, at seven o'clock in the morning. There were scarcely thirty people there, and after the sermon, when he asked why there were so few people, he learnt that the fair was the cause of this happening. He came down from the pulpit, and without telling anyone what he planned, he went straight to the fair and, carried away with the zeal of Phinehas or of Moses, he overturned all the stalls, to right and to left, that he saw before him, and in less than a quarter of an hour, all the merchants packed up, closed their stalls and took away their goods. Then a rumour went round the whole fairground that all the horses, cattle and other animals that were being sold there were to be killed. This news, founded on nothing but panicky terror, instilled such a horror in the buyers and sellers that they fled in haste, and in less than an hour this famous fair was dispersed. Only men inspired by God can carry out such feats or cause them to be successful.

He had a horror of the sin of impurity. He preached vehemently against it, and there was nothing he would not do, nor any means he would not take, to convert people guilty of it, as we shall see later.

## CHAPTER X

### *His love of crosses.*

It is difficult to express the burning love that M. de Montfort showed for crosses. They were the most precious delights and the tenderest object of his heart. The heavier they were, the happier he was to carry them and the greater his joy. It was easy to tell when he had received some crosses to bear, because then he would show an extraordinary gaiety. His custom was to say a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving whenever he was subjected to some mortification. But when his crosses were heavy (as he called those which were hardest to bear), he would invite all his friends to thank God for him and with him. Every day he would say very special prayers, and have public prayers said, for all those who brought these crosses on him, and he loved them with such tenderness that he would have sacrificed himself completely to render them some service, looking upon them as his most intimate friends. And when he knew who they were he did not hesitate to go to see them and thank them for the crosses. Here are two examples which bear this out, in the words of M. des Bastières.

Having gone to give a mission in one of the parishes of the diocese of Nantes, as requested by M. Barrin, the Vicar General, the parish-priest and all the other priests of the parish declared themselves M. Grignon's enemies. They heaped abuse on him and offered him the most outrageous insults. Before leaving this parish, he took me with him to see the parish-priest to say good-bye. He spoke to him with such gentleness and charity that I was

charmed, for he asked a thousand pardons for the alleged upsets he might have caused him: "I assure you, Monsieur," he said, embracing him tenderly, "I will pray for you to the Lord all my life; I owe you too much ever to forget you. I would be so happy if I could find some opportunity to be of service to you."

One pious person, having witnessed all the abuse this parish-priest had poured on him, sent an urgent message to the Bishop of Nantes informing him of the ill-treatment he had made him suffer. When Monsieur Grignon heard of this, he told this person off, and said that the affronts which he had suffered during this mission would draw down God's blessings on both workers and people. And since this person was one of his penitents, he deprived her of the sacraments for quite a long time to punish her for this fault, and ordered her, as he left, to pray to God that he would send him many crosses, that he would humiliate him severely, and said that this was necessary to draw down graces on the mission and on the people.

The second example is the following. Monsieur de Montfort at one point allied himself with a certain religious priest who was to help him in a mission he was to give. For the whole month that the mission lasted, this religious never ceased to calumniate Monsieur Grignon in the most cruel and most ignominious manner imaginable. He put it about everywhere that he sold the sacraments, that he was one of the most zealous followers of Simon Magus, and even dared to swear on his life that he was a sorcerer. I was so scandalised by the conduct of this remarkable calumniator, that I felt in conscience obliged to warn Monsieur de Montfort of what he was saying about him. I even made every effort to get him to dismiss the man. But the servant of God, far from following my advice, covered him with virtue, showed him many kindnesses, seating him at his right hand at table, and never reproached him in any way with what he knew of him. Is this not a close imitation of the conduct of Jesus Christ himself with regard to the traitor, Judas?

Such a holy and charitable way of acting had such extraordinary and so prodigious effects on the spirits of the majority of his persecutors that a great number of them became his most faithful friends.

I have already told, continues Monsieur des Bastières, how I happened to be in Nantes one day when he was being taken off to prison. On going to see him the following day, he seemed to me to be so full of joy as to be beside himself. I was alone in his room, and he took me by the hands and said: "Well, what have you to say now, my dear friend, about the day we had yesterday?" I told him that it had been very humiliating for him and very sad for me, and that I had suffered a great deal to see him treated with such indignity. "For myself," he replied with a laugh, "I don't remember having more joy in the whole of my life. My happiness would have been perfect if I had had the good fortune to be imprisoned." Then he sang a hymn on the cross.

When he was offered several missions to do, he would always choose the one in which he believed he would receive the most crosses. When we were giving the mission in Vertou (says M. des Bastières), to which God granted all sorts of blessings, Monsieur Grignon, not having suffered any great crosses, took me by the hand one day after evening prayer, and led me to his room. I asked him what he wanted. He seemed so afflicted and so hurt that I thought some great misfortune must have befallen him. He said, sighing in such a sad way that it chilled my heart, "My dear friend, what an evil plight we are in here!" – "Not at all," I replied, "where would we go to find a better situation? We have everything to hope for, and everything in abundance." – "The problem is that, here, we are too much at our ease," he said. "We are in a bad way, and our mission will be without fruit, because it is not founded nor based on the cross. We are too much loved here, and that is what is making me suffer. No cross, what a cross!<sup>40</sup> What an affliction! I am thinking of ending this mission

tomorrow. What do you think, my dear friend? Would we not be better off in another parish, where we could carry the cross of Jesus Christ, than here with nothing to suffer?" – I replied: "You would be doing wrong, Monsieur, to leave God's work in an imperfect state. If you don't have any crosses here, it is not our fault. This is perhaps the first mission where you have not had any." He did me the favour of accepting what I said. We finished the mission in Vertou, which lasted a month, and God poured out his graces and blessings on it in abundance. All his letters, his sermons, his actions and his desires breathed and spoke only of the cross. This is how he expressed it in a letter to a religious of the Blessed Sacrament in Paris: "What an inspiring letter! It speaks only of happenings marked with the cross. Whatever human nature and reason may say, without the cross there will never be any real happiness nor any lasting good here below until judgement day.

"You are having to bear a large, weighty cross. But what a great happiness for you! Have confidence. For if God, who is all goodness, continues to make you suffer he will not test you more than you can bear. The cross is a sure sign that he loves you. I can assure you of this, that the greatest proof that we are loved by God is when we are despised by the world and burdened with crosses, i.e., when we are made to endure the privation of things we could rightly claim; when our holiest wishes meet with opposition; when we are afflicted with distressing and hurtful insults; when we are subjected to persecution, to having our actions misinterpreted by good people and by those who are our best friends; and when we suffer illnesses which are particularly repugnant, etc. But why should I tell you things which you know better than I, for you understand and experience all of them. If Christians only knew the value of the cross, they would walk a hundred miles to obtain it, because enclosed in the beloved cross is true wisdom and that is what I am looking for night and day more eagerly than ever. O good Cross, come to us for God's greater glory! This is my frequent prayer dictated by my heart in spite of my weakness and my many infidelities. After Jesus, our only love, I place all my trust in the cross. Please tell N. that I adore Christ crucified in her, and I pray God that she will think of herself only to offer herself for more painful sacrifices."

In another letter he wrote to a religious, he speaks in these terms: "What can I say to you, my dear mother, in reply to your letter except to repeat what the Holy Spirit tells you every day. *Love to be humbled and being given scant respect, love the hidden life, love silence, be the silent one who offers Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, love divine Wisdom, love the Cross. I am opposed and restricted in everything I do. Thank God in my name for the crosses he has given me and which he keeps within limits to suit my weakness, etc.*"<sup>41</sup>

This is how he expresses himself in another letter, written to his sister from La Rochelle on 1 January 1713. "God takes pleasure, my dear sister, in seeing us both struggle and in making us both victorious, you in secret and I in public. Your struggles take place within you and are not seen outside your community, whereas mine ring out through the whole of France, as I fight against the demons of hell or make war on the world and the worldly, the enemies of truth. You would be surprised if you knew all the details of the precious cross which has been sent to me from heaven at the intercession of our good Mother. Please thank my good Lord Jesus and ask your dear community, to whom I send my greetings, to obtain from Jesus the grace for me to carry the roughest and heaviest crosses as I would the light-as-straw ones and to resist with unyielding courage the powers of hell."<sup>42</sup>

He wrote again to her from Paris, on 15 August 1713, beginning with these words: "May Jesus and his Cross reign for ever! If only you knew the half of the crosses and humiliations I have to bear, I don't think you would be so eager to see me; for I never seem to go anywhere without bringing something of the Cross to my dearest friends without any fault of mine or theirs. Those who befriend me or support me suffer for doing so, and sometimes



draw down upon themselves the wrath of the devil I am fighting against, as well as the world I am protesting against and the flesh I am chastising. This veritable ants' nest of sinners against whom my preaching is directed cannot leave me or my friends in peace. I have forever to be on the alert, treading warily as though on thorns or sharp stones. I am like a ball in a game of tennis; no sooner am I hurled to one side than I am sent back to the other, and the players strike me hard. This is the fate of the poor sinner that I am and I have been like this without rest or respite all the thirteen years since leaving Saint-Sulpice. However, my dear sister, thank God for me for I am content and happy in all my troubles. I think there is nothing in the whole world so welcome as the most bitter cross, when it is steeped in the blood of Christ crucified and in the milk of his holy Mother. Besides this inward happiness, there is the great merit of carrying the crosses. I wish you could see mine. I have never had more conversions than after the most painful and unjust prohibitions. Be brave, my dear sister, all three of us must carry our cross to the extreme limits of the kingdom. Carry yours well and I will carry mine well too, with the help of God. Let us not complain or put the burden aside or make excuses or cry like a child who weeps because he is given a load of gold to carry, or a farmer who loses heart when his fields are strewn with pieces of gold by people wanting to make him rich.”<sup>43</sup>

It is amazing how much abuse and mistrust, how many contradictions and how much opprobrium at the hands of his superiors and inferiors Monsieur de Montfort suffered during his lifetime. For a number of bishops often forbade him to stay in their dioceses, where they themselves had summoned him, because of the complaints made against him concerning his alleged imprudence and indiscretion. Their Vicars General treated him as an ignorant person, a hypocrite and a vagabond. One of them, one day, said to his face all the most mortifying things that extreme anger might inspire. Monsieur Grignon never offered anything in reply other than to say that he always followed the orders of the Bishops in their dioceses, and that he would do nothing against their wishes. Then he asked this Vicar General to hear his confession. The latter kept him waiting at the confessional for two hours, though he had promised to come and find him, then sent him away without hearing his confession.

In short, the cross followed him everywhere: to Paris, Poitiers, Saintes, Nantes, La Rochelle, Luçon, Saint-Brieuc and Saint-Malo, in the more than two hundred missions he gave throughout these dioceses. He used always to have the Confraternity of the Cross established and approved, and he would set up crosses in the most prominent places. He used to hand out small crosses to those who came to listen to him, and he would have hymns in honour of the cross sung. He wrote and had printed circular letters, addressed to the Friends of the Cross, and never ceased to beg for crosses and to speak of them with enthusiasm, to carry them always and everywhere.

How different all this is from the ways of the people of this world, who seek only joy and pleasure.

## CHAPTER XI

### *His penitential life.*

The penitential life lived by Monsieur Grignon is more admirable than imitable. His daily austerities went far beyond a man's natural powers. This is how M. des Bastières speaks of this matter.

“He took the discipline as often as five times a day. I have heard him saying to himself as he flogged himself: ‘Lord, please forgive my enemies, do not hold against them what they do and say against me. Lord, convert all the sinners in this parish, and show them all your mercy. Punish me, chastise me as much as you wish, for I deserve it, but for pity’s sake spare them.’

“I have heard that he would often get up during the night, even in winter, when it was freezing hard, and go into the garden or some other out-of-the-way place, where he would apply the discipline to the point of shedding blood. People worthy of belief have assured me that they had found him a number of times hidden in ditches, beating himself most cruelly. This was something he never failed to do before going into the pulpit to preach, and he used to say that a cock never crows better than when he has been fairly beaten with his wings.

“The discipline he used bristled with iron spikes. I often found it stained with blood where he had put it down. Day and night he wore an iron heart, in the form of a grater and very sharp, on his chest. One day, as he left the pulpit in this state, he fainted. When they loosened his clothes to restore him, they found this instrument of penance on his body, and took it away from him. Coming to himself, and finding himself in the arms of one of his assistants, he uttered these words: *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat* (I sleep and my heart keeps watch). He often wore a girdle and bracelets furnished with very sharp iron spikes. And he lived this kind of life often enough when he was giving missions.

“He got up every day at four o’clock in all seasons, and went to sleep most often at eleven o’clock or midnight, never in a bed, but always rather on the bare ground, with a handful of straw or at most a straw mattress.

“He fasted regularly every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, apart from the fast-days prescribed by the Church. He preached normally four times on Sundays and feast-days: twice in the morning and twice after dinner, and heard confessions the rest of the time. Often on those days he did not break his fast until one o’clock in the afternoon. He was very abstemious in his meals. Normally he would eat just one sort of meat, always choosing the least tasty. He would not drink pure wine, but would mix it at least half and half with water. He paid such little attention to what he drank that I have seen him once drink a cup of vinegar mixed with water without noticing, thinking it was wine. I asked him (says M. des Bastières) if the wine he had just drunk was good. He told me he had found it good. I have several times seen him put absinthe in his soup, or lots of vinegar, or stale wine.

“He would give at least three sermons on the necessity of penance, and he treated this matter with such power and so effectively that he touched his listeners to the heart, causing them to weep most bitterly. When he had preached just once on this question, the confessors had no difficulty in getting their penitents, whether people of quality or ordinary folk, to accept severe penances when they had deserved such. They would even ask for more than the confessors wanted to give them.

“Monsieur Grignon had a person who sold, at the doors of the churches where he was giving missions, pictures, books, rosaries and all kinds of instruments of penance. And of all these various articles, the most sought-after and the ones selling best were the disciplines, the hair-shirts, the iron or horsehair girdles, and the sharp bracelets and hearts. There were never enough of them, such was the great love of penance which Monsieur Grignon inspired in his listeners during his missions.”

Even though Monsieur de Montfort led a very holy life, and in the view of his confessors had never lost his baptismal innocence, yet he believed himself to be the greatest sinner in the world. And whenever it happened that he committed some slight fault, such as

even the greatest saints are not immune to, he would prostrate himself face down in his room and would often remain in this unpleasant and humiliating attitude for more than half an hour.

When he was travelling in the countryside, whether in excessive heat or copious rain, he often walked bare-headed, with his hat under his arm, to mortify himself, or he would carry a crucifix at the top of his stick. And when he went into the houses of those he was visiting, he would almost always kneel down and say the prayer *Visita quaesumus super hanc familiam tuam, etc.* This drew down on him the scorn and mockery of everyone.

## CHAPTER XII

### *His love of poverty.*

Tertullian, in days gone by, made agreeable fun of the pagans, saying that poverty seemed to them a more tremendous divinity than all their gods (*Apolog.*), since they would often sell their idols of gold and silver to supply their needs. But we can say on the contrary that the saints held evangelical poverty to be such a divine and lovable virtue, that they sold all their possessions to buy it, giving them to the poor.

In fact it is a hidden treasure, for St. Paul says that the Son of God, who was rich with the wealth of his Father, made himself poor for love of us, so as to enrich us with his very poverty. *Christus cum esset, Christus propter vos egenus factus est cum esset dives ut illius inopia vos divites essetis* (2 Cor 8:9). That is why this holy apostle, recognising the loftiness, dignity and nobility of that poverty that the Son of God made man consecrated in his own person, treats it with reverence and says that it abounds with all sorts of riches of the simplicity of God. *Altissima paupertas eorum abundavit in divitiis simplicitatis* (2 Cor 8:2). In fact it is so lofty, well beyond the nature of the senses and of reason itself, that worldly people lose sight of it and cannot know its worth or value. It is only the saints who know that the Son of God has canonised it even in this life, making it one of the beatitudes: *Beati pauperes spiritu*. Only they have prized it, sought it and preferred it to all the riches of the earth, persuaded that in possessing nothing in this world, they would possess everything in the next, *Nihil habentes et omnia possidentes*, and that lacking all things they would be in a better position than the rich to help the poor. *Egentes et multos locupletantes* (2 Cor 6:10).

Monsieur Grignon, relying on these great truths of faith, made himself poor, gave up his patrimony and all sorts of benefices, and made a vow of poverty. And he encouraged all the workers who followed him in the missions to do the same thing, leaving them, on the subject of this voluntary and evangelical poverty, some admirable writings, prescribing the rules most suitable for practising it. More than that, he established a society of priests, with the title of Company of Mary, wanting them to be like the apostles to whom Our Lord said: "Go forth without money or purse, without shoes, and never have two coats." And reflecting on the fact that this same Saviour one day asked his disciples if they had lacked for anything in their missions, and that they had replied boldly that they had not, because God looks after the birds who do not sow wheat in the fields, nor reap a harvest for their granaries; he wanted his missionaries, as much as he himself and the apostles, to depend solely on divine Providence, persuaded that they would lack nothing that was necessary for life.

So poverty was always a virtue dear to and loved by Monsieur Grignon. His heart was so detached from the goods of this world that he sighed only for those of heaven. And from his tenderest youth he felt such a great attraction for this virtue that he thought seriously of leaving his father's house and going to an unknown country so that, deprived of all

worldly goods, he might live poorly and beg his bread until he was strong enough to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. “When I asked him,” says M. des Bastières, “what trade he would chose, he told me he would always prefer the most mechanical and vile to any others.”

He was still young when he began abandoning himself to divine Providence and living a very poor life which continued right up to his death.

He never had any desire to possess any capital in the world; he gave up his patrimony, and did not wish even to receive any ecclesiastical goods, for he refused several considerable benefices. I know (says M. des Bastières) that M. l’abbé Barrin presented him with a priory which he never wanted to accept, saying that he would not change his condition of poverty for all the goods in the world.

When he first went to Paris his parents had made him don a new suit and take some money. When he was only a short distance into the countryside, he got down on his knees and, unable to bear what had been given him, he took off his suit and gave it to the first poor man he found, taking the poor man’s clothes for himself, then, carried away with fervour, he made a vow never to possess anything as his own. He arrived in Paris in these clothes, and told somebody in confidence that he was staying in a little stable-hovel, where Providence sent him enough to eat without his needing to ask anyone for anything, until such time as he was accepted at Saint-Sulpice.

From that time on, he gave everything he owned to the poor, even stripping himself of his coats and shirts to clothe them. When a certain well-to-do person one day gave him two pistoles for his own needs, he promptly gave them to an officer who begged an alms from him in the street.

His mother having had a new cassock made for him, he gave it to a poor priest that he met and took this man’s for himself. Many people reproached him with having given away to the poor what they had given him for his own use. But he said such admirable things to them about poverty that they judged themselves happy to have contributed to his charity, and held him in higher esteem.

The moment he was given any collars or linen, he shared them with the missionaries, his brothers or the poor. He never had two outfits at the same time. He only changed them when they were worn out, and never asked any from anyone, waiting rather until God should inspire someone with the idea to supply him with a new one. One good lady from Nantes, seeing his cassock all torn, made him one of woven wool, seamless, something like the one Our Lord had which the Gospel calls *Tunica inconsutilis*. He wore it with devotion until it was no longer fit to be used, through a spirit of poverty. He went more than three months without a change of linen, yet without being dirty, and when someone gave him white linen, he would make it dirty, not wishing to wear it while it was still white. When he did not have a handkerchief, he went down on his knees to his sister to ask her for one; she brought him two, but he would only take one, saying that he did not need more than this. He wore shoes and socks that were all tattered and torn and lacking soles.

This stripping of himself of all things that M. Grignon adopted, did not prevent the enemies of all the good that he was doing from accusing him often of being exacting and avaricious, saying that he appropriated to himself all the restitutions, both determined and indeterminate, that were made during his missions. They also said that he refused absolution and the sacraments to those would not give him money. All this forced him, when he left Nantes, to renew the vow of poverty he had already made, and to never again touch money from indeterminate restitutions, having it put in a coffer of which the parish-priests of the various places held one key and he the other. This coffer was not opened except in the

presence of three witnesses, and the money was immediately distributed to the poor or set aside for the decoration of the churches. He wrote many hymns on the excellence of evangelical poverty, which show well the esteem in which he held it.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *His charity to the poor.*

It is easier to love the poor than to love poverty. But it is more glorious for the rich, says the Son of God, to give to the poor than to be in a position to receive: *Beatius est magis dare quam accipere*. M. de Montfort did both. Not only did he have an extraordinary predilection for poverty, but his tenderness towards the poor, if I may say so, went to excess. He looked upon them as a sacrament which contained Jesus Christ under their repellent exterior.<sup>44</sup> A poor man, he said, is a great mystery, and we must learn how to penetrate it: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem*, that is, *intus legit*.

Basing himself on these principles, not only did M. Grignon cherish and embrace the poor as his children and his brothers, but he honoured them and respected them as his lords and masters. When he met any of them in the street, he would greet them, would not speak except bare-headed, would kiss and wash their feet. He would sit them down at his table on his right hand, would serve them first with all that was best. He would often drink from their glasses and eat their leftovers. He would embrace those who were quite hideous and covered in ulcers. He would get up from table when there were no poor people with him and say: "I am going to look for the good Jesus." He was never repelled by their stench, nor by their deformities, and whenever they were reluctant to take places at table above him and the other missionaries, for fear that they would cause them pain, he would encourage them to seat themselves there, as though they were children of the household. When they were crippled and could not walk, he carried them on his shoulders. He himself would cut the hair of those who had ringworm, and cleanse them of their vermin. He took such good care of them that he cured them in no time, and what is surprising is that, even though he drank from their cups and ate their leftovers, and embraced them, he never experienced the slightest effect. What would have been contagious to someone else, was something delicious for him. Also, he preferred the company of the poor to that of the rich. When one of them came to look for him at the hospital in Poitiers, one of the sisters, fearing that he would make a nuisance of himself, turned him away without allowing him to speak with him. When Monsieur de Montfort heard of this, he reproached her very strongly and made her do penance.

When he fell ill in Paris and in La Rochelle, he had himself taken to the hospital among the poor, deeming it too much of an honour for him to be lodged in the Hôtel-Dieu, since it was only for princes to have lodgings in the Louvre or the house of the king.

Every day during his missions, he had soup distributed to all the poor people to be found there. He even supplied them with clothing which was made by pious people during the course of the mission. And at the end of the mission, he would establish ladies of charity in the parishes, who would go out to visit the poor and the sick and help them in their needs. This was one of the principle aims for which he established the Daughters of Wisdom. He had the poor walking two by two in all the processions, the cross held high in front of them, and their rosaries in their hands. He taught them the catechism, and showed them how to love God with all their hearts and to serve him, making holy use of their poverty.

When he was in Montfort, his father tried to get him to stay in his house. Since he was unwilling to stay there, he begged him at least to come to dine there. This he accepted, provided he laid on a bigger meal than usual, because he had lots of friends that he would like to treat that day. His father, taking him at his word, was very surprised when he saw his son leading a troop of beggars that he had picked up in the parish. But he was obliged to feed them, because he told him that these were his friends that he had spoken of.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *His zeal for the salvation of souls.*

Saint Augustine says that he who has no zeal for the salvation of souls, has no love for God, *qui non zelat, non amat*. M. de Montfort, having seen through faith that men's souls were created in God's image, that they have been redeemed by the blood of his Son, and that he had a sincere will to save all of them and enable them to rejoice in the glory of paradise, was like one of those angels that St. Paul says are God's ministers to cooperate in their salvation: *sunt administratorii Spiritus propter eos qui capiunt hereditatem salutis*. All the journeys he undertook, all the missions he gave, all the establishments he brought about in various dioceses, provide irrefutable proof of this. He would have gone to the ends of the earth to save a single soul. His idea was, first of all, as we have already said, to go to India to preach the Gospel to the pagans, if Pope Clement XI had not prevented him.

He offered his services to ten or twelve dioceses to give missions there, but the devil, foreseeing the fruit that he would produce there as everywhere else, had caused thousands of calumnies to circulate about him, so that he could not be accepted there, which would not have prevented God from rewarding his zeal. For, whatever may be said against him, it is certain that he had a wonderful talent for converting sinners. And it cannot be denied that there were a great number of people, guilty of all the most abominable crimes, even among the clergy and religious who had the misfortune to scandalise the public, who could be seen weeping hot tears at his feet and uttering such violent cries, while striking their breasts, that everyone in the church who heard them was touched by it. One well-to-do man, having assisted at several of his sermons, had laughed at them in a truly scandalous manner and pointedly and publicly mocked them. A short time later, he fell dangerously ill. He would not go to confession to anyone other than Monsieur Grignon, whom he asked for and to whom he made a general confession of his whole life, with the liveliest sentiments of sorrow for his sins, after public reparation for the scandal he had caused, and at length he died in his arms.

The lord of one parish where he gave a mission would in no way at first attend the sermons. He even forbade his officers to help him arrange court cases and to reconcile those who harboured grudges in the parish. One day when Monsieur Grignon was in the pulpit, such a terrible clap of thunder came on the church that it caused all those there to tremble. He took his crucifix in his hand and made honourable amends, saying: "Lord, do not let your lightning fall on this people who honour you. Cause the enemies of your glory and the enemies of the mission to be so frightened that they will be converted." At that moment a thunder-ball fell on one of the tenanted farms belonging to the lord of the parish, quite close to his chateau. For several days they could not put out the fire. The lord, coming to his senses, came to Monsieur Grignon to ask him to beg God's mercy for him. He went to the place where the fire was, and prayed to God to extinguish it, and suddenly his prayer was heard and the fire was extinguished. This touched the lord so deeply that everyday he was the first to go along with his wife to hear the mission sermons. And they would wait, early in the morning,

for the church doors to be opened. He did considerable acts of charity for the poor of the parish, and gave money to Monsieur de Montfort to carry out good works.

We should not be surprised that he brought about so many conversions. For, as we have already seen, he used to prepare himself for his sermons by making an hour's meditation at the foot of the crucifix. He had prayers said everywhere for the conversion of sinners, and he went three or four days a week without drinking wine, so as to ask God for the conversion of some drunkard. It often happened that libertines came to his sermons solely to mock and laugh, but departed quite changed.

I have seen two of them, says a certain person worthy of belief, in the church, setting out at first just to joke about what he had to say. But, as it turned out, they were so touched by his discourse that they wept hot tears and retired to the corner of an altar, where they poured them out copiously for more than an hour.

If I had been willing, says M. des Bastières, to go to Rome with him, he would have gone a second time for the same purpose.<sup>45</sup> He did all he could to get me to undertake this journey and to persuade me that God was asking this of us. "My heart is pierced with such deep sorrow," he told me from time to time, "when I think of the almost infinite number of souls who are damned because of a lack of knowledge of the true God and of the Christian religion. If we ourselves had the faith and the charity, we would not hesitate for a moment to go. How happy are those who have the good fortune to work at such a divine task! They are doing what Our Lord once did, what the apostles did following his example, and what a great number of generous and holy missionaries are still doing today. It is my sins," he continued with a sigh, "which make me unworthy of such an excellent favour. I will never die content, if I do not breathe my last at the foot of a tree, like the incomparable missionary of Japan, St. Francis Xavier."<sup>46</sup>

It is said in the Holy Gospel that Our Lord often went to the houses of publicans, that he ate and drank with them, with the aim of converting them by this means. Monsieur Grignon behaved in like manner towards sinners. A few days after arriving in a parish to give a mission, he would find out if there were any scandalous people and where they lived. He would go to see them from time to time and speak to them individually. He treated them with the utmost gentleness imaginable. He converted many by this holy practice.

It would be impossible to say how often he exposed himself to danger in order to win back people given over to crime. "He often took me into places of debauchery without warning me beforehand, rightly fearing that if I knew I would not be willing to go," says his helper in the missions. "When we went into these unhappy places, he would first of all go down on his knees in the centre of the room, with a small crucifix in his hand. I would kneel down following his example, and we would say a *Hail Mary*. Then, after kissing the ground, we would get up. Then he would preach to them with such power and unction that these gentlemen and their women would not know what to say or do, such was their consternation. Most of them would leave without a word, their women staying behind. Some would weep bitterly, while others were like immovable statues. But Monsieur de Montfort would make them kneel down, and he would kneel down himself. Having given them a good sermon, he would make them promise to leave their infamous business behind for good, and to make a general confession. Several of these women, and even some of the men who had looked on them in a sinful way, would come to seek us out for confession.

"It happened once, when M. de Montfort was saying his *Hail Mary* in the midst of nine or ten persons of wicked life, there was one of the women who also knelt down to pray to God. All the men left except one who threw himself on Monsieur de Montfort like a

ravening wolf on a lamb. He grabbed him by the hair with his left hand, with his drawn sword in the other, and swearing in an execrable way he told him that if he did not leave at once he would run his sword through his body. Monsieur de Montfort, in no way intimidated, made this wise reply: 'I consent, Monsieur, that you should take my life, and I will willingly forgive you for my death, provided you promise me that you will be converted. For I love the salvation of your soul a thousand times more than I would ten thousand lives like my own.' These words were like a thunderbolt to this wretch. He was so astonished that he trembled in all his limbs, so much so that he had great difficulty in sheathing his sword and even more in finding the door to get out. We were left alone in the room with this poor wretched woman who was on her knees like us, and who was more than half dead, as I was myself. Monsieur de Montfort took her along with us and put her in the care of a very pious woman, who instructed her so well that she is now a perfect model of repentance.

"Monsieur de Montfort told me of many other adventures of a similar sort to the ones I have just related. I was even an eye-witness of some of them, which must be enough to convince those who read his life without prejudice that there are very few people whose zeal for the salvation of souls has equalled that which he showed during his apostolic life. When he was unable, by his remonstrances, to convert some sinners who were noted for their odious and scandalous crimes, he would offer up for them all the prayers he said during the mission. He would fast and use the discipline on himself to the point of drawing blood, to obtain from God their conversion."

## CHAPTER XV

### *His humility.*

"I do not think that it is possible to carry humility to a higher degree than Monsieur Montfort did. What I am telling you," says Monsieur des Bastières, "is clear proof of this truth. The most striking acts of humility performed by Our Lord during his public life were that he washed the feet of his disciples, that he frequented the company of publicans and ate and drank at their table, that he preferred the conversation of the poor to that of the rich, and that of ignorant people to that of teachers, and that he took pleasure in conversing with little children, preferring them to gown-up people, etc. Monsieur Montfort imitated this holy conduct to perfection. I saw him a hundred times going down on his knees before poor people, beggars and others, kissing their feet, even though they were full of filth. He prostrated himself often before his brethren, and he had such humble opinions of himself that he made them believe that he deserved to be trampled underfoot by them. He even ordered them to place their feet on his throat, which they did out of obedience to him. At the end of each mission he would get all the little children of the parish, from two years old to seven, to come forward. He would stand in the middle of this little flock of innocents and preach to the older ones. He spoke to them as though he were himself a child. Then he would give them all his blessing. He was altogether ingenious in humiliating himself and bringing humiliations on himself. He always preferred the poor and the common people to the rich and to persons of distinction.

"I confess that it might be objected against what I have just been saying that acts of humility which are merely external make only a hypocrite. But it is easy to prove that Monsieur de Montfort was truly humble in heart, as far as one can judge by the light of reason. To have no other will than that of God and one's superiors; to have a low opinion of oneself; to believe oneself the greatest of sinners among mortals; to love humiliations; to



have enough courage to look for them – are not these the clear marks of a deep humility? In painting the portrait of this virtue I have depicted that of Monsieur Montfort. For, not only did he do what I have just been saying, but he was even more humble to the point of preferring the opinions of his inferiors to his own. His persecutors will never believe this fact any more than many others. Nevertheless it is very true that I have seen him consulting his brethren many times on things that were not concerned with the truth, or with faith or morals, and following their advice at the expense of his own. It is impossible to have a lower opinion of oneself than he had of his own person. He never did anything good in his own opinion, and he believed himself to be the greatest sinner in the world. When he was able to find me alone after evening prayer, he would cast himself at my feet and accuse himself of the faults that he believed he had committed, with words so touching that one would have to have the heart of Pharaoh not to be moved by it. When he had finished his confession he would ask me to give him the most humiliating penances, but with such insistence that I could not prevent myself from bending to his earnest requests. When he was told that he had many enemies, he would say that he knew no enemies on earth apart from those who flattered him and spoke in his praise, and that he regarded as his best friends those who obtained for him, or themselves gave him, good crosses to bear. He was never happier than when he was being humiliated and when abuse was being heaped upon him. However great the insults, he would kneel to receive them. He begged all those who stayed with him to reproach him for his slightest defects, and above all not to pardon his most grievous faults. And from time to time he would reiterate this humble petition to us, and said the same to his brethren and the missionaries. Whenever I gave him some penances which had humiliated him, as soon as he had performed them, he would come and thank me on his knees and beg me to impose even greater and more humiliating ones on him. When I gave him light penances, far from being grateful to me for that, he would tell me that I was very cruel to him. In short he was insatiable as far as humiliation was concerned.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### *His patience and gentleness.*

Monsieur Montfort possessed these two excellent virtues of patience and gentleness to a supreme degree. His greatest joy was to suffer. What annoyed him most was not to have the opportunity to do so. I have seen him suffer very serious maladies, says Monsieur des Bastières, inexplicable illnesses, such as severe stomach pains, to which he was very prone, pains in his side so that he could not breathe, headaches such that he would be unable to open his eyes, and he put up with many other very violent pains with heroic patience. Far from complaining, he would always pray or sing hymns. Whenever I asked him how he was, he would reply that if he could get up he would be fine. Then he would talk to me as though he were in perfect health, always full of joy and contentment.

Monsieur Seignette, the doctor who treated him during the great illness he suffered in La Rochelle, which lasted about seven weeks, told me a number of times that of a hundred men who might have had the same sickness as he, not a single one would have been spared. He had a continuous high fever and an abscess in a very tender spot. When this was probed, which happened twice a day, he gave no sign, says Monsieur Seignette, that he felt any pain. He did not even emit the slightest sigh. Far from uttering words of complaint, he encouraged us not to spare him, assuring us that he would remember us in his prayers. He would laugh with us as though he were feeling the greatest pleasure. And when the probe touched his

painful part, he would sing the refrain of the hymns, *Vive Jésus, Vive sa Croix, is it not right that we love him*, etc. The surgeon who performed this operation and his assistants were surprised at his patience, and they freely confessed they had never seen its like.

He would in no way refuse the remedies that the doctors ordered, not because he had much faith in them, but because he found in them an opportunity for suffering and mortification. Sometimes his stomach pains were so violent that he would cry out at the top of his voice: *O Crux amabilis, ô Crux desiderata*. Here we have an admirable model of patience, which is seldom imitated. We read in the life of St. Francis de Sales that he was naturally violent and fierce, but that virtue had made him as gentle as a lamb. There we have the character of Monsieur Grignon. He told me himself that he had much more difficulty in overcoming his brusqueness and the passion of anger than all the others put together, and that if God had destined him for the world, he would have been the most terrible man<sup>47</sup> of his time. He was extraordinarily strong. He could easily put a full barrel on his knee. I have seen him carrying a tombstone that two strong men could not lift from the ground. He made incredible efforts to overcome his natural impetuosity. In the end he achieved this and acquired that charming virtue of gentleness, so often recommended by the Son of God. It was written on his face, and it shone forth in all his conversations. All who spoke with him were charmed.

At the end of the mission in N., one of the lay-brothers of Monsieur Grignon ran away during the night, and stole forty écus which had been a charitable donation, meant for the poor of the parish. Brother Jean ran after him and caught him, bringing him back to Monsieur Grignon, who received him with an angelic gentleness, exhorting him so touchingly that the poor lad, admitting his fault, wept bitterly and asked for mercy. Monsieur de Montfort granted it with all his heart, and gave him some money to get him home. Today this young fellow is a perfectly honest man who renders service to the public.

A similar thing happened in another mission, the day it came to a close. One of the brothers, who was the stall-keeper, ran away just as furtively and stole all the money from the goods he had sold, and carried off the mule as well. It was already late when Monsieur Montfort was told of it. He passed the news to his host with whom we were staying, and he immediately mounted his horse with his valet, and both of them rode after him, caught him and brought him back to M. Grignon. The poor crook threw himself at once at his feet, begging for his life. This action softened this holy man so much that he raised him up and embraced him so tenderly. He shed tears and gave him a lesson filled with gentleness and charity, after which he asked us all to keep silent about everything that had taken place in his regard. Before leaving, he gave him enough to set up a small shop, recommending him to the charity of the parishioners, who in fact took great care of him.

The gentleness of Monsieur de Montfort extended to the tribunal of penance. He always avoided those two fatal excesses which in the past have caused, and continue even today to cause, such great evils in the Church, namely, too great a severity and too great a laxity in morals. In the pulpit he thundered against all the vices, but he was gentle and firm, both at the same time, in the confessional. He had a special gift for touching hearts, whether in the confessional or in the pulpit. But he had such a horror of too severe a morality, that he believed that rigorous confessors did a hundred times more harm in the Church than those who were lax, though the latter do much harm: "I would much rather," he used to say, "suffer in purgatory for having shown too much gentleness towards my penitents, than for having treated them with a severity to make them despair."<sup>48</sup> For the Son of God says that those who are burdened with crimes and who labour under the weight of iniquity, should approach him

to receive rest.” Yet, though Monsieur de Montfort might appear to be extremely severe, the great sinners approached him for confession more than any other missionary.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *His detachment from the affairs of the world and from his relations.*

We have no better way of appreciating Monsieur Montfort’s detachment from the affairs of the world than from himself. This is what he wrote on this score to his uncle on 6 March 1699: “Please be kind enough to tell Madame B. that I have received her packet of letters for the Bishop of Saint-Malo. I must admit, my dear uncle, that these various errands distress me and make me feel that I am still living in the world. Would to God that I could be left in peace as the dead are left in their tombs, or the snail in its shell, which, when it is hidden, seems to be something of value, but when it comes out is wretched and disgusting, - which is what I am. Indeed I am worse, for I only spoil things whenever I get involved in them. So, please, uncle, I beg you to remember me only in your prayers to God. *Non praevaleat homo, ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me.* (*Let man not prevail against me; from the unjust and deceitful man deliver me.*) Ever yours in our Lord and in our holy Mother, in time and in eternity.”<sup>49</sup>

His detachment from his relations was no less than his detachment from the affairs of the world. We have already said that when he was in Rennes, he went three days without visiting his father and mother. When he was in Montfort to give a mission, he was unwilling to go and stay with them; and when he was in Dinan, he did not want to make himself known to his brother who was a Dominican, when he went to say Mass in the convent where the latter was sacristan and asked him for vestments. But the letter he wrote to his mother from Poitiers on 28 August 1704 goes far beyond what we might say on this subject.

This is what he wrote: “You must prepare for death which is closing in upon you through all your trials. Continue to accept them in a Christian spirit, as you are doing. You must suffer and bear your cross every day - this is essential. If it is God’s will for you to become so poor that you have to enter the poorhouse, it will be for your greater good to be so despised and to be cast aside by everyone and so to die while still living in the body. Although I do not write to you, I never forget you in my prayers and sacrifices. I love you and I honour you all the more as flesh and blood have no part in it. Please do not burden me with my brothers’ and sisters’ affairs. I have done all God asked me to do for them in a spirit of love. For the moment, I have no worldly goods to give them for I am poorer than all of them. I place them all and all the family into the hands of him who created them. Let them think of me as dead. Again I say it, so that they will remember, - let them think of me as dead. I want to receive nothing at all from the family into which God caused me to be born. I give up my right to everything except my patrimony which the Church does not allow me to renounce. My property, home, father and mother are up above. I no longer regard anyone on earth as my kinsfolk. I know that I owe you and my father a great debt of gratitude for bringing me into the world, for looking after me, bringing me up in the fear of God, and for all the other good things you have done for me. For these I thank you over and over again and pray every day for your salvation and I will go on doing so all during your life and after your death. But I will do nothing else for you and that applies to the rest of the family. In my new family - the one I belong to now - I have chosen to be wedded to Wisdom and the Cross for

in these I find every good, both earthly and heavenly. So precious are these possessions that, if they were but known, Montfort would be the envy of the richest and most powerful kings on earth. No one knows the secrets I am talking about, or at least very few people do. You will understand them in eternity if you have the happiness to be saved. It could happen that you will not, so fear and love God all the more. Please tell my father, on behalf of my heavenly Father, not to touch pitch or else he will be defiled; tell him not to indulge in earthly pleasures, for they will suffocate him; and not to be engrossed in worldly affairs, for he will be choked by them. Flee the world and hold it in contempt; love the Blessed virgin with whom I am all in all to you and my father. I greet your Guardian Angel and I am all yours in Jesus and Mary. Montfort, priest and unworthy slave of Jesus living in Mary.”<sup>50</sup>

## **INVENTIVE STRATEGIES AND MEANS**

*used by Monsieur de Montfort*

*to perpetuate the fruits of his missions*

Monsieur de Montfort had learnt from the Gospel that the Son of God, sending his apostles out to carry out their mission throughout the world and to convert sinners, recommended them, among other things, to make sure that the fruit of their apostolic labours would be stable and permanent, *ut eatis, et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat* (Jn 15:16). That was why he used all the ingenuity that the Spirit of God could suggest to him, that the exercises of piety and the great maxims of religion, which he had tried to teach the people during the course of his missions, might not be wiped out a short time later from their minds and hearts, and that they might persevere in the observance of God’s law until death.

To this end, he made use of ten or twelve most excellent practices, of which we will now speak.

### **First Means**

*The establishment of Christian schools*

The first concern of Monsieur Grignon was to set up, in the course of his missions, Christian schools for boys and girls. And he wanted the school-masters to be dressed in black, wearing at least a short cassock, so as to command respect, and the school-mistresses dressed in a large headdress covering them from head to foot. His method for teaching was to have them seated on nine benches arranged like an amphitheatre, one above the other, so that they could not engage in chat or banter without the teacher seeing it. He gave these benches the names of the nine choirs of angels. The highest was the bench of the Seraphim, the second that of the Cherubim, and so on.

All those on the same bench had the same book, and recited the same lesson all together, because the first was obliged to pick up from the second, and the second from the third, when they failed, etc. Using this method, a school-teacher often had a hundred and fifty pupils, which caused him no more problem than if he had only a dozen. The teacher led them to Mass, singing hymns. One pupil would intone the first verse, and the others would follow him or her. He had a number of monitors appointed, who would take note of the good and

bad points of each one, and they would conduct them all back to their parents' homes. They said five decades of the Rosary together every day after class in honour of the Blessed Virgin.

## **Second Means**

### *Confraternities of penitents and virgins*

Monsieur de Montfort used to set up during his missions different assemblies or confraternities, one of white penitents for the men, and the other for the young women, which he called the Company of Virgins.

The first was designed simply to wean the men away from taverns and from debauchery, from swearing and malicious gossip. The sole aim of the second was to preserve the young women from the corruption of the age, keeping them away from dances, gatherings of boys, and *veillées*<sup>51</sup>, and in general all those occasions of offending God which are normal for their sex. He would have these young women, with the permission of the Bishop, in the hands of the parish-priest, make a simple vow not to marry for a year, and he had them walking in his processions in a white robe, the virgins having a veil on their heads. This practice seemed quite extraordinary to some. But since up to now only very good effects have been observed, and the women who took on this obligation have been very faithful in keeping the rules that we will give, the Bishop of La Rochelle has granted an indulgence of forty days to these penitents and virgins each time they gather together.

Besides, these confraternities of penitents are quite normal in Italy and in France, in Puy-en-Velay, etc.

### **Rule of the White Penitents**

1. They will be men of high moral standard who say the Rosary regularly.
2. They will go to Confession frequently especially on the first Sunday of the month and the principal feasts of the year.
3. Four times in the year they will walk in procession, barefoot and dressed in white.
4. Each week they will practice some act of bodily mortification in keeping with their strength and on the advice of a wise director.
5. They will edify the faithful of both sexes by their example of Christian virtue.
6. They will not engage in any lawsuit. Should there be differences to regulate, they will consult prudent and informed people so as to settle the matter out of court.
7. In order to avoid scandal and moral corruption, they will go to taverns only by necessity.
8. When one of their members dies they will assist at his funeral and pray for the repose of his soul.
9. They will meet frequently, as arranged by their director, to receive the instructions he will see fit to give them.
10. To be accepted into the congregation, the aspirant must receive a majority vote.

## **Rule of the Forty-four Virgins**

1. They will not be more than forty-four in number. When one dies or otherwise leaves, the parish-priest will appoint a replacement. He will choose a steady, good-living person who will take a vow not to marry for one year.
2. Those who are called by God to marry will ask the advice of their spiritual director and when they have completed the time for which their vow was binding, they will give up their veils and rings before marrying. The director will refund the cost of these articles, if desired, and they will be sold again to new members.
3. The virgins will be specially faithful to saying the Rosary every day. They will avoid the smallest fault against purity or anything at all which might in the least sully their holy state, such as dances, parties and the company of the opposite sex.
4. They will meet in church four times a year on the following feasts of our Lady: the Annunciation, the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption, the Immaculate Conception and the Purification. They will dress in white, receive Holy Communion at High Mass and after Vespers they will carry our Lady's statue in procession. Then either the parish-priest or his deputy will give them an instruction in the Rosary chapel.
5. They will obey their mother mistress and her two assistants and will accept their advice with respect and submit when ordered or forbidden to do something for the general good.
6. If, after receiving two admonitions, one of the virgins should continue to give bad example, her name will be removed from the list of members and a more suitable person will be chosen to take her place.
7. Each year on the feast of the Annunciation, they will renew their vow for one year.

## **Third Means**

### *The singing of hymns*

The third means he used to produce fruit in his missions was to have hymns or canticles sung. He composed a whole volume of these himself written in his own handwriting, the titles being:

1°. On the usefulness of canticles. 2°. Against the poets of the age who compose obscene verses, dirty songs, and comedies. 3°. On the esteem and desire one ought to have for virtue in general. 4°. On the excellence of charity. 5°. On the lights of faith. 6°. On the firmness of hope. 7°. On humility. 8°. On the charms of gentleness. 9°. On the merit of obedience. 10°. On the power of patience. 11°. On the beauty of virginity. 12°. On the necessity of doing penance. 13°. On charity towards one's neighbour. 14°. On the splendours of meditation. 15°. On the power of fasting. 16°. On the credit of almsgiving. 17°. On the cries of the poor. 18°. On the triumph of the cross. 19°. On the treasures of poverty. 20°. On the ardour of zeal. 21°. On the tasks of a missionary. 22°. On the good odour of modesty. 23°. On the conversion of the scrupulous. 24°. On the wisdom of silence. 25°. On false devotion. 26°. On the practice of the presence of God.

He also wrote other canticles on the duty of gratitude, on abandonment to divine Providence, on the consolation of the afflicted, on contempt for the world, the snares of the

world such as gambling, dances, balls, the theatre, spectacles, luxury, and human respect. Others were on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on the infinite treasures of this divine Heart, on the excess of its love, the outrages it has received, and the reparation of honour we ought to make to it. What is admirable in his canticles, where we find all that one should believe, do, suffer and avoid, is that he first of all gives the definition of each topic. He points out the motives which commit us to practising each virtue, he lists the means we need to take to achieve our end, the signs that make it known, and the things that are opposed to it. The whole is written in a simple and natural style, and set to popular tunes, so that nothing is easier to retain or to sing. By this means, Monsieur de Montfort taught both the great and the humble, the rich and the poor, and gave them the means to be instructed and edified, to be used in the towns and in the countryside, in church and at home. It is not possible to conceive what good effects these canticles produced in families, for they all end with a prayer addressed to God for the grace to practice the virtue or to avoid the vice which are the canticles' subjects.

### **Fourth Means**

#### *Teaching catechism*

The fourth means was to teach catechism in a simple and familiar way. He wanted the missionaries to provide themselves with the mission catechism; he wished the questions asked to be short, clear and easy to remember; the children to be seated on benches arranged like an amphitheatre. The catechists were to apply themselves more to asking questions rather than speaking to them, and to get them to repeat what had been explained in the preceding catechism class. They were to bring them to love and fear at the same time. They were never to strike them with the hand or the cane, and they were to deliver an exhortation of a quarter of an hour at the end.

### **Fifth Means**

#### *Renewal of the Vows of Baptism*

The fifth means was to get all his penitents, before they were given absolution, to renew the vows of their baptism, and even to have them repeat their promises in a loud voice in the middle of a sermon, getting them to raise their hands to make them remember, but advising them that by so doing they were neither making a vow, nor swearing an oath. He made it clear to them that their commitment to believe in God and to renounce Satan, his pomps and his works, such as dances, theatrical performances, etc., was no greater, when they gave this outward sign of the renewal of these vows, than that which they had entered into at their baptism itself through the mouths of their godparents, and which they were bound to renew and ratify when they had reached the age of reason. Apart from that, to commit them to remember it better, he had printed a formula of this renewal of the vows of baptism, which he had those who could write sign, in these terms.

### **Covenant with God**

#### *Vows or Promises of Holy Baptism*

1. I firmly believe all the truths of the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. I renounce for ever Satan, the world, sin and myself.
3. With the help of God's grace, which will never be wanting to me, I promise to keep faithfully all the commandments of God and of the Church, and avoid mortal sin and its occasions, especially bad company.
4. I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ by the hands of Mary to carry my cross after him all the days of my life.
5. I believe that those who transgress these vows without showing repentance will be damned, and that those who keep them until death will be saved, in testimony of which I have signed below. Given in the presence of the Church, in the parish of ..... : in the year 17.....

### **Practices**

*Of those who have renewed their baptismal vows,  
in order to live in a Christian manner*

1. I shall avoid dances, theatres, and other public spectacles, games of chance, luxurious living, vanity, bad books and songs.
2. I will never frequent, except when necessary, drinking houses and other such places of temptation.
3. I will go to Confession once a month, and even oftener as guided by a good director.
4. Every year I will renew privately the vows of my baptism, I will say the Rosary, adore the Blessed Sacrament for half-an-hour, and will try to receive Communion that day.
5. I will say every day the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, and five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* in honour of the Holy Name of Jesus; and I will faithfully keep these resolutions until my death.

Monsieur Grignon tried to really convince his listeners that the promises of baptism were very solemn and not subject to dispensation: solemn because they were made in the presence of God and his angels, and in the presence of the Church; not subject to dispensation because in certain cases popes and bishops can dispense from the most solemn of vows, but neither the whole Church gathered together, nor even Jesus Christ himself, can ever dispense from the vows of baptism, those which make one a Christian and promise to believe in God, to love him, and to renounce Satan and all his works.

### **Sixth Means**

*Perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*

He used to establish in all the parishes he visited perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, getting each of his listeners to take one hour per week, or per month, or per year, to come to the church to adore Jesus Christ present on our altars, to thank him for all the



graces they had received, to ask him for all the graces of which they were in need, to pour out their hearts in his presence: *desiderium meum ante te, et gemitus meus non est a te absconditus*; and to make honourable amends to him for all the profanations, insults and sacrileges he suffers there from heretics, bad Christians and unworthy communicants. To this end, he had obtained from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament established in Paris, an act of association with all the adoration they rendered to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and with all the indulgences granted them by the Holy See.

## **Seventh Means**

### *The Confraternity of the Rosary*

It could be said that, since the time of St. Dominic, there has never been a man more zealous than Monsieur de Montfort for the establishment of the Confraternity of the Rosary, in all those places where it had not already been set up, and for its re-establishment in parishes where the negligence of the pastors or of the people had caused it to be abandoned. For, not content with reciting the fifteen decades of the Rosary every day in private, he had the people who came to listen to him recite it out loud, sharing the fifteen decades three times a day.

In all the processions at the end of each mission, he had fifteen banners carried, representing the fifteen mysteries, namely: five joyful, five sorrowful and five glorious. And he had had similar pictures made, on which these mysteries were painted, which he would explain in the church, convinced that it was to this devotion towards the Blessed Virgin that he owed so many graces and all the blessings that God poured out on his missions. What is even more wonderful is the fact that this devotion persists with the same fervour, since his death, in the parishes where he established it. For, as we have already said, the parish-priest of La Séguinière assures me that, for the past eight years, the Rosary has been recited every Sunday in his church: five decades at the first Mass, five at the High Mass, and the other five at Vespers; and that there is not a household in the whole of his parish, nor an inhabitant who does not recite a chaplet every day either in private or in common.

## **Eighth Means**

### *The Association of Friends of the Cross*

Monsieur Grignon, basing himself on that saying of Jesus Christ, that to be numbered among his disciples it is necessary to renounce oneself, carry one's cross all the days of one's life, and follow him: *tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me*, tried to inspire in all the people the love of crosses, of whatever kind, spiritual or temporal, such as illnesses, insults, humiliations, contempt, etc. And he preached this great truth more effectively by his own example than by his words. For, as we have already said, he sought crosses with as much ardour as worldly people seek pleasures. He accepted them joyfully, and bore them with patience and with gratitude. He even thanked those who made him suffer, and looked on them as his best friends. To inspire this devotion, so contrary to the senses and to corrupted nature, he set up associations of a number of people under the title of the cross. He gave them rules and practices approved by the bishops. There is one that still exists in La Rochelle,

made up of more than sixty persons. He used to erect great crosses, at the end of each mission, with much solemnity, and would bless small crosses embroidered on cloth, which he would give to all those who had attended thirty-three sermons on his missions, and which they would put on their sleeves to remind them of the truths they had heard, one of the main ones being the obligation on a Christian to suffer at every stage of his life. He wrote a number of hymns on the cross, and had printed a circular letter addressed to the Friends of the Cross, which contains Gospel maxims necessary for salvation.

### **Ninth Means**

#### *The establishment of the Company of Mary or of the Holy Spirit*

The most efficacious means Monsieur de Montfort used to ensure the permanence of the fruits of his missions, was to leave behind missionaries who were like the successors of his own zeal, to go out and preach the Gospel throughout the world and bring the love of God to all places. We have already seen the spirit of detachment from the goods of this world and the spirit of the highest perfection that he inspired in them, and the rules he gave them. Monsieur de Montfort had hardly left this world when their company was established under the name of the Holy Spirit, or the Company of Mary.

They already number sixty or seventy priests altogether, who work with many blessings in the dioceses of La Rochelle, Saintes and Poitiers, with the approval of the bishops and even of the Holy See.

### **Tenth Means**

#### *The establishment of the daughters of Wisdom*

Monsieur de Montfort, whose aim in his labours all his life was to combat the false wisdom and the maxims of the world, began the institute of the Daughters of Wisdom in the hospital in Poitiers in the year 1706.<sup>52</sup> And though the opposition aimed at this establishment by the devil and the world right from the start, ought without a doubt to have upset and destroyed it, as we have already said, God, who is pleased to use the weakest means to combat the powers of hell and who, from the birth of the Church onwards, has confounded the wisdom of worldly people, of philosophers and great minds by the seeming folly of the Gospel, caused Monsieur de Montfort's undertaking to succeed against all odds.

For a house of the Daughters of Wisdom has imperceptibly formed, numbering sixty or seventy Sisters, in the village of St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, at the foot of his tomb; their work is to run a small school for the girls, and to serve the poor and the sick of the parish and its neighbourhood. Thus the zeal of Monsieur de Montfort for the salvation of persons of both sexes is alive and well, and has become, as it were, immortal after his death.

### **Eleventh Means**

#### *Ceremonies of general processions,*

*and the order he kept therein*

Monsieur Grignon used to hold seven processions in each mission. The first one was on the day of general Communion for the women; the second on the day of general Communion for the men; the third the day of general Communion for the children; the fourth the day of the service for the dead; the fifth the day of the renewal of baptismal vows; this one was a general one. The sixth was on the day of the erection of the Cross; the seventh on the day of the distribution of crosses and of the name of Jesus.

*This is the order he maintained for his general processions.*

On the day set down for the procession, when the people had gathered in the church, Monsieur Grignon would go up into the pulpit and, after a short exhortation, would lay down the order of the procession in this way. The cross and the banner would go at the head of the procession. All the children of the catechism class would follow them, the girls in front of the boys; then all the other girls and boys, all the women and the widowed men would walk behind them. Finally the clergy and those who had the honour of carrying the Blessed Sacrament would follow. Then the statue of the Blessed Virgin was carried on a richly decorated stretcher by girls who had made a vow of chastity for one year, dressed in white and with white veils on their heads. They walked in the midst of the ranks of the virgins, as those girls who had made this vow were called.

A deacon, dressed in the vestments of his order, would carry the Holy Gospel, walking at the head of the clergy, flanked by two torches. A great number of penitents would walk in the ranks, all barefoot, with a sort of alb over their ordinary clothes, several with a rope around their necks, others with an iron chain. Some would have their hands bound, others would carry knotted cords in their hands with which they would strike themselves cruelly. I have seen some who dragged great pieces of iron attached to their feet. They would all have a very pale cloth covering their faces, so that they could not be recognised. They would walk with such modesty and such edifying recollection that the spectators would be moved to tears. Each estate would have a banner at its head. All kinds of instruments would precede the Blessed Sacrament. Four or five runners would be flying continually through the ranks to warn people when to stop and when to walk on. Two chosen persons would direct the company of each estate, getting them to sing canticles or psalms, and hymns, and to chant the Rosary. When the procession was too big for the people to walk two by two, they would walk four by four. Some were more than a quarter of a league long. The pace was always measured, and altogether regular. Piety, devotion and modesty reigned throughout. No-one was allowed to walk who did not have a Rosary, a cross and a Covenant contract in their hands.

All those who were not furnished with these marks of piety and who had not made their mission, that is, had not been to Confession, or who did not belong to the parish, would walk haphazardly, without any particular order, behind the Blessed Sacrament. When the procession reached the altar of repose, the deacon would chant the Gospel of the day, and the clergy would sing one of the hymns to the Blessed Sacrament; then, the celebrant having said the prayer, Monsieur Grignon would preach. Afterwards, the procession continued on as before, except that the deacon would now walk immediately behind the cross and the banner, and on arriving at the main door of the church, would seat himself in an armchair, holding the Holy Gospel open on his lap. Then all those who had walked in procession, but not the rest, before entering the church, would kneel down and kiss the Gospel, while saying:

*I firmly believe all the truths of the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Then they would enter the church, and as they passed in front of the baptismal font, a priest would get them to pronounce their baptismal vows, having them kiss the font and say these words:

*I renew with all my heart the vows of my baptism, and I renounce forever Satan, the world and myself.*

Having made this renewal, they would go to an altar where Monsieur Grignon would be, holding in his hand a small statue of the Blessed Virgin which he always carried with him, and he would have them kiss its feet and say the following words:

*I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross after him all the days of my life.*

When these ceremonies were over, and the priests also had had their turn, they would go to the font and intone the *Credo* which all the people would sing, while in the meantime M. Grignon went up into the pulpit. As soon as they had finished singing, he would begin his sermon. Towards the end of his discourse, he would ask several questions of the deacon, who held the Gospel in his hands. He would ask him, for example, if one could be saved in any religion; which religion was the best, if only in the Catholic religion could one be saved; if it were enough to make an external profession of the Catholic faith to be saved? etc. The deacon having given his answers to all these questions, Monsieur Grignon would ask him what rule it was that every Christian must observe in order to merit eternal happiness. The deacon would reply while showing the book of the Gospels to the people: "Here is the rule," he would say, "for all Christians. Whoever does not observe all these precepts and those of the Church will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." After some further words, he would carry the book of the Gospels to the preacher, who would receive it kneeling, then, having placed it on his breast when he got up, he would preach so patiently that all his listeners would be moved to tears.

After his sermons, he would bless all the Rosaries, crosses and pictures of the people. Then Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament would be given. And so would end all the ceremonies of the general processions held by Monsieur Grignon at the end of every mission he gave.

This is the method he used to get the people to walk in procession, in a very beautiful and regular order. Being in the pulpit, after delivering his sermon, he would call all the little girls of the catechism classes and tell them to take a companion each and to walk, two by two, in front of the pulpit, and to follow the cross and the banner. Then he would call the little boys and then all the others according to their rank and estate, to do the same thing. The whole thing was carried out straight away, with no trouble or disturbance, and he would do all by himself, without moving from his place, what a dozen people would have had difficulty in doing, with lots of agitation.

## PROOFS

*Of the establishment of virgins consecrated to God in a special way,  
without being enclosed in a monastery.*

*Drawn from the church history of Monsieur Fleury.*

*Tom. V beginning with 395, up to 429.*

<sup>1</sup> It is reported that Theodore, the Arian bishop of Oxyringus in lower Thebes, persecuted, as the other Arian bishops had done, the Catholic virgins who numbered 20,000 in this town, and to show clearly that he was not speaking of cloistered religious, he explains himself clearly in this way.

<sup>2</sup> The life of those who were cloistered is characterised in these terms. They drank no wine, ate no fruit, and often fasted two or three times a week. They were dressed in a hair-shirt which covered them from head to foot, and never took a bath. They kept to a strict enclosure. They had, however, 60 young virgins who went out on Sundays to go to church and receive Holy Communion, and to show that these 60 young virgins were not just boarders, there were some of them who never went out, even though they could do so, and who died in the community.

<sup>3</sup> In Verona there was a virgin called *Indicia* whom Zenon, the bishop of this town, had consecrated to God. She had lived in Rome with St. Marcellina, in St. Ambrose's house, and had always had a good opinion of his virtue. Going back to Rome, she lived with her sister, who was married to a man called Maxime, where she lived in such a retiring way that some were shocked that she did not visit their wives. She was calumniated, but St. Ambrose undertook her defence and justified her conduct, helped by his sister, St. Marcellina, and by the virgin *Paterna*, with whom she stayed in Milan during the court-case. So here we have a virgin consecrated to God by a bishop, yet living in the world. It should be noted that these virgins wore a veil on certain days, as we shall see below.

<sup>4</sup> At the third Council of Carthage, at which St. Augustine assisted with 44 other bishops, under the presidency of Bishop Aurelius, and at almost all the other assemblies in the time of St. Augustine, as we shall see later, rules were drawn up for the virgins. For at this Council, it is laid down among the points of discipline, Canon 4, *that virgins are to be consecrated only at the age of 25*; which is to be understood for those who were vowed for life, since we have seen (page 41 above) that there were those who took the veil at the age of 7. And Canon 33 lays down that those girls who have lost their parents will be placed, by the good graces of the bishop, in a monastery of virgins, or in the company of some virtuous women. Here we clearly see two kinds of virgins consecrated to God: some living in community, others in individual houses. And this is the reflection made by Monsieur l'abbé Fleury in his history at the point cited in the margin.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 25, line 8, Tom. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Page 26, last line, and page 27, first line.

<sup>3</sup> Page 41, line 26.

<sup>4</sup> The year 397, pg. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory of Tours reports that at the burial of St. Martin, there was gathered a large group of virgins who broke down in tears along with the people, though no-one doubted the glory of the holy bishop.

<sup>6</sup> Lucius Canitacius, a friend of Acase, the Donatist bishop, treated with contempt the virgins assembled by order of St. John Chrysostom along with all the people on the night of the Paschal Vigil. The following day, the same violence was used towards the clergy, the lay-people and the virgins gathered with them. They ripped the ear-rings off the women, even ripping off their ears, and stripped the virgins of the veils they were wearing, even though they were not cloistered. And this violence was perpetrated by heretics out of hatred for St. John Chrysostom, because these people and these virgins belonged to his communion, while his enemies belonged to the communion of Donatus, and so were Donatist heretics.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Nicarete also retired from Constantinople at this time. She was a virgin of one of the most illustrious families of Nicomedia, who practised all the virtues, but especially humility, yet with great courage; so much so that she made no complaint concerning the great riches that were unjustly taken from her. By means of her virtue of economy, the little that was left to her sufficed for her to live with her relatives until she was old, and still to give with liberality. She prepared all kinds of remedies for the poor; cured those whom the doctors had not been able to heal, and brought about cures which appeared to be miraculous. She took great care to hide herself. She never wanted to be raised to the rank of deaconess, despite the pleas of St. John Chrysostom, nor to accept the leadership of the *ecclesiastical* virgins, that is, those who were not enclosed in monasteries but lived with their parents, and of whom the Church had a list. The memorial of St. Nicorete is celebrated on 27 December. *See the Roman Martyrology.*

<sup>8</sup> It is pointed out that the virgins and the nuns came in droves to meet St. John Chrysostom as he entered Capadocia, weeping and saying: “It would have been better for the sun to have withdrawn its rays than to see John’s mouth silenced.” It can be seen on page 200 what farewells St. John Chrysostom bade the virgins of Constantinople, and his farewell in person to Saint Olympiade.

<sup>9</sup> Pope St. Innocent I, in a letter to St. Victrice, the bishop of Rouen, makes reference to the repentance of a veiled virgin who married despite her vow. The same St. Victrice had established monasteries, virgins and widows everywhere. It should be noted that the author does not say ‘monasteries of virgins and widows’, but ‘monasteries’, then ‘virgins and widows’, that is, societies of virgins, and others of widows, as distinct from monasteries.

<sup>10</sup> That is the significance of the comma after the word ‘monasteries’.

<sup>11</sup> Saint Jerome, in his writings against Vigilance, advises the keeping of virginity, and upholds monastic profession, saying that it should not be feared that the world will perish. Though there were virgins, as can be judged from the esteem in which St. John Chrysostom held these virgins, through the letters he wrote to them, and especially the letters he wrote to

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<sup>5</sup> The year 400, page 114, last line.

<sup>6</sup> The year 400, page 114, last line.

<sup>7</sup> The year 404, pg. 206, line 13.

<sup>8</sup> The year 404, pg. 208. Also marked above page 200, and pg. 203.

<sup>9</sup> The year 404, pg. 227.

<sup>10</sup> pg. 228.

<sup>11</sup> The year 405, pg. 2. 56.

St. Olympiade and Italique. He makes the point in this last letter, in order to thank her, as he had St. Demetriade, for the part she played during his persecution and for having supported him in Rome before the Pope, and in his exile, through their liberality,<sup>12</sup> that women can have a share, as well as the men, in the combat for the cause of God and his Church.

<sup>13</sup> St. Jerome complains of the insults offered to the virgins of Toulouse, and the virgin Eutropia was killed at the door of the church. Her memorial is on 14 December in the Roman Martyrology. History tells that the same thing happened in Rome to the virgins consecrated to God; and to prove that this was not a case of cloistered virgins, mention is made of one virgin who possessed great riches in her house. There she was attacked by an officer, who was so touched by the detachment of this virgin that, not only did he not take any of the riches he had demanded and which were in the house, but he provided her with an escort to his own house, for fear that she might be insulted by the soldiers.<sup>14</sup> The same year, Pulcheria, Arcadie and Maxime, who were virgins consecrated to God living in the palace of Theodosius the younger, their brother, also cared for the emperor, their brother, and Pulcheria governed the state in his minority.

<sup>15</sup> Even the pagans complained of the insults offered to the Christian virgins who, they said, had not even been spared, any more than their own, such was the honour in which this profession was held even among the pagans who built temples for them, and called them vestal goddesses.

<sup>16</sup> St. Augustine, in the first book of *The City of God*, chapter 17, recalls the Christian virgins, and shows how their courage and wisdom surpass that of Cato and Lucretius, so boasted of by the Romans.

<sup>17</sup> St. Augustine, afflicted by the death of Marcellinus, received great consolation from the consecration of the virgin Demetriade, the daughter of Olybrius, with her mother Julienne and her paternal grandmother Proba. They had decided to marry her in Africa, even though they would have preferred to see her embrace virginity, but dared not expect such great perfection from her. Nevertheless, Demetriade made this holy resolution in the midst of a number of girls who were her servants, and in the midst of the delights of such a grand house. She began fasting, wearing poor and rough clothes, and sleeping on the ground, covered only with a hair-shirt. She did all this in secret, there being just a few domestic virgins of the household who knew about it. Finally, when the wedding day arrived, she left the nuptial chamber, knelt down at the feet of her father and mother, and begged them to allow her to be consecrated a virgin. They joyfully gave their consent, and several of her friends and her slaves followed her example, consecrating themselves to God. Proba and Julienne did not lessen their daughter's dowry one bit, giving to the poor all that they had destined for her spouse. She received the veil from the hands of the bishop. Saint Augustine experienced a joy all the greater for the fact that his exhortations had contributed a little to the result. Saint Jerome also showed her how happy he was, and wrote to give her a rule of life.

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<sup>12</sup> Again above pg. 92.

<sup>13</sup> The year 408, pg. 175, and 410, pg. 285.

<sup>14</sup> Pg. 280.

<sup>15</sup> The year 412, pg. 366.

<sup>16</sup> Pg. 368.

<sup>17</sup> The year 413, pg. 378.

<sup>18</sup> There took place one Council at Carthage, with more than 200 bishops, which in certain cases allowed virgins to receive the veil before the age of 25. As a proof that these virgins were not cloistered, there is the fact that, this same year,<sup>19</sup> the relics of Saint Stephen having been brought to Neace, of which Evodius was the bishop, the virgins, like the rest of the people, gathered to pay their respects in the cathedral to these relics. And as they were talking about this one day, one of the consecrated virgins said to herself: “Well! Who knows whether these are really the relics of the holy martyr?” The following night, she had a dream which was verified in the event, along with a similar one dreamt by another virgin; and a number of miracles took place,<sup>20</sup> reported by Saint Augustine who was a friend of Evodius. One of them is mentioned, in speaking of a religious – and this word is to be noted, as it shows the distinction made between a cloistered virgin and a non-cloistered one, who lives in the world, as we have seen above.

<sup>21</sup> The emperor Honorius, on 8 May 420, passed a law which condemned to banishment, with confiscation of their goods, those who ravished virgins consecrated to God. This is to be understood also of those living in the world who are more exposed. For, if he had intended to speak of those who were cloistered, he would have said, as above, religious, though this law can concern both kinds.

<sup>22</sup> Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius, of whom we spoke above, vowed her virginity to God even though she was not yet 15 years old. She persuaded her two sisters to do the same. In public witness of her vow, she presented to the church in Constantinople a golden altar table, adorned with precious stones, with an inscription giving the reason for this offering, and she lived in the imperial palace, governing with Theodosius, who from that day forward associated her with the emperorship. In short, the whole history of the first centuries speaks of virgins consecrated to God, veiled though not cloistered.

<sup>23</sup> In the year 439, page 232, the Council of Riez allowed a bishop ordained without a title to consecrate virgins, in the church given to him, which he governed as co-bishop. And, page 245, a canon of the same Council of Riez lays down that young women who, after taking the habit of a virgin, marry, even though they have not been consecrated, are none the less culpable. On this subject the author says positively that, at that time, there were two kinds of virgin: the one kind committed by a solemn vow in a monastery, the other by a simple vow, living with their parents. And Pope St. Leo laid down the age at which they should be accepted, and he says that the consecration of this second kind must be done by the bishop, on a solemn feast-day. This is what St. Germain of Auxerre had previously done in Paris for Saint Genevieve, who, although a consecrated virgin, stayed with her parents, and was even mistreated one day by her mother, who took exception to the devotions of her daughter. Her mother having given her a slap, her hand remained dry and paralysed. But she was cured by the prayers of her daughter. In short, nothing gives so positive a proof that there were, in former times, veiled virgins, distinguished by a special dress and consecrated to God, who could nevertheless marry at the expiration of their vow; or perhaps by a dispensation granted for the good of the State, as the story of St. Pulcheria cited above shows us. This

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<sup>18</sup> The year 418, pg. 463.

<sup>19</sup> Pg. 485.

<sup>20</sup> Pg. 490.

<sup>21</sup> The year 410, pg. 511.

<sup>22</sup> The year 421, pg. 542.

<sup>23</sup> The year 439.



virgin was already associated with the emperorship of her brother Theodosius. After his death in 450, Marcien, a native of Illiria and a great captain, became emperor, and the emperor Martinien, who ruled in the West, agreed to this election. Then St. Pulcheria married Marcien, the emperor, to bestow greater authority on him, and to reign with him, but on condition that she remained a virgin. In any case, she was then 51 years old, and he himself was advanced in age. He had a daughter called Euphemia from a previous marriage. He was zealous for the Catholics, and generous towards the poor.

## EXTRAORDINARY CURES

*brought about through the intercession  
of Monsieur de Montfort*

These are the names of those who gave evidence, on the 25th of November, 1718, before Perronet and Sigonière, royal notaries in Poitiers.

Madame Hilaire Nicolas, widow of Messire Olivier Guilbaut, Sieur de la Faverie, a doctor of medicine of the Faculty of Poitiers, aged fifty-six, testified that she had heard from one of the lady's maids of Madame de Montespan, that the said Sieur Grignon, having one day said Mass in the chapel of the said Madame de Montespan, went into the sacristy to make his thanksgiving, and that on coming out he saw a blind man and asked him if he wished to be cured; that this man having said yes, Monsieur de Montfort took his saliva with one of his fingers and rubbed his eyes with it; that at that same moment, the blind man recovered his sight and cried out that he could see very well.

Marie-Louise Leigné, aged twenty-six, testified that her sister, having had a violent fever for two months, which had obliged her to stay in bed for six weeks, with increasing severity and strange agitations, having tried in vain all sorts of remedies to cure her, she was advised to put one of Monsieur Grignon's teeth, which she possessed, in water; which she did, and having given it to her sister to drink, she was instantly cured. That she herself, Louise Leigné, had a very big tumour on her knee for two months, which inconvenienced her greatly; that she applied to it a piece of iron from one of the disciplines of Monsieur de Montfort, and that the tumour disappeared in a few days.

Antoinette de Bège, a woman aged forty, gave evidence that having a daughter aged three, who neither ate nor drink and whose legs and thighs appeared to be dead, who had not walked for two months, and who suffered on top of that such a great tightening of the chest that she could not breathe, was advised to place on her daughter a shoe that had belonged to Monsieur de Montfort, and that she was cured instantly of all her ailments.

Mademoiselle Marie Montois, a young woman aged twenty-one, living in Poitiers in the parish of Saint-Michel, gave evidence that, having had a cyst on her hand for two years, which inconvenienced her greatly, she was inspired to go and make a novena at the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort at St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, and to say there five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys*. Not being able to do this as soon as she would have liked, she had a Mass said in the church of Saint-Jean, to thank God for the graces he had given Monsieur de Montfort, and to ask for her healing through his intercession, and she testified that, after nine days, she found herself completely cured, the cyst having disappeared.

André Launay, Madame de Bouillé's coachman, normally residing at the Château de La Machefolière, gave evidence that he knew for certain that Jeanne Launay, of the parish of La Renaudière in Anjou, having a daughter who had been languishing for seven years, with a continuous fever and being extremely thin, with no sign of improvement, she was completely cured when her mother made her drink some water in which she had steeped a piece of the coffin of Monsieur de Montfort. That the same remedy had restored health to a great number

of people tormented by malign and pestilential fevers, stomach upsets, fierce scurvy, dropsy, lethargy and cataracts on the eyes. And among other things, that a certain Ouvrard of the said parish of La Renaudière, who had been sick for six months, given up by the doctors, and who had received the last sacraments, having heard of the wonderful effects of this water, asked for some to drink, and was instantly cured. Also that a certain man called Bretonis, resident in La Grolière in the parish of Roussay, who had been grievously wounded when he gave himself a serious blow on his arm with an axe while cutting a tree branch, was cured in just a few days without any suppuration, having applied some of this water to the wound on his arm.

He also gave evidence that a woman named Anne Ripoché, who for four or five months had lost her mind, wandering round the roads, ready to drown herself at any moment by throwing herself into the water, and uttering execrable curses, her parents having had a Mass said for the souls in Purgatory, was much relieved, and completely cured when they had led her to the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort.

The aforementioned André Launay testifies that having been kicked by a horse, which nearly knocked an eye out of his head, this being followed by a severe swelling, and spitting blood, being despaired of by the surgeons, he was completely cured by the application of the same water to his wounds.

René Pyronnet, journeyman, gave evidence in Poitiers, on 28 November 1718, that having suffered from scrofula beneath his throat for eight years, with open sores and suppuration, without ever finding a remedy to cure it, his wife, Adrienne Lamy by name, went to the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort in St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, twenty-eight leagues distant from Poitiers. She was given a small piece of the coffin of Monsieur Grignon who had just recently been exhumed, and on returning home, she applied it to the sores of her husband, who was completely cured on the ninth day.

The said Adrienne Lamy gave evidence of this fact together with her husband, and said that a number of her neighbours, suffering from various ailments, learning that she was going to Saint-Laurent, gave her linen to touch the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort, and that when she gave them back on her return, they all experienced complete healing through the application of these pieces of linen to their ills.

Charles Guillar, master surgeon, living in Poitiers in the parish of Saint Etienne, aged fifty, certified and gave evidence before the aforementioned notaries, on oath, that having been called to treat and give medicine to Jeanne Alleaume, a girl of four and a half, suffering from a considerable swelling on her eyes which had deprived her of sight, and having her eyes completely covered, all the remedies applied were useless, even a cauterisation which he administered. That, since that time, he had seen her cured; and having asked how it came about, he had been told that her parents had taken her to the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort, and that there she had recovered her sight. That he had certain knowledge of the wonderful life that this servant of God had led in Poitiers, having several times assisted at his sermons, by which he was charmed and altogether touched.

Louise Ouvrard, the wife of François Alenneau, merchant, living in Poitiers in the parish of Saint Etienne, aged thirty-five, gave evidence that Jeanne Alonneau,<sup>53</sup> her niece having become blind, having tried all the remedies that the doctors and surgeons could offer following the rules of their art, without finding any relief, at length invoked Monsieur de Montfort, and applied a piece of one of Monsieur de Montfort's shoes, which she had kept, to her niece's eyes for nine days, and that at the end of this time she was completely cured and recovered her sight. That she even went afterwards to the tomb of Monsieur de Montfort in

St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, to thank him for this grace; and that on her return she was stricken with a false pleurisy of which she thought to die. But, having implored the intercession of this fervent missionary, she laid on her stomach a handkerchief with which she had touched his tomb, which she had brought for her niece, and she was immediately cured.

We would never be finished if we intended to report in detail all the other miraculous cures wrought by the intercession of Monsieur Grignon, before and after his death. We have in our hands a copy, signed by the two notaries, taken from the original, the minutes of which remain with Messieurs Perronet and Sigonière, royal and apostolic notaries, resident in Poitiers, dated the 20th, 25th, 28th and 30th November 1718, and it only requires the authority of the bishops to declare them authentic, as we have already said.

Every day, there is talk of new wonders wrought at his tomb, where two priests worthy of credence have assured me that they had seen, on one morning alone, sick people who had come from five dioceses.

## ATTESTATIONS OF THE THEIR LORDSHIPS

*the Bishops of Nantes, La Rochelle and Poitiers, and of several other persons who have written in favour of Monsieur Grignon, during his life and after his death, which serve as proof of the facts contained in his life.*

### **Attestation of his Lordship the Bishop of Nantes**

Aegidius de Beauveau, Dei et sanctae Sedis Apostolicae gratia Episcopus Nannetensis, Regi ab omnibus Consiliis, etc. Notum facimus universis atque testamur Magistrum, Ludovicum-Mariam Grignon de Montfort, Macloviensis Dioecesis Presbyterum, perbiennium diversis in Parochiis nostrae Dioecesis de nostra licentia munia Evangelii praeconis pie et laudabiliter gessisse, ipsumque bonis vita et moribus, ac sana doctrina, nec non pietate et modestia maxime commendabilem fuisse, nullisque censuris Ecclesiasticis saltem nobis cognitum impeditum. In quorum omnium fidem praesentes testimoniales litteras concessimus et tradidimus. Nannetis in Palatio nostro Episcopali, sub signo sigilloque nostris et Secretarii nostri ordinarii infra scripti chyrographo, die decima mensis Maii, anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo decimo tertio. *Signatum* AEG. Episcopus Nannetensis. Et infra de Mandato Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi DD. Episcopi Nannetensis. *Signatum* BRULE, Presbyter Canonicus Secretarius.

### **Attestation of his Lordship the Bishop of La Rochelle**

Stephanus, Providentia Divina, et autoritate sanctae Sedis Apostolicae Episcopus Rupellensis. Notum facimus et attestamur Magistrorum Grignon de Montfort, Presbyterum multis Missionibus in nostra Dioecesi, cum zelo pietate, fructu et aedificatione operam dedisse et etiam nunc dare, eumque esse pium ac probum, vita commendabilem, sanamque sectari Doctrinam. Datum Rupellae die decima Martii anni Millesimi septingentesimi decimi sexti. *Signatum*, Stephanus Episc. Rupellensis et infra de Mandato Illustrissimi ac Reverendissimi DD. Episc. Rupellensis. *Signatum* ROULLEAU.

### **Copy of a letter of his Lordship the Bishop of La Rochelle**

*in reply to four very important questions put to him by Monsieur Mulot after the death of Monsieur de Montfort, regarding the practices of this deceased missionary.*

I do not find, Monsieur, sufficient basis for approving and authorising the indulgences attached to Rosary-beads blessed by the priors of the Brigatine Fathers; the copy you sent me with the letter written by this Brigatine to the late Monsieur de Montfort not being sufficient for this purpose. I do not find either any sufficient basis to condemn it completely.

With regard to the confraternity of the slavery, what caused some to speak against it is the fact that one ought not to be slave of a creature. But that is not the meaning of this confraternity. It must be clearly understood, by those who join it, that it is the confraternity of the slavery of Our Lord, in the Blessed Virgin, and not simply the slavery of the Blessed

Virgin. When it is thus explained the confraternity is very good, and you may bless the little chains that the late Monsieur de Montfort used to bless.

It is wrong to make me speak. I never disapproved of the vow of chastity which Monsieur de Montfort had some make for a limited time; on the contrary, I regarded it as a good practice. You should not be surprised at all the bad things you may hear said of this poor dead man. During his lifetime he suffered enough obstacles and contradictions for them to continue to malign him after his death. But I still believe him to be a great saint before God, and everywhere that he gave missions, he is shown marks of recognition, esteem and attachment, through all the services and the prayers that are offered for the repose of his soul. I recommend myself to your prayers, and am, with the greatest esteem, Monsieur, all yours. ETIENNE, bishop of La Rochelle.

### **Attestation of His Lordship the Bishop of Poitiers**

We, bishop of Poitiers, certify that the late Monsieur Grignon de Montfort, most worthy priest and missionary, gave admirable examples of penitence, prayer, zeal and charity, during a number of years that he lived in our diocese. In witness whereof, We have given this present testimony. Given at Poitiers, this 29th day of November 1718, *Signed* JEAN-CLAUDE, bishop of Poitiers.

### **Another letter**

As you are writing, dear Monsieur, the life of the late Monsieur Grignon de Montfort, servant of God, here is a miraculous event which has just taken place in Poitiers, as you will see from the certificate of the Lady Governor of the Hôtel-Dieu. I had the consolation of seeing two good women who were bewitched, cured by means of water in which some of the linen of this servant of God had been steeped, which I sent to them so that they could drink it. They were cured the moment they took it, while before they were always falling victim to the spells cast on them, of which the doctors said they knew nothing, that not being within their competence. Praise God, who shows how acceptable to him during his life was this servant of his divine Majesty, and how he continues to be so after his death. I recommend myself to your holy prayers, and am, more than any other, your most humble and obedient servant. JEAN-CLAUDE, bishop of Poitiers. Given at Poitiers, this 13th day of December 1723.

I, the undersigned, Governor of the Hôtel-Dieu of Poitiers, certify that on 6 October 1723, I admitted to the said Hôtel-Dieu the women called Perrine and Françoise Tartre, daughters of Jacques Tartre and Michelle Geste, of the parish of St. Aubin, near Partenay, one aged 13 and the other 21, said to be bewitched; who were treated at first as sick people, to whom the remedies applied seemed to bring no relief. I noticed that, whenever they took these remedies or ordinary food, they would fall into long fainting fits, with stiffness and contortions of their limbs, quite surprising, with cries and dreadful howls like ferocious beasts, and that this state would last for more than an hour, and was repeated several times a day, whenever they were made to take the normal food of the sick; that they were unable to swallow either broth or soup without the greatest reluctance, and whenever they were forced to take some, they would fall into their fainting fits; but they would take only some ordinary fruit, which severely weakened and exhausted them. And I also noticed that during the novena of prayers that, by order of his Lordship our Bishop, were said after the remedies, by Monsieur Bottreau, cantor of the church of Notre-Dame, these distressing symptoms were redoubled. And I saw that when he read the Gospel of St. Mark that is read on the feast of the Ascension, placing the end of his stole on their heads, as is the custom, at those precise

words, *in nomine meo daemonia ejicient*, they exhibited more dreadful contortions of their arms and hands, emitted more horrible howls, and fell into a faint without any sign of life. This happened twice, morning and evening, each day of the novena, at the moment these words were pronounced, *daemonia ejicient*. After this, our holy prelate, touched with compassion for the state of these poor girls and full of charity for their healing, sent me a quantity of water in which his Lordship told me he had steeped a piece of linen of the late Monsieur Grignon de Montfort, missionary and servant of God, who died in the odour of sanctity; and I mixed some of this water with everything they ate or drank. And I noticed that they took quite easily all the food in which I had put some, that the symptoms that had manifested themselves before no longer occurred, that they had regained their strength and were perfectly cured. I was very edified by their piety in all those moments when they were themselves, both during their illness and after their recovery; in the novenas they made in Notre-Dame des Larmes, Saint Michel and Sainte Radegonde, where I took them. This is the testimony I believe I am obliged to give to the public, and that they left the Hôtel-Dieu on the 7th of December without being unwell, and went home to their parents blessing the Lord. Given and signed in the said Hôtel-Dieu, on the ninth day of December, seventeen hundred and twenty-three. DEVOIS.

**Letter of Fr. Préfontaine, Jesuit.**

*Vannes, 28 November 1718.*

I am very happy, Mademoiselle, that at last efforts are being made to write the life of the late Monsieur Grignon de Montfort. For a long time I hoped that someone might be found zealous enough to undertake this work, which could be so fruitful for the glory of God and for the salvation of those who, like the late Monsieur de Montfort, work for the salvation of souls, that they might find something to help them do this with fruit. Since it is only a question of having some remembrances of the conduct and life of this holy missionary, it will not be difficult to find them, since I am persuaded that those who had the honour to know him and to practice what he taught, will be delighted to give such remembrances, and will think themselves very fortunate to have the opportunity by this means to do justice to his merits and his virtues. For myself, it is with these sentiments that I am going to have the honour to write to you about what I remarked in him during the four or five years he spent in Nantes, where I saw and knew him at that time, and heard his confession a number of times.

An ardent and continual desire to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls – this was, in my opinion, his special virtue and what formed his character. He applied himself to nothing else. That was the end to which he referred everything, and it was this that inspired in him an indefatigable zeal and the courage that nothing could defeat or hold back. The poor especially, and the country folk, were the ones among whom he worked most willingly. It was to them that he sometimes said he was sent, and for whose salvation he believed himself responsible. He also had a wonderful talent for winning them and inspiring in them all the sentiments he wanted. These good people were attached to him. They looked on him as a saint, and when he left one parish to go to another, they would follow him in droves, tears in their eyes, thinking that in losing him they had lost everything. Seeing Jesus Christ through the eyes of faith in the person of the poor, the lengths to which his charity would go in their regard is unimaginable. In all his missions they followed him in droves, and no matter how many they were, his charity would find ways to supply all their needs. He fed them and he clothed them. His tenderness towards them and his compassion communicated themselves to all those who approached him and inspired them with sentiments like his own. His example drew everyone, and each person would make it their pleasure and their duty to

contribute to his works of mercy: some by their generous gifts, others by the work of their own hands. For Monsieur de Montfort had a special talent, on these occasions, for making all the different ways of doing good to the poor that an ingenious Christian charity can devise, count for something. If he exhorted everyone to love the poor, he was the first to give the good example. And I have seen him, more than once, go into a crowd of beggars to pick out the most dirty and disgusting, take him by the hand and lead him with him to sit down at table beside him in the highest place, serve him before everyone else with the best morsels, and then, at the end of the meal, embrace him and, taking him to the door himself, send him off with a considerable alms. This was his custom every day, and in all the missions I saw him give, whether in Nantes or elsewhere.

Poor himself in his own person, he wore nothing that he had not obtained through charity. A short while after leaving the diocese of Nantes to go to the diocese of Luçon, he made a special vow to abandon himself entirely to Providence, to do all his travelling without money or provisions, to beg lodgings through charity wherever he went, and wherever he was obliged to stop. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin was, if I may speak in this way, his favourite devotion. He carried with him, everywhere and always, an image of this Mother of God, in whom he delighted and took his consolation. All his efforts went into finding new ways of honouring this divine Mother, and inspiring this same devotion in all peoples everywhere. He established among them certain practices of piety in her honour, which these people embraced with joy and carefully preserved. I myself, last year in the diocese of Saint-Malo, going into some parishes where Monsieur de Montfort had given a mission ten or fifteen years ago, witnessed how these practices still continued and were observed as regularly as the first day.

He practised a degree of mortification to inspire horror in human nature; always covered in a rough hair-shirt which he never left off, not even when he was sick; sleeping very little and getting up at night to pray to God; sleeping on straw when he could do so without being seen and when he was able to sleep as badly as he wished; eating like the poor when he was among them in the countryside and when he could, without drawing attention to himself, conform himself to their manner of living. His patience was heroic. Perhaps no man has ever met with so many contradictions or had more to suffer, being persecuted in all places and by all kinds of people. But all the evil that could be done to him and all the persecution aroused against him, never pushed his patience to the limit.

When obliged to leave one place, he would go to another. He would stay there without remembering, in the place where he was, what he had suffered in the place he had left, never complaining of anyone, and never seeking to justify himself by making known the unjust proceedings taken in his regard and the disgraceful manner in which he had often been treated. Everyone knows all the trouble he went to, to build a calvary on the heath of Pontchâteau. He had always had this project in his heart, to honour Jesus Christ crucified. And when at last he found a time and a place that he believed right for its execution, he made it his duty to do it. It cost him infinite trouble and immense expense, to which the generosity of a number of people, and the zeal of the people of the countryside contributed equally.

The work was almost finished, and Monsieur de Montfort would soon have all his wishes satisfied, seeing this place already become famous for the devotion of the people, who came in droves from all parts to offer their prayers to God and to retrace, on seeing this calvary, the calvary on which the Saviour of the world had once offered himself for them. When, all of a sudden, a court order came to undo all this work and to destroy this calvary, M. de Montfort received this news, at which anyone else who did not possess all his virtue would have been devastated, with no other thought than to withdraw to spend eight days in



retreat and to console himself with God. He went into retreat and I received him without being able to see that he had suffered the slightest upset. He spoke with me in his normal way, and did not show me the slightest emotion in his words, his maxims or even in his face. As this court order made a great stir in Nantes and its neighbourhood, we were soon made aware of it.

I spoke of it with Monsieur de Montfort. He confirmed what was being said, but not a word escaped him of complaint or discontent against those who he had reason to suspect had brought on him an order so positive and so unexpected. This peace and tranquillity, this equanimity which did not flag for a single moment throughout eight days, surprised me. I admired it. What I had seen and what I knew of him had caused me to look upon him up till then as a great good man. But this patience, this submission to Providence in such a delicate situation as this, the serenity, and the joy, even, that showed in his face despite such a devastating blow for him, made me regard him henceforth as a saint, and produced in me sentiments of respect and of veneration for his virtue, that I have retained ever since, and that I shall retain to my dying day.

There, Monsieur, you have a small summary of the virtues I remarked in M. de Montfort. I have written nothing but what is true and that I can vouch for. I hope that this will serve for the glory of God, and to make known the merits of such a holy man. I am, with great respect, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant, de PRÉFONTAINE, Jesuit.

**Letter from Father de La Tour, Jesuit,**  
*Poitiers, 23 May 1718.*

Monsieur, the peace of Jesus Christ be with you.

You gave me great pleasure in asking me what I know of Monsieur de Montfort, because I am delighted to do justice to the virtue and the holiness of this great servant of God. As regards miracles, I saw none, and know of none that I could judge clearly and absolutely beyond all natural causes. I have heard tell of many surprising things. 1°. Like blind people cured when he touched them. 2°. Like sick people given up by the doctors, who recovered and were cured when they drank from a small cup that he had given to a certain person; and other sick people cured after a few prayers that he said in their bedroom. I say that I have heard tell of this. But, apart from the fact that I did not see it myself, I do not believe that everything that happened in these encounters, nor the way it was done, can be ascribed only to a miracle. So I have nothing to say on this subject. But with regard to the other point with which one begins when it is a question of beatifying or canonising someone, namely their heroic virtues, I have many things to say.

Let us begin with innocence. It was so great in him that, during all the time that I had the honour to be his confessor, it was always a problem for me to absolve him due to a lack of matter. I always had to go back to his past life to find a single venial sin to which I might be able to apply the absolution.

2°. He was a man of great mortification and penance. Hair-shirts and disciplines, fasting, the most severe abstinence, were all normal for him.

3°. His life was one continuous recollection and the most tender devotion. He had a great gift of mental prayer and contemplation, and especially a devotion towards the Blessed Virgin that surpassed all that one may find of tenderness and devotion for her.

4°. His zeal was as great as that of the great apostles. With this sense of the presence of God and this recollection, he was untiring in the labours of the missions, in hearing

confessions, in instructing and guiding especially the little people, both in the towns and in the countryside, in going everywhere for the most infectious and the poorest sick people, depriving himself of food in order to give it to them, and often begging charity both for himself and for others.

5°. He was so detached that he would not take the wages or salary of the chaplains when he was serving in the hospital or elsewhere, as he did in the hospital of Poitiers where he served as chaplain to the poor for nothing, taking only, by way of alms, the cassock that he wore and that he would not accept unless it was well worn.

6°. Where his virtue seemed triumphant and superhuman, was in the crosses, persecutions and wars waged against him by the world, on the pretext that his supernatural prudence and his burning zeal made him do things which, according to the rules of ordinary prudence, passed for imprudent or ridiculous actions. Under this pretext, priests, religious, the great and often his ecclesiastical superiors, remonstrated with him, condemned him, ill-treated him, suspended and banned him. And in all these cases, he put up with his crosses and overcame his difficulties with an apostolic patience and generosity, fearing nothing out of human respect, and always ready to continue the work of God; yet always in submission to, and obedient to the least indication of the will of those who had authority over him.

I would add two facts, one that emphasises the agility of his zeal, namely: the journey to Rome that he made on foot, going and coming in a short space of time, judging that, by this journey, he would obtain faculties to make his ministry more effective for the glory of God and the conversion of souls; a journey he made begging for alms.

Another: one day, having come across a poor man full of lice and the most repulsive dirt, who not being able to put up with the bites of these creatures, stripped the shirt from his body and threw it on a hedge, Monsieur de Montfort, seeing this, hastened to take off his own shirt to give it to the poor man, and straight away went to get that of the poor man and put it on himself, filthy as it was.

After this, I am not at all surprised at the great blessings God bestowed on his zeal, and the great and lasting conversions he brought about. I have heard the confessions, since he left Poitiers, of certain people whom he had won for God. But their virtue and piety, and their practice of the sacraments has been constant ever since then. I have no doubt that what Monsieur Grignon did in places other than Poitiers would be even more illustrious. You are right, Monsieur, not to think of me to write the life of this holy man. Apart from the fact that whoever might take an interest in this, will come out of it better than I, and will throw greater light on the merits of this wonderful man, it is certain that I am too busy to think of anything other than my present tiring work. Lots of other people in Poitiers will inform you of other particulars, from what I hear. For myself, it is enough for me to have said something of his virtues, and to assure you at the same time of the esteem and the respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant, La TOUR, Jesuit. To the Dean of St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

**Letter from Monsieur l'abbé BARRIN,**  
*Vicar General of his Lordship the Bishop of Nantes.*

Monsieur, I thought Madame the Countess of Bouillé had sent you some memoirs to write the life of Monsieur de Montfort. The Misses Dauvaise, who followed him in his missions, would be able to inform you better than I of particular facts.

His main virtues were confidence in God and submission to his Providence. He went without any money in his missions, with seven or eight people who lacked for nothing in the conduct of the mission. And still he found the wherewithal to feed and clothe the poor.

He had begun the construction of a calvary which was a great attraction for the devotion of the people. There were even persons of quality who went there in their carriages to work. Word was sent to the court that it would be a haven for robbers when finished. With this idea in mind, its destruction was ordered. Our missionary accepted this thunderbolt with a submission which would have charmed you. I am delighted that you are writing the life of this truly apostolic man, and am, with great respect, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant, Abbé BARRIN. Nantes, 25 August 1719.

**Letter from Monsieur des Jonchères,**  
*Archdeacon of Nantes.*

I knew Monsieur de Montfort very well, and I received many letters full of marks of esteem and affection for him, from Monsieur Bouin of Saint-Sulpice, who was his director, and whom I consider a saint. He found a benefice for him in Saint-Julien-de-Concelles, in this diocese, of which I took possession on his behalf. He was a man of very great mortification, total detachment, holy zeal, and untiring labour, with a great facility and talent for speaking. But what he excelled in was a gift and a special grace for winning hearts, and one had total confidence in him once one had heard him. He found a way, with his know-how, of providing for the poor during his missions. And the freely-given and easy confidence the people had in him was so great that he established in many parishes the practice of evening prayer and the Rosary. And the practice of burying in the cemetery, which had been impossible to establish because of a decree of the Parliament of Brittany, he easily brought about at the first suggestion he made. And this great confidence that the people had in him, enabled him to undertake the building of a calvary hill; which was beyond the powers of any one person, no matter how powerful they might be; and which was nevertheless against the advice of many people, according to the rules of prudence. For this same calvary was straight away demolished by order of the court.

**Letter from Father Martinet, Jesuit.**

I read with extreme joy and great edification the testimony that Father de Préfontaine renders to the virtue of Monsieur de Montfort. I recognised in this letter that you did me the honour of sharing with me, the true character of this servant of God. I can affirm, based on the knowledge that his perfect confidence in me has given me of the whole of his life, that nothing has been said concerning all his virtues but what is the exact truth, clear proofs and heroic examples of which I have myself seen. I have always said openly, even in the presence of people who appeared most prejudiced against him, and indeed while he still lived, what I still say when the occasion arises now that he is dead. All that you can read in the stories of the saints concerning their innocence, the purity of their faith, the firmness of their hope, the tenderness of their confidence in God and his holy Mother, their zeal for the salvation of their neighbour, their charity towards the poor, their mortification, their patience, their constancy in troubles and persecutions, their equanimity in all kinds of events, their gentleness, their obedience, their love of poverty, contempt and crosses, their complete abandonment to the divine Providence of the Lord; in short, all that you find done by the saints, I have seen reproduced in the morals and the behaviour of this zealous missionary. Even today, I see as a singular favour from heaven, the happiness that I have enjoyed in being the depositary of the

graces God poured out on him, and the beautiful and generous sentiments that inspired his great heart. All the marvellous things that are said of him in his story, do not astonish me in the least. They simply confirm me in the exalted idea I have conceived of the sublime perfection to which the Lord raised him. It is very pleasant for me to learn that God has been pleased to manifest by means of miracles the glory of a friend who was so dear to me while he lived, and who, I dare to flatter myself, would not refuse to remember me after his death. I beg you, Monsieur, to join your prayers with mine to obtain from God the realisation of the desires I have often conceived of walking to some degree in the footsteps of this holy man, and of sharing in the ardour of the apostolic zeal that filled him. I am, with great respect, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant in Our Lord, MARTINET, of the Society of Jesus.

**Letter from Father Collusson, Jesuit,**

*19 December 1718.*

I am sending you what I remarked in the life and behaviour of the late Monsieur de Montfort. I praise your zeal, and I would like to be able to give you more details of the life of this holy missionary. I have no doubt that you will find elsewhere more abundant memoirs. Whatever you may be informed of in his favour, I can easily believe. I have said it before, and I repeat it: I would not be at all surprised that miracles should be attributed to him. I have observed virtues in him in the degree necessary for God to authenticate them by the effects of his almighty power. I am, with great respect...

**Letter from Monsieur le Normand,**

*Royal Procurator at the Présidial Court of Poitiers,*

*8 September 1719.*

It is true that I had the honour to know M. de Montfort very well. I was even a member, for several months, of a society he established for young men in Poitiers, where he fostered us by means of very edifying exercises of piety. Every day he would give us exhortations which were so natural, and given with such zeal, that it is certain that those who had the good fortune to share in them and to profit by them, entered the Church, in which they have since lived with as much devotion and edification as he had himself.

I know that there are two of them in particular who, like him, always wore a hair-shirt and mortified their bodies with the most cruel pains. One of these two, called Monsieur Brunet, the parish-priest of Celles-Lévescaut, died two weeks ago in the odour of sanctity, even recognised universally as a saint. They found on his arms a number of iron bracelets, and a hair-shirt on his body, while in his study were a number of disciplines. There are a number of young women for whom he established a society, who opted to become religious; others who live with an incomparable devotion. In these societies where we met once every day, the young women doing the same separately, he taught us to practise mental prayer, and had us do so in front of him. Then he would give us material for us to do it at home. There are more than two hundred persons that he sanctified in this town. His zeal was without equal and without compromise. For him, there was no-one in the Church who had to be handled carefully. God, who was the principle of all his actions, obliged him a number of times to go and warn people, even those enjoying a certain dignity, whether in the Church or in society and the nobility, to keep quiet when, by their conversations, they were profaning the house of God.

He preached every day in our churches, and was followed there by a number of people of repute even among the most licentious of people. One day, while crossing the Place Royale, he heard an officer taking the Holy Name of God in vain. He spoke sharply to him, treated him like a wretch, even though he was with other officers, and impressed him, despite his licentiousness, with such fear that he was obliged on the spot to ask pardon of God for it, on his knees, kissing the ground. This occurrence would seem absolutely incredible to you if you knew the officer in question, whose name was Gantière. But I can vouch for it. One saw such piety in this man that there was no-one who did not fear him. He would walk about our streets with the air of one beatified, always with several people in his train. He sought nothing but the opportunity to repress vice. A number of churchmen were envious of him. He was even, on several occasions, insulted by people in authority; he never replied but with a humility that surpassed anything I could describe.

Apart from this, I can certify that he lived in complete dependence on Providence; that normally he never kept anything to eat; that often, come midday, he had nothing, and that, one day when he kept us by his side until the evening, we told him that we needed to eat, and he replied that he had nothing to give us, but that Providence would provide. In fact he was sent more than was necessary. And often he would even feed a number of poor people with what was sent him. He lived for a long time at the Hôpital Général, where he did a great deal of good for the renewal of the church through the gifts that he elicited through his preaching and his hymns. His enemies were unable here to accuse him of anything but indiscreet zeal, because he has no human respect at all. But in this he was just following the law of Jesus Christ.

One day, he took it upon himself to burn all the bad books in the town, and he sought them out assiduously. There were more than five hundred of them. This idea was something very admirable, if only he had carried it through simply. But he took it into his head to have a sort of devil set up in the middle of the square, to which all the books were attached. M. N. the Vicar General, passed by just as they were about to set fire to it, and he had all that had been prepared pulled down. He even addressed some discourteous words to Monsieur de Montfort. But he could not upset him. He accepted this double annoyance with the patience of an angel. All the bystanders carried off all those books, and that was the greatest mortification for him. For the rest, I can assure you again that, for three weeks, I myself was afflicted with a very distressing illness, with a fever two days out of three, hallucinations, and amazing headaches. The faith and confidence I have in the holiness of M. de Montfort encouraged me to drink, for three consecutive days, water containing a piece of wood from his coffin, which had been given to me in St-Laurent by the Dean. On the third day, the fever left me all of a sudden, my headaches and hallucinations also ceased, and at present I am quite well. There you have, Monsieur, what I can tell you of Monsieur de Montfort, from what I saw of him. And, for the rest, we are quite convinced in this town that he is blessed in heaven.

I am delighted, Monsieur, that the occasion of the life of Monsieur de Montfort, on which I do advise you to keep working, gives me this opportunity to correspond with you. I have no doubt, even, that this work, in which you will reveal a life that is as edifying as it is exemplary for the servants of God, will do you a great favour in his eyes.

But I find that certain things essential for his beatification are still lacking. He has worked, and continues to work every day, a number of miracles at St-Laurent, but no records of these have ever been drawn up by the judges of the place. This is a drastic omission, which must eventually be rectified. I have said as much to the Dean. I am, with the highest consideration, Monsieur, your most humble, etc.

**Letter from Monsieur Arot,**  
*Advocate at the Parliament of Brittany,*  
*Rennes, 7 October 1719.*

Monsieur, I take the liberty of sending you a number of memoirs for the life of Monsieur de Montfort. Apparently, it was thought that I would be able to work on this holy life, when I was entrusted with these memoirs. And in truth, I would very much like to have been capable and in a position to do it, but the duties of my profession did not allow me to think of it. And since it is you, Monsieur, that Providence has seen fit to choose to bring honour to this holy priest, who is already held in veneration wherever he went, I thought it my duty to pass on to you these various memoirs. I have added those that I have been able to collect, along with several letters, of which I have kept the originals. I was waiting for still other memoirs, but since they have not been sent to me, I thought it best to send you what I was able to obtain. If others come my way, or if you need some information that you judge I may be able to give, you will give me pleasure in letting me help in some way in bringing about the glory of our Lord, and in giving me the opportunity, which I shall take with pleasure, of being of some small service to you in this town. I assure you that no-one could be, with more zeal or consideration than I, etc.

**Letter from Monsieur Dubois,**  
*Director of the Hôpital Général in Poitiers,*  
*25 May 1718.*

Monsieur Grignon was always so clever at hiding his interior graces, and anything that might bring him any particular esteem, that hardly any but his confessors could speak of them with certainty. But during the period of about three months that I lived with this holy priest and worked under him at the Hôpital Général in this town, I was so concerned with considering with admiration his external conduct, that it was impossible for me not to draw pious conclusions in favour of his internal sanctity.

From four o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock in the evening, you never saw him for a moment inactive. His exercises of piety were never interrupted except by exercises of public charity or hidden mortification.

Mental prayer, the Divine Office, the celebration of Mass, hearing confessions, preaching, catechism sessions, visits to the sick and to sinners, and the singing of spiritual canticles occupied his time continuously and one after the other, despite very difficult and continual labours. He fasted severely and strictly three times a week: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, from first light until evening, and then his sole meal consisted of a thin soup with two eggs and a little cheese. He always wore iron chains about his body and his arms, so tightly that he could hardly bend, afflicted himself with frequent bloody mortifications, and slept on a little straw with hardly any covering. Often he ate nothing but brown bread, and always mixed his wine with two thirds or three quarters water.

At all our evening and morning meals, he would normally sit a poor person down at our table, and he would give this person his own glass to drink from, which he would fill with wine and water, until there remained at least a third, which he would then skilfully take, adding a drop of water or wine to hide his original intention. What horrified everyone but himself was that normally the poor man, whose leftovers he was drinking, was either scrofulous or infected with some other dangerous disease capable of inspiring horror. Yet he was never inconvenienced by this. One poor man, whom poverty had brought to the Hôpital

Général, finally came to be covered in infection and corruption caused by a shameful disease; he had no relations, no friends and had been sent packing by the public nurses, and was about to be abandoned and ejected from the Hôpital Général, because of the danger posed by his disease and the fact that he could find no-one to care for him. Our holy priest took upon himself the entire care of this sick person. He had him put in a place apart, where he acted as his surgeon and nurse. Alone, he performed all the services needed for such a dangerous and disgusting sickness; cleaned him up and disposed of his refuse, and everything else, until the man died, without ever being affected himself in the least.

Monsieur Grignon had a special gift for calming the poor, who were often irritated by the severity of a hospital. And, when he encountered resistance or when the correction embittered their bad disposition, he would kneel down (even in the mud), bareheaded, protesting that he would not get up until he could see that they were calm. Straight away, they too would kneel down and ask his pardon, etc. By this pious manoeuvre, he managed to stop and calm down, one day, a soldier who was blaspheming the name of God in the streets of Poitiers, etc. And, whenever in all these encounters and others like them, he met with some outrage which stung to the quick (as happened to him almost every day), he had the habit of saying that this was to his personal gain and the reward for his good intentions.

Everybody knows the great humiliation he suffered at the hands of a proud and haughty woman, at the end of a mission, because he had refused her a cross which was put on the arm, because of some invincible tenacity on the part of this stubborn person. She used the credit she had with the ecclesiastical powers to avenge herself for this alleged affront, and, at the end of a public discourse by our zealous missionary, he was told off in public in the church, while he was still in the pulpit. Realising her intention, he knelt down, bareheaded, and humbly endured, without opening his mouth in his own defence, all that false zeal could inspire, etc. They added cruel reproaches against a spectacle which his zeal (against the enemy of the human race) had suggested, and delivered all the trappings up to be plundered by licentious people. But the remedy was worse than the evil itself. This pious missionary had, to show that the devil was vanquished, collected a quantity of bad books which fell into the hands of all sorts of people, etc. Everybody thought the mission was going to fail because of this. The clergy who had helped this holy priest in his mission, judged that all the people would regard all that had been said to them during the mission as so much fiction. Our holy priest himself was alarmed. He spent the night in the church, at the foot of the altar, in violent agitation of spirit brought about by not being sure what he ought to do in such a situation.

His zeal for the salvation of the people who had just attended the mission, and who were due to make their general communion the following day, urged him to stay to support such a good work. The public reprimand he had just received and suffered, right there in the church, could persuade him that his presence from then on would tend to scandalise these same people, etc. These people, returning to the church the following day, removed all his doubts, and all the confessors taking part in the mission were quite surprised. They even feared, with some reason, that such a public and authentic reprimand might change the dispositions of their penitents for this pious missionary. But quite the contrary happened. Almost all of them asked to be reconciled. And the confessors had the consolation of seeing that it was solely due to having had sentiments of zeal for M. Grignon, and of protest against the authors or promoters of his humiliation. Again, everybody knows about the difficult labours, the contradictions and general and more specific humiliations, that were brought his way by the rebuilding of the church of Saint-Jean in Poitiers, financed by public collections made at the doors of the churches. These collection, as everyone knows, were accompanied by thousands of different humiliations, which he called his special revenue bond. Everybody knows that he himself personally carried stones and sand , etc.

Everyone knows about the journeys his zeal caused him to undertake on foot, from Poitiers to Rome on one occasion, and back to Poitiers, several times from Poitiers to Paris and back from Paris to Poitiers, for reasons I know nothing about, with no money in his pockets, and no change of clothing. The Holy Bible, his breviary, his Rosary and his crucifix, were always his only provisions, since he was abandoned to divine Providence for all the rest.

The labours of Monsieur Grignon were so hard on both body and spirit, his exercises of piety so continual and his mortifications so relentless, that I always saw it as a kind of miracle that he could keep going without dying a thousand times. And, as I told M. Revol, the bishop of Oléron, who was then Vicar General of Poitiers, one day, of my sentiments and my surprise on this subject, he did me the honour to reply that he, too, of all the miracles that were attributed to Monsieur Grignon since then, wondered at this one the most. This same prelate said on some other occasion, again with great admiration, that Monsieur Grignon had, as it were, an acquired right over the most distinguished clergy, and over him in particular, to engage them without reluctance in all his difficult tasks, and that he had only to speak: *fac hoc et facit*.

A number of times, torrents of tears were seen flowing from his eyes during the celebration of Holy Mass.

He lived on alms and charity alone, and one day when he had been given twenty livres or thereabouts for his needs, two officers in poor accoutrements came to him, and he generously gave this money to them.

So as not to be in debt to boatmen, because he never carried money on his person, he was known to risk crossing rivers on the locks, which he crossed without suffering any accident. This is something which is not unusual for people who are a little used to it. But it certainly showed a great sense of confidence in a priest who was not used to it.

What is most extraordinary in the life of Monsieur Grignon is the fact that he never let up in anything, nor seemed for a moment different from what he was. I leave it to the historian who is to write his life to evaluate this phenomenon, which is very peculiar and very rare in the greatest saints. For to practise the most exalted virtues and the most austere mortifications of body and spirit, without ever letting a natural reaction escape one on any occasion, whether it be while retired or in public functions, with the poor or the rich, in drinking or eating, alone or in company, etc., is truly rare.

Though all I have been saying could have been observed by almost anybody, there may nevertheless be several circumstances to which perhaps no-one paid attention. It is to gain your esteem, Monsieur, in memory of Monsieur Grignon, and to find a place in your pious intentions, that I address these remarks to you; you may make whatever use of them you judge to be pertinent. I would think myself well recompensed if the holy priest whose praises we are singing might obtain from God for me a small portion of the spirit which always animated him. For this reason, I ask the help of your holy prayers, assuring you that I am, in Our Lord Jesus Christ, and with all possible zeal, your most humble and obedient servant, DUBOIS.

**Circular letter written by Monsieur de Montfort  
to the inhabitants of Montbernage, when he was obliged to leave Poitiers.**



Dear people of Montbernage, St. Saturnin, St. Simplicien, the Resurrection, and others who profited from the mission which Jesus Christ, my Master, has just given you, greetings in Jesus and Mary.

Not being able to speak to you personally, since holy obedience prevents me, I take the liberty of writing to you on my departure, as a father writing to his children, not to teach you anything new, but to confirm you in the truths I have already taught you.

The Christian and fatherly love I bear you is so great that you will always have a place in my heart as long as I live and even into eternity. I would rather lose my right hand than forget you wherever I may be, whether at the altar, or far away at the end of the earth or even at death's door. You can be sure of my remembrance as long as you are faithful to what Jesus Christ has taught you through his missionaries and through my unworthy self, in spite of the devil, the world and the flesh.

Remember, then, my dear children, my joy, my glory and my crown (Phil 4.1), to have a great love for Jesus and to love him through Mary. Let your true devotion to your loving Mother Mary be manifest everywhere and to everyone, so that you may spread everywhere the fragrance of Jesus and, carrying your cross steadfastly after our good Master, gain the crown and kingdom which is waiting for you. So, do not fail to fulfil your baptismal promises and all that they entail, say your Rosary every day either alone or in public and receive the sacraments at least once a month.

I beg my dear friends of Montbernage, who possess the statue of our Lady, my good Mother, and my heart, to continue praying even more fervently and not to allow into their district those who swear and blaspheme, sing ribald songs, and drunkards, without doing something about it. When I say, "without doing something about it," I mean that if you can't prevent them from sinning by reproving them zealously but kindly, at least let some godly man or woman undertake to do penance, even in public, be it only by saying a Hail Mary in the street where they say their prayers, or even to hold a lighted candle in their room or in the church. This is what you have to do and keep on doing and so with God's help persevere in his service. I give this same advice to the other districts.

My dear children, you must be living examples to all Poitiers and district. Let no-one work on Sundays or Holydays. Let no-one lay out his wares or even half-open his shop, and so counter the general practice of bakers, butchers, second-hand dealers and other shopkeepers of Poitiers who rob God of his day and are sadly damning themselves in spite of the fine excuses they may offer. I, under necessity, you must do otherwise, then receive the approval of your parish-priest. Do not work, then, in any way on Holydays and God, I promise you, will bless you both in body and soul, and you will never be short of what you need. I ask my dear women of St. Simplicien who sell fish and meat, and other shopkeepers and retailers, to continue giving good example to the whole town by living what they learned during the mission.

I ask you all, in general and individually, to follow me with your prayers on the pilgrimage which I am going to make for you and many others. I say, "for you," because I am undertaking this long and difficult journey in dependence on divine Providence to obtain from him through the prayers of Mary, your perseverance. I say, "for many others," because I bear in my heart all the poor sinners of Poitou and elsewhere, who are sadly placing their salvation at risk. They are so dear to my God that he gave all his blood for them, and would I give nothing? He undertook such long and arduous journeys for them, and would I undertake none? He went so far as to risk his own life, and wouldn't I risk mine too? Only a pagan or a bad Christian could fail to be affected at the immense loss of the infinite treasure of souls

which Jesus Christ redeemed. So pray for that intention, my dear friends, and pray also for me, that my sinfulness and unworthiness do not hinder what God and his holy Mother wish to accomplish through my ministry. I am seeking divine Wisdom; help me to find it. I am faced with many enemies. All those who love and esteem transitory and perishable things of this world treat me with contempt, mock and persecute me, and the powers of evil have conspired together to incite against me everywhere all those in authority. Surrounded by all this I am very weak, even weakness personified; I am ignorant, even ignorance personified; and even worse besides which I do not dare to speak of. Alone and poor as I am, I would certainly perish were I not supported by our Lady and the prayers of good people, especially your own. These are obtaining for me from God the gift of speech or divine Wisdom, which will be the remedy for all my ills and a powerful weapon against all my enemies. With Mary it is easy. I place all confidence in her, despite the snarls of the devil and the world, and I say with St. Bernard: *hoc filioli mei maxima fiducia mea, ac tota ratio spei meae*. Have these words explained to you for I would not have dared to propose them on my own authority. Through Mary I will seek and find Jesus; I will crush the serpent's head and overcome all my enemies as well as myself, for the greater glory of God.

Farewell but not goodbye, for if God spares me, I shall pass this way again, either to stay for a short while, subject to the obedience I owe to your good bishop who is so zealous for the salvation of men and so compassionate to us in our weakness, or while on my way to some other place; for since God is my Father, wherever he is offended by sinners, there is my dwelling-place.

*Qui justus est justificetur adhuc.  
Qui in sordibus est sordescat adhuc.  
Aliis quidem odor mortis in mortem.  
Aliis autem odor vita in vitam.*

I am all yours,

LOUIS MARIE de Montfort, Priest and unworthy slave of Jesus in Mary.

THE END

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Is 43:7; Jn 6:15

<sup>2</sup> Mk 3:5

<sup>3</sup> Jn 5:58

<sup>4</sup> *Fac tibi vinculas et catenas, et pone eas in collo tuo.* Jer 27:2

<sup>5</sup> Jn 10:20

<sup>6</sup> Cor. 1:27

<sup>7</sup> A slight dating error: Louis Grignion was born on 31 January 1673.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 17.19

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, pg 9, Letter 7, to Guyonne-Jeanne (Louise).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *God Alone*, pg. 17, Letter 12, to Guyonne-Jeanne (Louise)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *God Alone*, pg. 23, Letter 18, to Guyonne-Jeanne (Louise)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *God Alone*, pg. 23, Letter 19, to Guyonne-Jeanne (Louise)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *God Alone*, pg. 22, Letter 17, to Guyonne-Jeanne (Louise)

<sup>14</sup> See also pg. , Grandet MS pg. 310. This ancient monument was often wrongly called “the Temple of St. John”. Today archaeologists recognise it as a Christian baptistery of the 4th century. It was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and, according to some, was probably built by St. Hilary, who lived in a neighbouring lane which is named after him. Its frescoes with their symbols seem to be the work of artists of Poitou of the 12th century. The building became an Abbey church in the 11th century, and also served as a small parish church in the 14th century. It has recently been discovered that the Abbé Grignion carried out the functions of curate there. Falling into disuse with the Revolution, it has been, since 1885, an important Merovingian lapidary museum. At the time of his missionary career, and perhaps even before that, Fr. de Montfort, with the consent of the religious authorities, courageously set about restoring it. At first the clergy had only scepticism concerning the success of the undertaking. It is said that the restorer broke a small Baptismal font of the 11th century: it has since been put together again. The large font has been discovered recently with the dig carried out by P. Delacroix. The indisputable result of the operation was the immediate saving of a venerable monument threatened with ruin and a remote contribution to its present good state of preservation.

<sup>15</sup> “A number of them who had practised magic collected their books and made a bonfire of them in public”.

<sup>16</sup> According to tradition, this crucifix is the same one that Father de Montfort has in his hand in the reliquary in the Mortuary Chapel at St-Laurent, though the inscription, “*Indulgentia plenaria...*”, of which Grandet speaks, is not visible.

<sup>17</sup> This is *Alain de la Roche*. This detail shows that Fr. de Montfort was already, in 1706, preaching the Rosary in his missions.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also pg. , MS pg. 124. The parish in question is that of *Saint-Similien*, where Fr. de Montfort gave a mission in 1708 when he joined with Father Joubart, a celebrated missionary of the Society of Jesus, “a second Fr. Maunoir”, who for many years had been working in the diocese of Nantes.

<sup>19</sup> These names should be read, no doubt, as follows: Campbon, Pont-Château, Vertou, St. Fiacre, Crossac, Besné, Missillac, Herbignac, Assérac, Landemont, Saint Sauveur, la Boissière, St-Christophe-la-Couperie, Bouguenais.

<sup>20</sup> The context would indicate that we might read this as “this bandit, Montfort”.

<sup>21</sup> This should read *men of Guernsey*.

<sup>22</sup> This should read *Guernsey*. The same for pg. , MS pgs 197-198.

<sup>23</sup> This should read *Ile d’Yeu*.

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<sup>24</sup> Certain of these names need to be corrected: Mozay (not Nozay; today called Mauzé), Croix-Chapeau, Thairé, Ile-d'Elle, La Ronde (not La Rode), Courçon, Le Vanneau. *L'Ile-D'Elle* is currently in the Vendée. Perhaps the author intended *l'Ile d'Aix*. In any case, at the beginning of Winter 1714, Fr. De Montfort gave a mission for the garrison and one hundred and fifty households in Ile-d'Aix. *Le Vanneau* was at that time in the diocese of Saintes; today Le Vanneau is in the department of Deux-Sèvres, in the diocese of Poitiers. Today, one speaks of "the pastor of Le Vanneau" (rather than "of Vanneau").

<sup>25</sup> Fr. De Montfort had known Pierre Kentin (whose name should probably be written *Keating*), "a priest from Ireland", while the latter was a chaplain in La Rochelle in 1712. Montfort called him "a parish-priest after his own heart".

<sup>26</sup> The parish-priest of Saint-Pompain was M. Jean Mulot. His brother, here called Pierre, was in fact M. René Mulot, who became the first Superior General of the Company of Mary after the death of St. Louis Marie.

<sup>27</sup> The Rule, as given here, is, for the most part, the text used in *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 495-498, which text is taken from Besnard, *Vie de M. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort*, Centre International Montfortain, Rome, 1981, pgs. 479-484. The text given by Grandet differs slightly from that of Besnard and these differences have been respected here.

<sup>28</sup> After the words "two choirs", in Besnard's version of this Rule, there are the words: "They will then sing hymns for an hour, keep silent for an hour and then talk quietly until they reach their night's lodgings. 12. On their arrival, while the one appointed prepares a meal, they will say the third Rosary," continuing (as in Grandet's version) with "to edify..." It may be that this is a copyist's or printer's error in the editing of Grandet's book.

<sup>29</sup> Grandet gives part of the text of the Prayer for Missionaries, with certain alterations (and perhaps also additions or paraphrases). The text given here is partly taken from that in *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 401-408.

<sup>30</sup> The text of this letter is taken from *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 36-37.

<sup>31</sup> The text is taken from *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 506-507.

<sup>32</sup> Grandet has mistaken the date: it was 28 April.

<sup>33</sup> Again, Grandet is mistaken: St. Louis Marie was 43 at his death.

<sup>34</sup> Grandet writes sometimes of *Monsieur Normand*, the King's procurator in Poitiers (cf. ms. pg. 289), and sometimes of *Monsieur Le Normand*, the King's procurator at the praesidium of Poitiers (cf. ms. Pg 464). They are the same person. The form *Le Normand* is preferable, sometimes written *Lenormand* (see Bernard Guitteny, *grignon de Montfort, missionnaire des pauvres*, ed. 1993, pg 228).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 3-4 (Letter 3).

<sup>36</sup> This is an important testimony, found in the first biography of the missionary. We will find in Montfort's life a number of testimonies which emphasise this mystical fact: "he never lost sight of God, and *never moved out of his presence*."

<sup>37</sup> Montfort knew by his *personal experience the interior practices if the devotion* he taught: cf. *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pg. 274 (SM 43); pg. 371 (TD 257).

<sup>38</sup> The book on the advantages of the Holy Slavery, written "in just three days", may be *The Secret of Mary*: cf. *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pgs. 263-287.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *God Alone. The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, NY, 1987, pg. 2 (Letter 1).

<sup>40</sup> This famous saying, *No cross, what a cross!*, has to be understood in the overall context of the spirituality of the cross, which was dear to Father de Montfort: cf. *Letter to the Friends of the Cross*, in *God Alone*, pgs 123 ff. Grandet refers to this indirectly, citing in this place a letter on this theme of the cross, sent to a religious of the Blessed Sacrament: cf. *Letter 13* in *God Alone*, pgs. 18-19.

<sup>41</sup> *Letter 14* in *God Alone*, pg. 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Letter 24* in *God Alone*, pg. 28.

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<sup>43</sup> Letter 26 in *God Alone*, pgs. 29-30.

<sup>44</sup> The poor man is the mysterious *sacrament of Jesus Christ*. This formula is like the synthesis of the rich teaching of Montfort on the poor and poverty: cf. the index in *Oeuvres complètes*, pg. 1861. This attention for the poor is notably at the heart of the apostolic spirituality of the Daughters of Wisdom: cf. C 149 in *Oeuvres complètes*, pg. 1619: *Il faut bien que j'aime, que j'aime Dieu cachédand mon prochain (I must love the God hidden in my neighbour)*.

<sup>45</sup> One of the main reasons for Fr. de Montfort's pilgrimage to Rome in 1706 was this desire "to go and give missions in the East to convert the pagans" (see pg. 34). Without any hesitation, the missionary fell in with the direction indicated by Clement XI: "Monsieur, you have a big enough field of action in France to exercise your zeal." Faced with the difficulties which were building up around him, the desire to go beyond these frontiers comes back to him very strongly. But he is unwilling to do anything without some new advice from the Pope; hence his desire to return to Rome.

<sup>46</sup> St. Francis Xavier, who died at the gates of China, was always for Montfort the "missionary" to be looked up to: cf. MR 6 in *God Alone*, pg. 412. "In this country, many people are not Christians solely because there is no one today to make them Christians" (Letter of Francis Xavier to Ignatius of Loyola).

<sup>47</sup> The "good Father de Montfort" had to overcome a fierce and hot-tempered nature. This characteristic deserved to be emphasised by his first biographers: Cf. Besnard, *Vie de Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort*, pg 526\*.

<sup>48</sup> *This gentleness, modelled on the gentleness of Jesus himself, he showed especially in regard to those sinners who approached him for the sacrament of reconciliation. He received them with kindness, listened to them with patience, and encouraged them to confess their sins with that ingenious charity which mitigates confusion and inspires confidence...* (Besnard, op. cit. Pg 527\*).

<sup>49</sup> Letter 4 in *God Alone*, pgs. 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> Letter 20 in *God Alone*, pgs. 24-26.

<sup>51</sup> (Translator's note) The term used by Grandet is *veille* rather than *veillée*, but the two terms referred to the same custom: on winter nights the women and girls would gather round a hospitable fireside to spin, sew or knit – and gossip – until two or three in the morning. Many parish-priests complained that they were 'gatherings of the devil', because ghost stories would be told, an instrumentalist might drop in to offer a tune, or, worst of all, the young men would insinuate themselves by the trick of putting out the lights, etc. Cf. McManners, John, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France, Vol. 2: The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion* (1998, Oxford University Press), pg. 203.

<sup>52</sup> Around the beginning of November 1702, Fr. de Montfort formed a small community, with a group of the sick, which met in the room called "Wisdom". At the beginning of 1703, Marie-Louise of Jesus entered the hospital of Poitiers and was admitted to the community of "Wisdom". On 2 February 1703, Marie-Louise received the habit of La Sagesse: this date is usually considered, therefore, the date of foundation of the congregation. The little community of sick people was suppressed around the beginning of March 1703.

<sup>53</sup> Probably the same spelling should be applied to "François Alenneau" and "Jeanne Alonneau". Besnard, *Vie de Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort*, pg. 568, reads *Allonneau*.

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