



His devotion to Mary, none more like Saint Bernard



Stained glass window:
Parish Church of La Trinité Porhoet

TO KNOW HIM

“His voice, ever more passionate, proclaims Mary's privileged and unique place not only in relation to the universal plan of salvation, but in the concrete history of every single soul. Cardinal de Bérrulle, attentive above all to the privilege of Mary's divine motherhood, had seen in her the bride of the Father; Louis contemplates her as the **bride of the Spirit**, using a vocabulary of singular and profound metaphors: «The Holy Spirit, who does not produce any divine person, became fruitful through Mary whom he espoused...». Spouse of the

Sanctifier, she conceived the «total Christ», and continues to generate the Son in the hearts of the saints: **every sanctification, every personal reality of grace passes through Mary.**

The very immutability of the mystery of God, the truth of his ways of love guarantees the perpetuation of the relevance of the Marian mystery. «The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation, the first coming of Jesus Christ, is adhered to each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church, and they will pursue it to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ».

Louis explains the mystery as it is explained to the people, or to children: «The same mother does not give birth to the head without the members, nor to the members without the head, for these would be monsters in the order of nature...». And then: «Jesus is always and everywhere the fruit and son of Mary, and Mary is always and everywhere the true tree that bears the fruit of life and the true mother that produces it». We capture in this Montfortian page the humble tension towards a full linearity of formulas. «Whoever wants to be a member of Jesus Christ must be formed in Mary, through the grace of God who dwells in her fully». There are no two main roads to go to the Lord: «**The Holy Virgin is the means our Lord used to come to us; it is also the means we must use to go to him...**». And elsewhere: «It is through Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through Mary that He must reign in the world».

«Mary is a holy place, a Holy of Holies, in which saints are formed and molded... Saint Augustine calls the Holy Virgin **forma Dei: the mold of God**; ... anyone who is cast into this divine mold is quickly shaped and molded into Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ into him».

(Benedetta PAPASOGLI, *Montfort un uomo per l'ultima chiesa [Montfort, a man for the last Church]*, Roma 1991², 368-369)

THE GUIDING WORD



**Let us listen to the Word of God
From the Book of Proverbs (8:17-21;
32-35)**

«I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me.
With me are riches and honor,
enduring wealth and prosperity.

My fruit is better than fine gold;
what I yield surpasses choice silver.
I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me
and making their treasuries full.

Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.

Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.
For those who find me find life
and receive favor from the Lord».

LET US MEDITATE

O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son
Humble beyond all creatures and more exalted
Predestined turning point of God's intention.

Thy merit so ennobled human nature
That its divine Creator did not scorn
To make Himself the creature of His creature.

The love that was enkindled in Thy womb
Sends for the warmth of the eternal peace
Within whose ray this flower has come to bloom.

Here to us, thou art the noon and scope
Of Love revealed; and among mortal men
The living fountain of eternal hope.

Lady, thou art so near God's reckonings
That who seeks grace and does not first seek thee
Would have his wish fly upward without wings.

Not only does thy sweet benignity
Flow out of all who beg, but oftentimes
Thy charity arrives before the plea

In thee is pity, in thee munificence
In thee the tenderest heart, in thee unites
All that creation knows of excellence!

(Dante, *Prayer of Saint Bernard*, Paradise XXXIII)

TODAY FOR ME

The Second Vatican Council teaches that true devotion has nothing to do with curiosity, vain credulity, miracleism, superficial sentimentalism and the formalism of external practices; but rather it consists in **recognizing the singular dignity of Mary, in turning to her with trust and filial love, in imitating her virtues**, to follow Christ together with her.

According to Saint Augustine, «to honor and not imitate is nothing other than lying flattery». Mary wants to be a model, not just a refuge. She is not a protective and possessive mother, who locks her children into infantilism; but a mother who helps us grow towards maturity and pushes us to face risk. Welcoming her among one's own things, like the disciple that Jesus loved, means above all assimilating her attitudes: courageous faith, inner freedom and self-giving, responsibility and presence in history, where God's plan is implemented. Trusting or consecrating oneself to her means living one's baptism in her company, with evangelical coherence and radicality.

In the veneration of the Holy Virgin, the first place must be given to liturgical worship and other forms of devotion must be inspired by it, so that Mary always appears united with Christ in his mysteries and involved in the act of adoration which he raises in the Holy Spirit to the Father. Mary remains «the servant of the Lord» (Lk 1:38) and her glory in heaven is still «the glory of serving». Her song is always the same: «My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior» (Lk 1:46); and his invitation is also the same: «Do whatever he tells you» (Jn 2:5).

«**The Church's piety towards the Holy Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship**». The Marian cult, «despite being distinctly singular, is however essentially different from that cult of adoration which is paid to the incarnate Word together with the Father and the Holy Spirit».

(From *Catechismo degli adulti* [Catechism of the adults], *La Verità vi farà liberi* [The Truth will make you free], nn. 794-795)

FOR PERSONAL AWARENESS

- Who is Mary for me? What relationship do I have with her?
- What do I mean by devotion to Mary?
- What do I need to change in my attitude towards her?



LET US PRAY WITH SAINT LOUIS (from the *Secret of Mary*, 68-69)

Hail, Mary, most beloved daughter of the eternal Father; hail, Mary, most admirable mother of the Son; hail, Mary, most faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary, Mother most dear, Lady most lovable, Queen most powerful! Hail, Mary, my joy, my glory, my heart and soul. You are all mine through God's mercy, but I am all yours in justice. Yet I do not belong sufficiently to you, and so once again, as a slave who always belongs to his master, I give myself wholly to you, reserving nothing for myself or for others.

If you still see anything in me which is not given to you, please take it now. Make yourself completely owner of all my capabilities. Destroy in me everything that is displeasing to God. Uproot it and bring it to nothing. Implant in me all that you deem to be good; improve it and make it increase in me.

May the light of your faith dispel the darkness of my mind. May your deep humility take the place of my pride. May your heavenly contemplation put an end to the distractions of my wandering imagination. May your continuous vision of God fill my memory with his presence. May the burning love of your heart inflame the coldness of mine. May your virtues take the place of my sins. May your merits be my adornment and make up for my unworthiness before God.

Finally, most dearly beloved Mother, grant, if it be possible, that I may have no other spirit but yours to know Jesus and his divine will. May I have no soul but yours to praise and glorify the Lord. May I have no heart but yours to love God purely and ardently as you love him.

I do not ask for visions or revelations, for sensible devotion or even spiritual pleasures. It is your privilege to see God clearly in perpetual light. It is your privilege to savor the delights of heaven where nothing is without sweetness. It is your privilege to triumph gloriously in heaven at the right hand of your Son without further humiliation, and to command angels, men, and demons, without resistance on their part. It is your privilege to dispose at your own choice of all the good gifts of God without any exception.

Such, most holy Mary, is the excellent portion which the Lord has given you, and which will never be taken from you, and which gives me great joy. As for my portion here on earth, I wish only to have a share in yours, that is, to have simple faith without seeing or tasting, to suffer joyfully without the consolation of men, to die daily to myself without flinching, to work gallantly for you even until death without any self-interest, as the most worthless of your slaves.

The only grace I beg you in your kindness to obtain for me is that every day and moment of my life I may say this threefold Amen: Amen, so be it, to all you did upon earth; Amen, so be it, to all you are doing now in heaven; Amen, so be it, to all you are doing in my soul. In that way, you and you alone will fully glorify Jesus in me during all my life and throughout eternity. Amen.

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