



**A priest of Christ,
he showed forth Christ in his actions,
and preached Him everywhere in his words.**



Icon made by Cecilia Gozzi, Rome

TO KNOW HIM

Gentleness acquired in contemplating Jesus Christ.

«Louis Marie had inherited a violent temperament from his father. We find confirmation of this in the scenes of anger, expressed or repressed, witnessed by his companion and friend Jean-Baptiste Blain at the Rennes boarding school. Montfort himself, in his mature age, confided in his faithful missionary colleague Pierre de Bastières who testifies: “This is the character of M. de

Montfort. He himself confessed to me that he had more difficulty overcoming his vivacity and anger than all his other defects put

together, and that if God had destined him for the world he would have been the most terrible man of his time...". In fact, his frequent acting with intrepid zeal sometimes attracted him to bad treatment. Where the parish priests were content with scolding, he went on with attacking... We have this testimony from his companion Pierre de Bastières: "He made incredible efforts to overcome his natural impetuosity. And he came to terms with it and acquired this splendid **virtue of gentleness**. He had it painted on his face and it flared up in every conversation he had...". The same stated: "Although M. de Montfort was considered extremely severe, the greatest sinners addressed themselves rather to him than to any other missionary". And he explained that Louis did not fall into rigorism, which was quite general at the time, but preferred to risk spending time in Purgatory due to an excess of gentleness... Even if it is practically impossible to follow the evolution of the missionary, it must be recognized that he made great efforts to overcome his natural violence. But is it just about effort? It is extraordinary that in his youthful work *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, he devotes two entire chapters to the gentleness of Jesus incarnate Wisdom, while he dedicates only one to his life and sufferings.

Let's fast forward thirteen years (April 1716). Montfort understands that he only has a few hours to live. Despite the fever that consumes him, he doesn't want to give the floor to anyone else. Even more so since it is the day on which the Bishop of La Rochelle will make his pastoral visit. What does he preach on? On the **gentleness of Jesus**, in particular on the kiss that the Savior wanted to receive from Judas to try to win over his hardened heart... It was like a final exhortation on **a topic that was particularly close to his heart!** On this last occasion he spoke of gentleness not as a moral virtue but of Jesus' gentleness. Knowing to what extent he lived and

preached the centrality of Jesus, we think that he presented him as the Christ whose gentleness penetrates the heart of Christian and above all his own. However great **his continuous efforts were to tame his natural impetuosity**, one can and must think that **the gentleness** of which Pierre de Bastières gives us testimony **was, even if not only, the fruit of his long contemplations of that of the Son of God**. But the progress that seemed to increase in gentleness had nothing taken away from the vigor of his temperament. We find good proof of this in his capacity to mobilize crowds of people for the construction of the Calvary of Pontchâteau...

Let us also focus on a scene, in September 1715, in the parish of St. John of Fontenay-le-Comte: the brutal captain of the military housed in that town wanted to make his men enter the church, despite the pace had been reserved for a particular preaching, in an hour allotted to women: screams, tumults, cries for help. De Bastières admits that he himself hid in the sacristy: “I saw Montfort in the pulpit... his face was pale like that of a dead man. However, he preached for almost an hour as if nothing had happened. The furious captain was waiting for him with his soldiers near the cemetery to teach him a lesson. Montfort passed among them with intrepid courage”. We perceive the man who has managed to control himself, where **firmness marries with gentleness**. Today, after more than three centuries, the disciples of Jesus Christ must continually try to combine intrepid strength with the search for an attitude of peace».

(Louis PEROUAS, Un maître spirituel à redécouvrir aujourd'hui ? Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, Limoges, 2001, 70-73)



THE GUIDING WORD

**Let us listen to the Word of God
from the letter of Saint Paul to the Phi-
lippians (1:19-27; 2:4-5)**

«I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus».

LET US MEDITATE FROM PSALM 62 (61)

Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress: I will never be shaken.

How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down -
this leaning wall,
this tottering fence?

Surely, they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.
With their mouths they bless,
but, in their hearts, they curse.

Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress. I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

Do not trust in extortion,
or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase,
do not set your heart on them.

TODAY FOR ME

“A priest of Christ, he showed forth Christ in his actions, and preached Him everywhere in his words”: I believe that every missionary, but not only, every disciple of Christ would love to have these words written on their tomb!

Saint Louis writes: **«Until we become one in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, until we form that perfect man, until we reach the measure of the fullness of Christ».** This phrase from Paul's letter to the Ephesians (4:13) is much loved by Montfort: he quotes it ten times in his prose writings. Not to mention the references in the *Canticles*. And it is surprising that with this phrase he opens and closes *The Love of eternal Wisdom*. At number 1 he writes thus:

«There is in you so much beauty and delight; you have shielded me from so many evils and showered on me so many favors, and you are moreover so little known and so much slighted. How can I remain silent? Non only justice and gratitude but my own interests urge me to speak about you, even though it be so imperfectly. It is true, I can only lisp like a child, but then I am only a child, anxious to learn how to talk properly through my lisping, once I have attained the fullness of your age».

And at the end of the book, he concludes the act of consecration to Christ Wisdom by addressing Mary: **«Through your intercession and example, I will reach the fullness of his age on earth and of his glory in heaven».** I believe that this sentence summarizes the experience of his personal life, the contents of his preaching, and the purpose of his pastoral activity. And let this be the relevance for us today, the aim and objective of our journey as disciples of the Lord.

Saint Paolo VI reminds us: «Christ is the only way to the Father (cf. Jn. 14:4-11), and the ultimate example to whom the disciple must conform his own conduct (cf. Jn. 13:15), to the extent of sharing Christ's sentiments (cf. Phil. 2:5), living His life and possessing His Spirit (cf. Gal. 2 20; Rom. 8:10-11). The Church has always taught this and nothing in pastoral activity should obscure this doctrine» (*Marialis cultus*, 57).

FOR PERSONAL AWARENESS

- “To me life means Christ”. Am I able to pronounce these words of Paul for myself?
- Which attitude in Jesus attracts me so much that I want to make it mine?
- I express it with a prayer ...



LET US PRAY WITH SAINT LOUIS

So that I may obtain from your mercy a genuine devotion to your blessed Mother and spread it throughout the whole world, help me to love you wholeheartedly, and for this intention accept the earnest prayer I offer with St. Augustine and all who truly love you.

*O Jesus Christ, you are my Father,
my merciful, my great King, my good Shepherd,
my only Master, my best helper,
my beloved friend of overwhelming beauty,
my living Bread, my eternal priest.*

You are my guide to my heavenly home,
my one true light, **my holy gentleness**,
my true way, my shining wisdom, my unfeigned simplicity,
the peace and harmony of my soul,
my perfect safeguard, my bounteous inheritance,
my everlasting salvation.

My loving Lord, Jesus Christ, why have I ever loved
or desired anything else in my life but you, my God?
Where was I when I was not in communion with you?

From now on, I direct all my desires
to be inspired by you and centered on you.

I direct them to press forward
for they have tarried long enough,
to hasten towards their goal, to seek the one they yearn for.
O Jesus, let him who does not love you be accursed,
and filled with bitterness.

O gentle Jesus, let every worthy feeling of mine
show you love, take delight in you and admire you.

O God of my heart and my inheritance, Christ Jesus,
**may my heart mellow before the influence of your spirit
and may you live in me.**

May the flame of your love burn in my soul.

May it burn incessantly on the altar of my heart.

May it glow in my innermost being.

May it spread its heat into the hidden recesses of my soul
and on the day of my consummation

may I appear before you consumed in your love. Amen.

(From *True devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, 67)