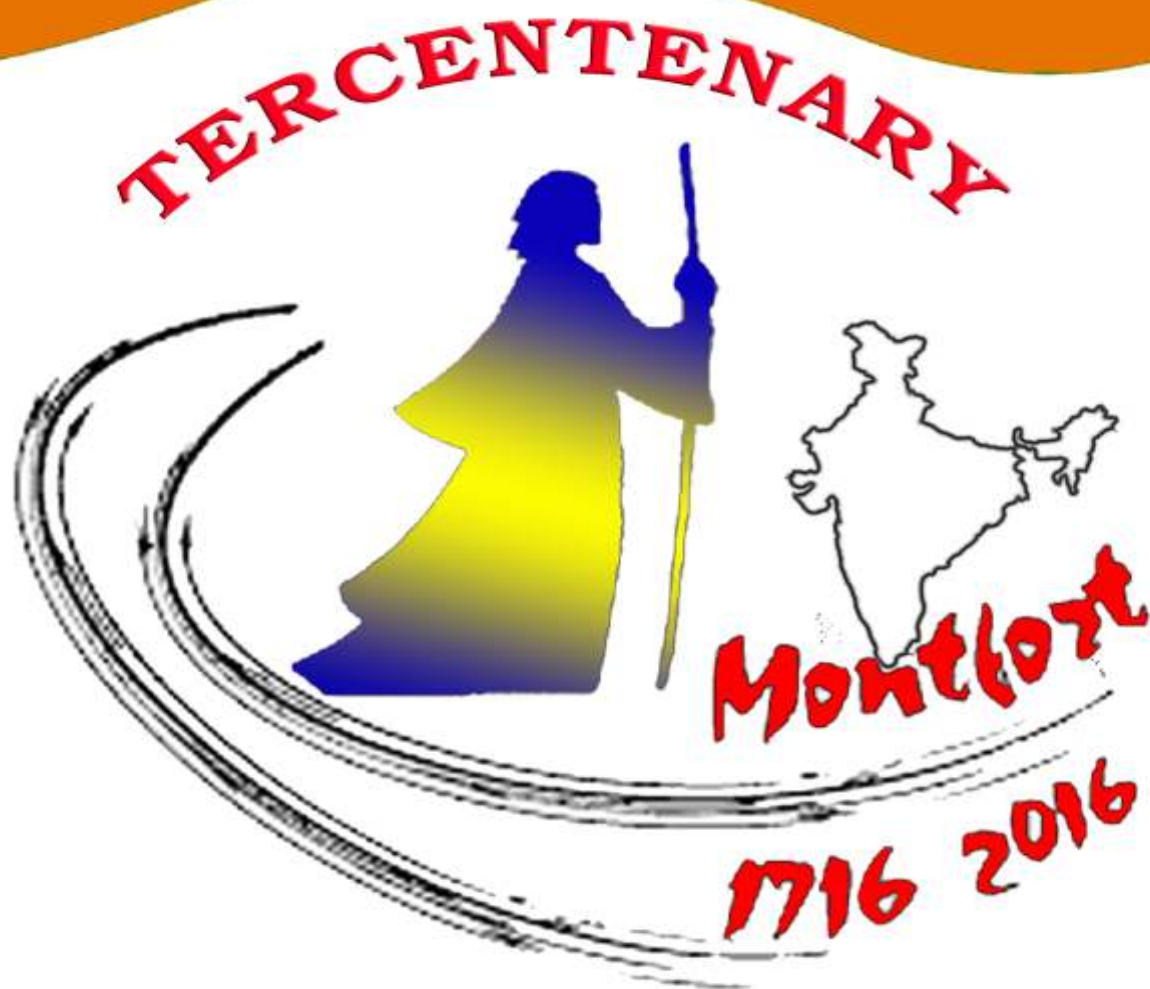


TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

A Quarterly Marian Magazine



**Montfort Marian Centre
Bengaluru**

Congratulations



Rev. Fr. Norbert Lobo
as you celebrate the 40th Anniversary of your Holy Priesthood
May God bless you



Rev. Dr. Peter Swamy
Doctor in Theology

Congratulations



Three hundred years passed after the heavenly birth of St. Louis Marie de Montfort, "A Prophet for our Times" as titled by Benedetta Papasogli. This is a unique occasion and joyful event in the life of Montfortain family around the globe. It is a call to go back to the sources, that is, the Spirituality and Charism with greater dynamism and zeal for recalling, renewing and revitalizing the spirit and the mission. This issue titled as Tricentnaire is an attempt to reread and live Montfort with greater enthusiasm. This issue, To Jesus through Mary, is dedicated to this noble cause of awakening the

vibrant missionary mandate handed down by our founder. He moves from place to place teaching, preaching and healing in the footsteps of Christ the Wisdom Incarnate. We read him in his own words and actions.

Montfort moves from Poitiers to Paris and starts to live and work in large poorhouse called *La Salpetriere*. From this location he gives lectures on Wisdom to the seminarians of *Poullart des Places*. These he works up in The Love of the Eternal Wisdom (LEW), his most important text on Wisdom, most likely written after being expelled from *La Salpetriere* and while living under a staircase in the *rue du Pot-de-Fer*. His fascination with Wisdom at that time shows in a letter to his mother: "In my new family... the one I belong to now- I have chosen to be wedded to Wisdom and Cross... no one knows the secrets I am talking about, or at least very few people do" (L. 20, August 28, 1704).

He convincingly presents the inner relationship of between Mary and the Trinity. He saw Mary as the supreme masterpiece of the Almighty God and he has reserved the knowledge and possession of her for himself. She is the glorious Mother of the Son, and the sealed fountain and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the sanctuary and the resting place of the blessed Trinity where God dwells. Montfort was profoundly challenged by this union and he declares: "Let me remind you again the dependence shown by the three persons on the blessed Lady. Theirs is the example which fully justifies our dependence on her...The Holy Spirit formed Jesus only through her, and he forms the members of the Mystical Body and dispenses his gifts and his favours only through her" (TD 140).

Montfort teaches us about different levels of devotion to Mary, of a true and a perfect devotion. "First consists in fulfilling the duties of our Christian state... Praying to our lady occasionally, and honouring her as the Mother of God, but without our devotion to her being exceptional" (SM 25). "The second consists in entering for our Lady deeper feelings of esteem and love, of confidence and veneration" (SM 26). The third devotion to our Lady is one which is unknown to many and practised by very few. This is one I am about to present to you" (SM 27). In other words, Montfort proposes a Marian mystical experience of Mary, a perfect practice of devotion to Mary. "Chosen soul, this devotion consists in surrendering oneself in the manner of a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through her, and then performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary and for Mary" (SM 28).

It was during his visit to the general hospital in Poitiers that he met Marie Louise Trichet who confided her intention of joining the mission of Louis Marie de Montfort. Later, as the first daughter of Wisdom she wrote in her Last will and Testament: "In the name of Jesus Christ and as the moment approaches when I shall render an account to my creator of the way in which I have dealt with the Daughters of Wisdom, having had the happiness of being the first one to wear the habit and seeing clearly fulfilled all that Fr. de Montfort foretold: that I should one day be at the head of a numerous community and in the course of time many candidates would present themselves to be trained as Daughters of Wisdom, I feel obliged to recommend all of them in the present and in the future, never to deviate from the primitive spirit of our holy founder, which is a spirit of humility, of poverty, detachment, of charity and union with each other."

As His Eminence Cardinal Ivan Dias puts it, as a ordained priest I was searching for some means to keep up the priestly ideals and to fan the spiritual fervour that had been inculcated in me during my seminary formation. I providentially came across the little book True Devotion to Mary in a bookstore in Bombay. It brought back so many pleasant memories of the years when I was a junior member of the Legion of Mary, the lay association founded by Frank Duff with the Montfort spirituality. While meditating on this treatise, it dawned on me that Montfort's thoughts, although meant for Christians in general, could be applied in a special way to priests. St. Louis de Montfort reveals a beautiful secret, a short cut to holiness.

This is the path Montfortians to follow in arriving at their wholehearted commitment to 'God Alone' the Motto of St. Louis de Montfort. It is a time to deepen and renew the profound faith imparted by Christ Wisdom in the person of St. Louis Marie and blessed Marie Louise Trichet. Our vision should visualize the deep rooted spirituality and commitment to the poor and downtrodden must make real and true in our context.

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Price : Rs. 35/-

For private circulation only

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MONTFORT AN APOSTLE OF MARY

Peter Mascarenhas smm

Mary's function in the Incarnation is twofold: dynamic, the Trinity freely pouring grace into her soul, and Mary's faithful response. "It is not possible to express, on the one hand, the ineffable communications of the Blessed Trinity to this most fair creature, and, on the other hand, the fidelity with which she corresponded with the graces of her Creator (Lk 11:28)"(LEW 105). Montfort presents the basic and the most important plan of God in the history of salvation through the figure and role of Mary. This is primarily her 'call' which led to her 'response'. Hence Mary's presence in the history of salvation remains fully actual and every believer must remember that 'All those who have found grace before God have found it only through her. Only through her will those who follow find grace with God.'

When Montfort asks for Missionaries for his Company, he will do so by reiterating the same principle: "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" (Prayer for Missionaries 6). In other words for Montfort the path was clear; the unique role of Mary in entering into the profound mystery of Incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity. It is in and through her one can belong totally to Christ. She is the worthy Mother and Associate to God the Redeemer. We need to be gratefully acknowledge the immeasurable graces granted to her by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to which she totally surrenders herself by her loving and unique consent.

The Incarnation

In the eyes of Montfort, Mary is a creature - like all humanity, a nothing. There is nothing Mario-centric in his thought. He confirms this fact by saying: "this great Lord, who is ever independent and self sufficient never had and does not now have, any absolute need of the Blessed Virgin for the accomplishment of his will and the manifestation of his glory. To do all things he has only to will them"(TD 14). She exists only in reference to him. All is grace, all is gift. She is totally turned to Christ; the only influence she can have on the faithful is in accord with her Christ-centered personality. Montfort speaks of her hypothetical necessity in the plan of God. She is necessary for God only because He freely wills it to be so. So, Mary is necessary in the Incarnation because of God's free choice, she is necessary for all who enter into the mystery of Incarnation.



"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".

Montfort convincingly presents the inner relationship between Mary and the Trinity. He saw Mary as the supreme masterpiece of the Almighty God and he has reserved the knowledge and possession of her for himself.

She is the glorious Mother of the Son, and the sealed fountain and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the sanctuary and resting-place of the Blessed Trinity where God dwells. Montfort was profoundly challenged by this union he declares: "Let me remind you again of the dependence shown by the three divine Persons on our Blessed Lady. Theirs is the example which fully justifies our dependence on her. The Father gave and still gives his Son only through her. He raises children for himself only through her. He dispenses his graces to us only through her. God the Son was prepared for mankind in general by her alone. Mary, in union with the Holy Spirit, still conceives him and brings him forth daily. It is through her alone that the Son distributes his merits and virtues. The Holy Spirit formed Jesus only through her, and he forms the members of the Mystical Body and dispenses his gifts and his favours only through her" (TD 140).

He saw Mary as the supreme masterpiece of the Almighty God and he has reserved the knowledge and possession of her for himself. She is the glorious Mother of the Son, and the sealed fountain and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the sanctuary and resting-place of the Blessed Trinity where God dwells.

God the Father communicated to Mary His fruitfulness, in as much as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that He might give her the power to produce His Son. God the Father generates the Eternal Wisdom within the Trinitarian life and also empowers Mary to be the virginal mother of the Eternal Wisdom according to his humanity. This Second Person

of the Trinity enfleshed in the womb of Mary constitutes His total dependence on the Father. And it is the Holy Spirit who takes possession of Mary for the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit communicates Himself to Mary precisely as the infinite love who binds together the Father and the Son. Thus Mary's unique role in the Incarnation becomes the matrix for the whole history of salvation.

Mary's Consent

Mary's divinely willed role in salvation history is expressed in her consent to bring forth the Eternal Wisdom. Simply put, it is through her Yes, her fiat, that the redemptive Incarnation becomes a reality. Eternal Incarnate Wisdom became Incarnate and Perfect man from the moment of Mary's consent, "... notwithstanding her desire to be lowly, Mary wholeheartedly gave the angel that priceless consent which the Blessed Trinity, all the angels and the whole world awaited for so many centuries. Humbling herself before her Creator she said "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done to me according to your word"(LEW 107). Montfort explains this consent of Mary in various categories as he saw it as an essential element in whole history of salvation. This consent of Mary is the link between the role of the Mother of God and that of the Companion of the Redeemer, and therefore, between divine maternity and spiritual maternity.

The consent of Mary to the redemptive Incarnation is, first of all, necessary because of God's plan. Montfort forcefully teaches, "The Eternal Incarnate Wisdom, desired to become man in her, provided that she gives her consent."(LEW 107). Her 'Yes' is therefore,

necessary in God's plan. Mary's 'Yes' is an essential part of the Incarnation: the life, death and the Resurrection of the Lord, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Sacraments, everything that concerns the history of salvation. For Montfort, the objective and therefore subjective redemption is governed, and is enclosed by the identical antiphon of Mary's Fiat in the Incarnation and to the victorious Cross.

Simply put, it is through her Yes, her Fiat, that the redemptive Incarnation becomes a reality. Eternal Incarnate Wisdom became Incarnate and Perfect man from the moment of Mary's consent, "... notwithstanding her desire to be lowly, Mary wholeheartedly gave the angel that priceless consent which the Blessed Trinity, all the angels and the whole world awaited for so many centuries.

It is a representative consent i.e., given by Mary as the corporate personality of this humanity, or as Montfort speaks of this universe, yearning for salvation. Mary found grace before God, for herself and for every man in particular, for the whole human race. The Church as we understand from the Vatican Council II, exists in Christ as a sacrament, sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. (LG 1& 56).

Finally, this consent of Mary is eternal. This is the succession of the various phases of the history of salvation. As all gifts are given in virtue of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, so too all

gifts are also given in virtue of Mary's corporate consent to the Redeemer. Forever Jesus remains the fruit of her womb, the fruit of her faith. Mary is forever the Yes of humanity and by this 'Yes' associate of the Redeemer in all the works of grace. She is the symbol of the Church, open fully to the capital grace of Christ. Karl Rahner writes: "The absolutely unique 'Yes' of the consent of the Blessed Virgin, which cooperated in determining the whole history of the world, is not a mere happening that has disappeared in the void of the past... She still utters her eternal Amen, her eternal Fiat, Let it be so, let it be done, to all that God willed, to the whole great ordered plan of redemption, in which we all find place, built up on the foundation which is Christ."¹

The consent of this woman, that is her 'faith' is always kept in mind by Montfort as the essential and necessary element in the history of salvation that is accomplished in our personal and community life in the Church.

Mary - Mother of the Redeemer

The ultimate reason to consider Mary as an integral part of the history of salvation is the Divine Maternity: Mary the faith-filled Mother, associated with the work of the Redeemer. In this context the Divine Maternity is the Prime Principle of Montfort's Mariology. The fundamental role of Mary in salvation history is to be the Mother of God and for Montfort this means also, as we will see, the Associate to the Redeemer. If God wants Mary at the Incarnation, it means that he will want her as regards all the consequences of the Incarnation as well. Mary's Fiat in the

¹ K. RAHNER, *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Theological Meditations*, New York, 1964, pp.100-101.

Incarnation - according to Montfort - is enclosed in all the other mysteries of the redemption. This means that God wanted to associate Mary with all the mysteries of the redemption and that Mary consented to be the companion of her Son, the Saviour of the world. Her special role in the plan of salvation is clear: "Divine Wisdom would become man, provided that she would give her consent," (TD 243), to be his Mother.

In a broader context Montfort is declaring that the 'Yes' given by Mary in the Incarnation is her very personality. It is that 'Yes' which accompanies Jesus throughout his life, death, and Resurrection (Jn 19: 25-27). Therefore, together with the Fathers of the Church, Montfort affirms that, "If Jesus Christ, the head of mankind, is born of her, the predestinate, we who are members of this head, must also as a necessary consequence be born of her" (TD 32).

It can be added that Montfort, in presenting the Incarnation, always underlines the text from Heb. 10: 8-9: "Behold, I come to do your will." i.e., the free will of Jesus in accepting all that is on the way. For Montfort, Incarnation is redemptive, not only because Jesus is our Redeemer in his person, but also because this contains the mystery of the Church and all that is to follow. Similarly, Montfort is of the opinion that "God saved the world, by the Ave Maria. He will renew by her the earth and the water..." (Canticle 89 & TD 249). Thus Mary shares in the redemptive work of her Son by her consent. Her divine maternity overflows into the spiritual maternity from the very moment towards all the faithful redeemed by Christ. Mary's divine maternity is not an abstract principle but is the foundation for all the intrinsic principles

mentioned above in the mystery of the Incarnation which is the mystery of the Church.

This divine maternity is of paramount importance for Montfort in essentially linking the relationship between Mary and the Trinity. The Father gave the Son to the world through Mary, he began in her fruitfulness to generate 'the Son and all the members of his mystical body'. Mary is the treasury, full of grace, from her fullness all men are made rich. As Father, he, 'wishes to have children by means of Mary until the end of time' and whoever wants God as Father must have Mary as Mother. In other words, Montfort emphasizes the role of the Mother of the Saviour, who has redeemed us. She has given us by her Son, both grace and glory.

Her divine maternity overflows into the spiritual maternity from the very moment towards all the faithful redeemed by Christ. Mary's divine maternity is not an abstract principle but is the foundation for all the intrinsic principles mentioned above in the mystery of the Incarnation which is the mystery of the Church.

For her part, Mary collaborated in the Incarnation, so also does she collaborate with him in the formation of the great saints in the time of the Church. Montfort concludes by stating that "The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation and in the first coming of Jesus Christ, is adhered to each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church and it will be pursued to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ. Finally, as Montfort convincingly puts it, as God the Father has

imparted the fruitfulness to Mary in the formation of the Mystical Body, we have to have Mary for Mother as we have God for our Father.

Mary - Mother and Queen

Reading through *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* one can enter into the very mind of the author. Montfort was convinced that the very qualities of Our Lady are those of a Mother towards her children: "She is good, she is tender, she has nothing austere or forbidding about her, nothing too sublime or too brilliant....She is so charitable that she rejects none of those who ask her for intercession, no matter how great sinners they may have been..."(TD 85). Montfort has a special litany to express the spiritual maternity of Mary as a Mother.²

For Montfort, Mary's spiritual maternity is not an adoptive maternity, but as stressed by Pat Gaffney in similar lines that Mary gave us birth³: "No one but Mary has had the power to conceive and give birth to the Eternal Wisdom and no one else has now the power to incarnate Him, as it were, in the predestinate, by the operation of the Holy Spirit"(LEW 203). This is an expression of the basic purpose of Mary's Motherhood, to cooperate in our spiritual birth, as Montfort puts it: "O Blessed Virgin Mary, you give all of us life, in giving us the fruit of life."⁴ Note that Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus,

Head of the elect, but is also Mother of all believers. Hence she conceives them, bears them in her womb and brings them forth to the glory of heaven through the graces of God which she imparts to them. This element is stressed greatly because it is seen as a necessary consequence of the fact that Mary is the mother of the Head of the mystical Body. One and the same Mother does not give to the Head without the members.

"No one but Mary has had the power to conceive and give birth to the Eternal Wisdom and no one else has now the power to incarnate Him, as it were, in the predestinate, by the operation of the Holy Spirit"

For Montfort, Mary's maternity is real and dynamic, intent on giving us to the Holy Spirit, who alone can bring forth and fashion the children of God, but always through his faithful and inseparable spouse. Therefore we are 'children' of Mary, we are enclosed in her womb, while waiting to come to light in the same way in which Jesus lives in Mary and wants to depend on her.

Besides being our Mother, Mary is Queen of all hearts: 'Mary has received from God a far reaching dominion over the souls of the elect. Otherwise she could not make her dwelling-place in them as God the Father has ordered

² I cite here a few titles which he used for Mary: *Our mother* (TD 84), *My good Mother* (*Cantiques de Montfort*, p. 158), *My Sweetness* (TD 144), *My true Mother* (TD 201), *Mother of the predestinate* (TD 188), *Mother of Gifts* (*Cantiques de Montfort*, p. 175.), *Mother of grace* (SM 8), *My dear and well-beloved Mother*, *Echoing the Fathers*, *Mary is also the Mother of the Living* (SM 22), *Mother of fair love* (SM 215), *Mother of Christians* (*Cantiques de Montfort*, p. 139), *Mother of the Members* (LEW 213).

³ Cf. P.GAFFNEY, *Le rôle de Marie dans l'histoire du salut*, in *Montfort, un maître spirituel*, p. 198.

⁴ *Cantiques du Montfort*, p. 30.

her to do, and she could not conceive them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother.... unless she had received from the Almighty rights and authority over their souls... Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace as Jesus is King by nature and by conquest... So we may call her, as the saints do, Queen of all hearts (TD 37-38).

Mary's approach is maternal, one of love within the hearts of people, to influence them to surrender all to the overshadowing Spirit, so that Christ may be formed in them to the glory of the Father. Her maternal Queenship connotes authority as vast as that of her Son, though in Montfort's marian doctrine everything is subordinated to Christ.

'Mary has received from God a far reaching dominion over the souls of the elect. Otherwise she could not make her dwelling-place in them as God the Father has ordered her to do, and she could not conceive them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother....'

Mary is the means, our Lord chose to come to us and she is also the means we must choose

to go to him. Jesus, in choosing her as his inseparable associate in his life, death, glory and power in heaven and on earth, has given her by grace in his kingdom all the same rights and privileges that he possess by nature. The power and royalty of Mary are deduced from her union with her Son in the redemption of the world. H. Marie Boudon had stressed her royalty first.⁵ It is because Mary is our Mother that we are her children. Just as Jesus and Mary have the same will and the same power, they have also the same subjects and servants. All that belongs to God by nature belongs to Mary by grace. Since we are of Christ, we are also of Mary, or better, we are "slaves of Jesus in Mary."⁶

Saying that we are children and slaves, Montfort express this double dimension of Mary's role toward humankind: a mother with authority, who impels us to give ourselves to the Holy Spirit. In spite of the difficulty with terminology, Montfort wants to underline the evangelical dependence where St. Paul considered it an honour to be called "slave in Christ" (1Cor 7:22; 2 Tim 2:24). Slave is seen as a superlative form of son: so intense a son is called to live in total dependence as the child of

⁵ Cf. H.M BOUDON, *Oeuvres complètes* Vol. 3, Paris, Migne, 1856. The second volume has : *Dieu seul, ou le saint esclavage de l'admirable Mère de Dieu*, pp. 369-586. Speaking of Mary as "Mother of goodness" (p. 572), the accent is on the sovereign royalty. In the *Oraison pour s'offrir à la très sainte Vierge, en qualité d'esclave*, which appears at the end of the book, there are no references to the spiritual maternity.

⁶ In the *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Montfort explains several ways of expressing our belongingness to Jesus through Mary. His own usual and favorite way is Christ-centered, "slave of Jesus in Mary" TD 244-245; L 5, 6, 8-12, 20; TD 236-237, 252. He also uses the phrase, "Consecration to Jesus through Mary as a slaves of love." SM 34, 44, 61; LEW 219; TD 231. Montfort often speaks of Holy Slavery with reference to Jesus as well as Mary: TD 56, 68, 72-77, 113, 135, etc. We need to note that the slave certainly has biblical references (cf. Lk 1, 38; Rom 1, 1; Phil 1, 1; Tim 1, 1 etc.) and it does not mean servility. Nevertheless, the use of this term was not without problems already in Montfort's time. That is why he stops to justify it with various quotations (cf. 68-77) and we can believe that pastorally he sought to explain it and was careful to use it prudently. Montfort, *un maître spirituel*, p. 198.

her womb. To be a slave for Montfort, in no way means surrendering our liberty, but on the contrary it means realizing it in its highest degree: 'the slavery of love and free choice...is the perfect way for us human beings to give ourselves to God our Creator (SM 32), a radical dependence born out of love leading to love. This devotion makes the soul truly free by imbibing it with the liberty of the children of God.

Mary and Grace

The central event in time and its absolute culmination is, according to Montfort, the Incarnation of Eternal Wisdom as we have seen above. This is the reason why the mystery of Incarnation in the Church for the saint becomes the entry of grace into (human) time. This holds true for the time before the Incarnation, during which God, in anticipation of the enfleshment of the Word, bestowed on man the necessary grace. This is evident in the fact of the Incarnation: the complete fullness of grace is present among us which is characterized by the life and by the inner life of the mystery of Incarnation in the Church by the dynamism of grace. For Montfort, this remains inseparably linked with the activity of the Holy Spirit and of Mary⁷ as Incarnation is the imprint of the entire history of salvation.

Montfort attributes the Incarnation event to the three Persons of the Trinity. The characteristic of the Father is that, He is the

fountainhead and the source of every grace.⁸ The eternal Father yearns for nothing so much as to share the life-giving waters of His grace and mercy with us, and to reign in our souls by his grace. More concretely, God the Father desires to give us the greatest of all graces, Eternal Wisdom, His Son, in whom resides "the entire fullness of the divinity and the complete fullness of grace." (TD 61, SM 12). Jesus Christ is the quintessence of the grace of God. In Christ, God bends low over us in passionate

To be a slave for Montfort, in no way means surrendering our liberty, but on the contrary it means realizing it in its highest degree: 'the slavery of love and free choice...is the perfect way for us human beings to give ourselves to God our Creator (SM 32), a radical dependence born out of love leading to love.

love and affection, over every human need. In the *Canticles (Cantiques)* on the *Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Montfort chants that Christ's heart is for humanity; it is "the true treasure of the grace of Jesus Christ; this Heart calms his anger, obtains his grace and his favour." (Canticles 40: 15,21).

Montfort describes the Holy Spirit, the third divine Person, as the substantial love of the Father and the Son. According to St. Paul, God's love which has flooded our hearts (Rom

⁷ Cf. TD 37; Cf. S.DE FIORES, *Le Saint Esprit et Marie chez Grignon de Montfort*, in CM 99 (1975), 195-215, pp. 205-207.

⁸ Montfort speaks of grace in a concrete fashion in his *Book of the Sermons*. He gives an outline illustrating the essence of grace in eight points: i) La grâce est un don de Dieu incompréhensible. ii) La grâce est un grand don. iii) La nécessité de la grâce. iv) Les principes de la grâce. v) Les qualités de la grâce. vi) Les obstacles à la grâce. vii) Les moyen d'obtenir la grâce. viii) Les moyens de la conserver et l'augmenter. in *Le Livre des Sermons*, p. 36; Cf. SM 9.

5:5) designates the characteristic of the grace of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the bond between Father and Son who draws the believers into the divine love through graces and gifts which enables them to respond in love to God and love of neighbour. For Montfort, every human 'Yes' to God and to Christ flows from the grace of the Holy Spirit and is intertwined with the consent of Mary. In the generation of the members of the Body of Christ, as well as in their formation and sanctification, the Holy Spirit and Mary work together. Mary is the inseparable associate of the Holy Spirit in all these works of grace.

Montfort emphasizes the close threads with which the God the Father knits her into the work of incarnation and redemption. He is convinced that Mary was so transformed into the life of her Son, through grace, that it is impossible for us to understand it. His life, preaching and writings bear witness to this fact, and expresses it in simple terminology.⁹ Mary is not only God's masterpiece of glory in heaven, but also his masterpiece of grace on earth. Mary is the treasurer and universal dispenser of the merits and virtues of Jesus her Son. To the one who gives himself totally to her, She gives herself completely in a wondrous manner. She engulfs him in the ocean of her graces, adorns him with her merits, supports him with her power, enlightens him with her light, and fills him

with her love. She shares her virtues with him.

Yet, the relationship between Mary and grace, in Montfort's thought cannot be described completely without the reference to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary, his faithful spouse, and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses, so that she distributes to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills all his gifts and graces. The time of the Church is seen by Montfort as a special reign of the Holy Spirit. The reign especially attributed to God the Father lasted until the deluge of water; the reign of Jesus Christ ended in a deluge of blood, but the reign, of the Spirit, is still not ended and will come to close with deluge of fire, of love and of justice. Thus the Church is oriented to this action of the Spirit in the light of the Father and the Son in bringing about the glory of God in the life of a believer in day-to-day.

Mary is not only God's masterpiece of glory in heaven, but also his masterpiece of grace on earth. Mary is the treasurer and universal dispenser of the merits and virtues of Jesus her Son. To the one who gives himself totally to her, She gives herself completely in a wondrous manner.

⁹ Cf. TD 50, 222, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 44, 63, 164, 208, 211...; Cf. LEW 58, 88, 105-107, 181-222, 207, 213...; SM 12, 8-9, 10, 20...; C 6, 23, 85, 103, 151,...; SR 58, 144.

MONTFORT, A MARIAN MYSTIC!

Claude Sigouin smm



The Montfortian Family of the Montfort Missionaries, the Montfort Sisters, and the Montfort Brothers and their different Associates commemorate 2016, the Third Centenary of St-Louis Marie-de-Montfort's death, on April 28th 1716, in St-Laurent-sur-Sèvres, a village situated in the West part of France.

As regards religiosity, the XVII Century, in France, is considered as a time of great mystics, men and women. More and more, the modern biographies on Montfort, speak about his mystical experience, especially in line with his Marian mystical experience.

I would like to present two different aspects of this experience, on one side, the Marian mystical experience of Montfort, in his own daily life, and on the other side, the same mystical experience shared through his writings, mainly "The Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary" (T.D.), the "Secret of Mary" (S.M.) and his Canticles (Cant).

The mystical experience of Montfort in his daily life

What is the meaning of a Christian mystical experience?

It is a loving experimental knowledge of God, a love and knowledge directly infused with the human person by God. God is love, and "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5,4).

This Christian mystical experience implies the divinisation or sanctification of the human

person through the love of the Holy Spirit. Ascetic life depends on our own efforts, mystical life depends on the impulses of the Holy Spirit. The constitutive element in the mystical life is the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in divine or supernatural mode which produces a divine activity in the soul. It is not me acting but the Spirit acting in me.

How does the Holy Spirit act in a soul?

Normally, through the maternal mediation of the Virgin Mary. Montfort writes: "God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary, his faithful spouse, and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses, so that she distributes all his gifts and graces to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills" (T.D. 25).

Ascetic life depends on our own efforts, mystical life depends on the impulses of the Holy Spirit. The constitutive element in the mystical life is the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in divine or supernatural mode which produces a divine activity in the soul. It is not me acting but the Spirit acting in me.

Montfort writes later on "When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it. He gives himself generously to that soul according to the place it has given to his spouse" (T.D. 36).

The mystical Presence of Mary in the Daily Life of Montfort.

As a child : Grandet, the first biographer of the life of Montfort reports "Since his early childhood, Louis manifested a spontaneous conscience of the presence of the Holy Virgin to whom he was attracted more and more in prayer. According to his uncle "he was retiring himself in some corner of the house to pray and recite the rosary in front of small image of the Holy Virgin. He was praying the rosary with his sister Guyonne-Jeanne, assuring her that if she was faithful to this prayer, she will become beautiful and would be the beloved of God" (Grandet, 2-3,4)

As a teenager: Blain describes a Marian mystical experience of Montfort: "When he was kneeling before an image of Mary, young Grignon appeared to be completely unaware of everyone else, being at it were, in a trance with his senses in some way suspended. He would be for hours at the foot of her altars. Looking devout and entranced, remaining motionless as if spell-bound. He would thus pray to her, honour her, paying her his homage, begging her to protect him, consecrating his innocence to her, imploring her to keep it safe, dedicating himself to her service" (Blain 14).

As a seminarian: A few months before his ordination to the priesthood, Montfort was chosen with another seminarian named Etienne Bardou to make a pilgrimage to Chartres. His companion tells: "On arriving at Chartres he hastened to the chapel in the crypt where a mosaic of the Blessed Virgin was kept and honoured; he threw himself at its feet with the most heartfelt tenderness and devotion....the

following day, he spent six to eight hours in meditation...kneeling motionless, he appeared completely carried away...." (Blain 183-85).

As a priest: Montfort, in his preaching and his writings, shares his own Marian mystical experience, especially when he speak of a disinterested devotion to Mary "True devotion to Mary is disinterested. It inspires us to seek God alone in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves... How pleasing and precious in the sight of God and his holy Mother must these servants of Mary be, who serve her without any self-seeking. How rare they are nowadays! It is to increase their number that I have taken up my pen to write down what I have been teaching with success both publicly and in private in my missions for many years." (T.D. 110).

It goes without saying that Montfort is a true devotee to Mary even a slave of love of Mary. In his Canticle "Devout Slave of Jesus in Mary" Montfort sings, "Here is something hard to grasp: in my heart's center I carry her. Etched with strokes of glory, yet in faith's darkness still in another stance he continues "I do everything in and by her, what a secret of holiness. Keeping me ever faithful to always do God's will" (Canticle 77, 15, 19).

At the end of his life: In 1714, two years before the death of Montfort. Blain narrates his last conversation with him: " In the dialogue we had together, he reveals to me that God has favored him with a very particular grace, the continuous presence of Jesus and Mary in his heart center" (Blain,340).

Those present at his bed, when Montfort was dying, holding in his hands a crucifix and the

statue of our Lady carved by himself, have heard his last words: "I am in between Jesus and Mary, I will not sin anymore."

Devout Slave of Jesus in Mary" Montfort sings, "Here is something hard to grasp: in my heart's center I carry her. Etched with strokes of glory, yet in faith's darkness still in another stance he continues "I do everything in and by her, what a secret of holiness. Keeping me ever faithful to always do God's will"

The mystical Marian experience of Montfort in his Writings.

A revelation: "Here is a secret, chosen soul, which the most High God taught me and which I have not found in any book, ancient or modern. Inspired by the Holy Spirit I am confiding it to you" (S.M.)

It is under the illumination of the Holy Spirit that Montfort shares with us his Marian mystical experience. It is a novelty. This experience cannot be found in any other book, ancient or new. Montfort was responsible of the library at the Major Seminary, so he knew many books on Mary.

A secret: "Having read nearly every book on devotion to the Blessed Virgin and talked to the most saintly and learned people of the day, I can now state with conviction that I have never known or heard of any devotion to our Lady which is comparable to the one I am going to speak of" (T.D. 118).

It is a secret, in the meaning of a revelation, something unknown before, in the meaning of a confidence, and it the meaning of a

pedagogy, a manner of doing to deepen an intimate relationship with Mary, a practice to live a mystical experience with her. "That you use this secret to become holy and worthy of heaven, for the more you make use of it the more benefit you will derive from it" (S.M. 1).

A Marian mystical experience: Montfort teaches us about different levels of devotion to Mary, of a true devotion and a perfect devotion.

"The first consists in fulfilling the duties of our Christian state.... Praying to our Lady occasionally, and honouring her as the Mother of God, but without our devotion to her being exceptional." (S.M.25)

"The second consists in entertaining for our Lady deeper feelings of esteem and love, of confidence and veneration." (S.M. 26)

The third devotion to our Lady is one which is unknown to many and practised by very few. This is the one I am about to present to you." (S.M.27)

In other words, Montfort proposes a Marian mystical experience of Mary, a perfect practice of devotion to Mary "Chosen soul, this devotion consists in surrendering oneself in the manner of a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through her, and then performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary, and for Mary." (S.M.28)

A special grace: "For this is a grace not given to everyone, and even when God in his great mercy favours a soul with this grace, it remains none the less very easy to lose it, except when the soul has become permanently aware of it, through the habit of recollection. But should

this misfortune happen to you, go back calmly to your sovereign Queen and make amends to her.” (S.M. 52)

A gift of the Holy Spirit: “Happy, indeed sublimely happy, is the person to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the secret of Mary, thus imparting to him true knowledge of her. Happy is the person to whom the Holy Spirit opens this enclosed garden, for him to enter, and to whom the Holy Spirit gives access to this sealed fountain where he can draw water and drink deep draughts of the living waters of grace.” (S.M.20)

:A living mold of God: “Dear friend, what a difference there is between a soul brought up in the ordinary way to resemble Jesus Christ by people who, like sculptors, rely on their own skill and industry, and a soul thoroughly tractable, entirely detached, most ready to be moulded by the working of the Holy Spirit. What blemishes and defects, what shadows and distortions, what natural and human imperfections are found in the first soul, and what a faithful and divine likeness to Jesus is found in the second!” (S.M.18)

An interior dependence: “The chief difficulty is to enter into its spirit, which requires an interior dependence on Mary, and effectively becoming her slave and the slave of Jesus through her” (S.M. 44).

A growing process: “As this devotion essentially consists in a state of soul, it will not be understood in the same way by everyone. Some -the great majority - will stop short at the threshold and go no further. Others - not many - will take but one step into its interior. Who will

take a second step? Who will take a third? Finally who will remain in it permanently? Only the one to whom the Spirit of Jesus reveals the secret. The Holy Spirit himself will lead this faithful soul from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from light to light, until at length he attains transformation into Jesus in the fullness of his age on earth and of his glory in heaven.” (T.D.119)

Special interior practices:

“Here are some very sanctifying interior practices for those souls who feel called by the Holy Spirit to a high degree of perfection. They may be expressed in these four basics: doing everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary, and for Mary, in order to do it more perfectly through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, and for Jesus.” (T.D. 257).

Through Mary:

“We must do everything through Mary, that is, we must obey her always and be led in all things by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit of God.” (T.D.258)

The Spirit of Mary: “A spirit which is gentle yet strong, zealous yet prudent, humble yet courageous, pure yet fruitful” (T.D. 258)

It is possible: “We should cast ourselves into her like a stone thrown into the sea. This is done easily and quickly by a mere thought, a slight movement of the will or just a few words as, “I renounce myself and give myself to you, my dear Mother.” (T.D.159)

In three actions before: “To renounce his own spirit his own views and his own will before doing anything” During “We should give

ourselves to the spirit of Mary to be moved and directed as she wishes" *After*: "To renew the same act of offering and of union" (T.D.259).

With Mary:

It means: "We must do everything with Mary, that is to say, in all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows. In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place." (T.D. 260).

The virtues of Mary: "Reproduce yourself then in my chosen ones, so that I may have the joy of seeing in them the roots of your invincible faith, profound humility, total mortification, sublime prayer, ardent charity, your firm hope and all your virtues. You are always my spouse, as faithful, pure, and fruitful as ever. May your faith give me believers; your purity, virgins; your fruitfulness, elect and living temples" (T.D.34).

It is possible: "In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it, if she were in our place" (T.D.260).

A gospel image of Mary: In three Latin words "Fiat" Be it done to me according to your Word, "Magnificat" My soul rejoices in the Lord. "Stabat" Mary stood at the foot of the Cross.

In Mary:

It means: With Jesus and like him we remain in Mary. We discover all the richness of her maternal heart. "When we have obtained this remarkable grace by our fidelity, we should be

delighted to remain in Mary. We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that we are within her virginal bosom" (T.D. 264).

"Saint Augustine, surpassing himself as well as all that I have said so far, affirms that in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God all the predestinate, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just. This is indeed a mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate and little known even to the predestinate!" (T.D. 33).

With Jesus and like him we remain in Mary. We discover all the richness of her maternal heart. "When we have obtained this remarkable grace by our fidelity, we should be delighted to remain in Mary. We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that we are within her virginal bosom".

In the heart of Mary: "In this place the air is perfectly pure. There is no night but only the brilliant day of the sacred humanity, the resplendent, spotless sun of the Divinity, the blazing furnace of love, melting all the base metal thrown into it and changing it into gold. There the river of humility gushes forth from the soil, divides into four branches and irrigates the whole of this enchanted place. These branches

are the four cardinal virtues” (T.D. 261).

It is possible: By a special grace from the Holy Spirit “The unfortunate children of Adam and Eve driven from the earthly paradise, can enter this new paradise only by a special grace of the Holy Spirit which they have to merit” (T.D.263).

A Marian joy “What wealth and what glory! What a joy and a privilege for us to enter and dwell in Mary, in whom almighty God has set up the throne of his supreme glory! (To be a continuation of her virginal motherhood which is to give Christ to the others. “It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world. (T.D. 1)

For Mary:

It means: “We must do everything for Mary. Since we have given ourselves completely to her service, it is only right that we should do everything for her as if we were her personal servants and slaves” (T.D. 265)

The mission of Mary: “It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world.” (T.D.1)

It is possible “Relying on her protection, we should undertake and carry out great things for our noble Queen. We must defend her privileges

when they are questioned and uphold her good name when it is under attack. We must attract everyone, if possible, to her service and to this true and sound devotion. We must speak up and denounce those who distort devotion to her by outraging her Son, and at the same time we must apply ourselves to spreading this true devotion” (T.D. 265).

The reward: As a reward for these little services, we should expect nothing in return save the honour of belonging to such a lovable Queen and the joy of being united through her to Jesus, her Son, by a bond that is indissoluble in time and in eternity. Glory to Jesus in Mary!” (T.D. 265)

Prayer to ask for the grace of a Marian mystical experience:

“Holy Spirit, grant me all these graces. Implant in my soul the tree of true life, which is Mary. Foster it and cultivate it so that it grows and blossoms and brings forth the fruit of life in abundance. Holy Spirit, give me a great love and longing for Mary, your exalted spouse. Give me a great trust in her maternal heart and a continuous access to her compassion, so that with her you may truly form Jesus, great and powerful, in me until I attain the fullness of his perfect age. Amen.” (S.M. 67)

JOKES

A minister wrote to his bishop asking if his Lordship could come and conduct a quiet Day in the parish. The bishop, after looking up the record of the parish, replied, “Your parish does not need a quiet day; it wants an earthquake.”

MONTFORT ON THE LOVING WISDOM OF GOD

Wiel Logister smm

When Montfort speaks of Wisdom, he thinks of Jesus, and of the folly that is prevalent in the world at the same time. Wisdom, to him, is not an indication of high intelligence or of the technical skills of the virtuoso, but a way of life. It is not synonymous with scholarship, cleverness, or powers of the intellect: it is selflessness and being on loving terms with friends and strangers. When he calls Jesus Wisdom Incarnate “whose gentleness ravishes our hearts” (H 65,4) and “who generously distributes treasures of knowledge and wisdom among his friends” (H 129,2), we should keep this in mind. One of the Bible quotations that Montfort starts out with in his meditations on the Incarnation of Wisdom is Jer. 9,22-23: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me (LEW. 9). Wisdom entails that we wholeheartedly imitate God's engagement in life according to the Old and New Testament: we are to be as merciful as the real Father, as kind as Jesus, as creative as the Holy Spirit, “bending that which is inflexible. Wisdom can be found by those who allow themselves to be inspired by people who-with God in mind - live in a spirit of peace and harmony, without oppressing others, without dominating them, without neglecting them. Wisdom is about passionate nearness to those who are suffering. Those who are wise in the biblical sense do not seek the meaning and the destination of life in wealth, power, and thrills, but in compassion with those who have been hurt and maimed.”

Three centuries ago in Paris and in the French countryside there were few signs of such compassion. Life is ravaged by religious strife and wars with England; as usual, it was the poor who suffer the most. Whereas luxury and abundance ruled at the court of the Sun King, within a stone's throw the poor and the diseased led a miserable existence. In the Bible Montfort finds a countermovement: Jesus and Mary, the poor apostles, and a few very ordinary people develop a way of life that is based on God's mercy and care. Following in their footsteps: this is Wisdom!

We are to be as merciful as the real Father, as kind as Jesus, as creative as the Holy Spirit, “bending that which is inflexible. Wisdom can be found by those who allow themselves to be inspired by people who - with God in mind - live in a spirit of peace and harmony, without oppressing others, without dominating them, without neglecting them.

1. Gradually Wisdom becomes an important theme for Montfort

In time Montfort's fascination with Wisdom continues to grow. No doubt the life-size statue of “Wisdom Incarnate” in the library of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice has drawn his attention during his student years in Paris. There is a passage in his notes that speaks of the love and the tenderness/kindness of uncreated and Incarnate Wisdom (God alone, 563). But it is in his later years that he first

elaborates on its meaning and importance.

1.1 In the Poorhouse of Poitiers (1701-1703)

In 1702 he became the rector of the poorhouse of Poitiers. He founded an association of sick and handicapped women, which he called *Filles de la Sagesse*. A short while later, they were joined by two young women from bourgeois families. Above the entrance to their chapel are the words “*La Sagesse*”; inside is a large Cross with texts concerning the imitation of Christ. Montfort calls it *la Croix de la Sagesse*, the Cross of Wisdom, since it was on the cross that it became clear what living wisely in the name of God entails. This is where “uncreated Wisdom” fully becomes “Wisdom Incarnate”. During his life and death, Jesus had been the reflection of uncreated Wisdom’s relationship of obedience towards the Father by being on loving terms with people who were looked down upon. The Daughters of Wisdom should contemplate the way in which uncreated Wisdom incarnates in all sorts of circumstances in life; it makes them radiant no matter how handicapped or ill they may be. Unfortunately, the group does not last. It is discontinued at the insistence of the board of the poorhouse: apparently it does not suit their plans. Montfort is asked to step down in the spring of 1703 as well.

Nonetheless, he has discovered something of great importance. On October 24, 1703 he writes to Louise Trichet: “I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever... They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which he brings into the lives of those in whom he dwells...” (L 16). He considers the difficulties that he encounters to be

the consequence of his choice for Wisdom. This is not a simple choice. In the same letter we can read: “When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me? When shall I be sufficiently equipped to serve as a place of rest for Wisdom in a world where he is rejected and without a home?”

During his life and death, Jesus had been the reflection of uncreated Wisdom’s relationship of obedience towards the Father by being on loving terms with people who were looked down upon. The Daughters of Wisdom should contemplate the way in which uncreated Wisdom incarnates in all sorts of circumstances in life; it makes them radiant no matter how handicapped or ill they may be.

1.2. The Love of Eternal Wisdom (Paris 1703-1704)

Montfort moves from Poitiers to Paris and starts to live and work in a large poorhouse called *La Salpêtrière*. From this location he gives lectures on Wisdom to the seminarians of Poulart des Places. These he works up in *The Love of Eternal Wisdom (LEW)*, his most important text on Wisdom, most likely written after being expelled from *La Salpêtrière* and while living under a staircase in the *rue du Pot-de-Fer*. His fascination with Wisdom at that time shows in a letter to his mother: “In my new family – the one I belong to now – I have chosen to be wedded to Wisdom and Cross... No one knows the secrets I am talking about, or at least very few people do” (L 20, August 28, 1704). During that time he also writes the hymns 103 and 124

through 126 on Eternal Wisdom.

For one third LEW consists of quotations of Biblical wisdom literature: Book of Proverbs, Book Sirach, Book of Wisdom. Especially the latter (Deuterocanonical) book he finds fascinating. It was written in Greek in the first Century BC by a Jew from Alexandria (Egypt) who called himself Solomon. In order to bridge the Jewish and the Hellenistic worldview and culture, Solomon articulates the Hebrew tradition in terms that Gentiles can understand. Guided by Solomon, Montfort recognizes traces of Wisdom in the universe and in history. As usual, he lets himself be inspired by Holy Scripture and meditatively familiarizes himself with its words. He reads and rereads Holy Scripture and adds notes that focus the attention. Thus Scripture receives ever-deeper overtones and power. While reading Solomon's views on Wisdom, he wonders at what Wisdom's feet, eyes, and breath are directed at. Definitely not at High Society and the rich who are under the spell of superficial pleasures and showing off. He keeps turning towards Jesus, lest he be deceived by the elegant words of gifted orators or the treacherous words of clever philosophers. To him, Jesus is the Wisdom of God, who has come to bring people to fullness. In him God has incarnated, fully come to light in his human words and acts.

Thus Montfort achieves a very personal articulation of the spirituality of the French School, with St. Paul's texts in which Jesus is called the Wisdom of God as the high point. In Jesus, God's Wisdom is brought forward as it should be sought and lived. As it turns out, this wisdom and crosses, humiliation, and poverty go

hand in hand. Montfort sees his own path and calling in this light. In Jesus he sees and hears the sound and the colour of eternity, i.e. the way that the life of God wells up in our midst. Referring to Scripture he brings up all different aspects of Wisdom, with the triumph of Eternal Wisdom on and by the Cross (the title of Chapter 14) as the climax. In Montfort's view, without Jesus' dying for us on the Cross, the heart is missing in a theology of Wisdom. This heart, however, can only be comprehended in light of the way God is understood and experienced in the history of creation and salvation according to the Old and the New Testaments.

The content of LEW

In the **Introduction** it is said that the high and mighty of the world believe themselves to be wise, but they do not live according to the law of justice and the will of God; they are consumed with envy and bewitched by pleasure and possessions.

Chapter 1 maintains that the knowledge of Jesus exceeds everything. He, Wisdom uncreated and incarnate, is nourished with the milk of divine kindness. Knowing Jesus is not one of the many forms of knowledge: it is the only form needed and the center towards which all the other branches of knowledge must tend. This wisdom differs entirely from the knowledge of natural things or that of philosophers and alchemists.

Chapter 2 calls Eternal Wisdom "a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty" and "the reflection of eternal light, the spotless mirror of God's majesty, the image

of his goodness.” Those words have been inspired by the beauty and the sweetness that the apostles were witnesses of during the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus in a moment of ecstasy.

Chapter 3 speaks of Eternal Wisdom as the Maker of all things, which he cherishes the way a mother cherishes her child. The creation order displays “this mysterious game of Divine Wisdom”; the saints were “astonished at her beauty, her harmony and her order”. “In the beginning”, before the Fall, man was aware of it. After all, he was “absorbed and rapt in God”. But nowadays “our mind is darkened, our heart turned cold towards God” and we are the “slaves of the devils”.

Chapter 4 describes Wisdom's goodness and mercy. After the Fall, he hears man's call for help because he misses Paradise and its rapture. In heaven, Eternal Wisdom argues with Divine Justice about ways to expiate man's sin. Wisdom offers to become human at a suitable time. In earlier days, there were signs that Wisdom is kindly disposed to people. This is apparent in the history of the Jewish people, according to the Book of Wisdom chapter 10. The eleventh chapter of Wisdom is used to relate the way different Israelites were saved by Eternal Wisdom.

Chapter 5 describes the grace of Eternal Wisdom by means of the Book of Wisdom chapter 8 and the way people have sought him. Subsequently his excellence is sung by means of the Book of Wisdom Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 outlines how much divine Wisdom wants to give himself to people who are created

after his image. The Wisdom of Solomon is like a letter written by a lover to win the affections of his loved one. It is the best that can be given to us. In order to purify us and comfort us, Wisdom becomes a poor man who dies on the cross and remains generously and invitingly near to us.

Chapter 7 points at the difference between true and false wisdom. Particular attention is paid to the wisdom of philosophers and alchemists. The conclusion reached is that we should remain with Jesus, the Eternal Wisdom incarnate.

Chapter 8 depicts the way Eternal Wisdom inspires us with the divine, cardinal, and moral virtues, protects us from mediocrity, and makes us resist temptations.

Chapter 9 describes Wisdom's presence in the saints of Israel, in Mary, and Jesus.

Chapters 10 and 11 are about the gentleness of Wisdom incarnate, the subject of Montfort's sermon shortly before his death. **Chapter 12** repeats a number of Jesus' enunciations.

Chapter 13 is about the suffering of Incarnated Wisdom for us.

Chapter 14 discusses the most profound mystery of Eternal Wisdom: the Cross. Wisdom takes on the flesh “in order to convince men of its friendship” by way of the cross. The Cross is chosen in the womb and is carried still. Thus the Cross of ignominy becomes an honorable place. It is the sign all the chosen ones should carry. Many do not understand any of it. Only Jesus' friends are willing to drink the cup.

Chapters 15 – 17 mention four ways that lead to divine Wisdom: an ardent desire, continuous

prayer, universal mortification, a loving and genuine devotion to the blessed Virgin. These ways melt into one another; devotion to the Holy Virgin is the leading factor. Mary is full of Messianic longing, the *Magnificat* continuously wells in her heart, and she lives unpretentiously. This devotion entails esteem for her dignity, gratitude for her benefactions, trust in her maternal goodness.

The **epilogue** is a prayer: devoting oneself to Jesus Christ, Wisdom incarnate, through the hands of Mary.

Montfort is aware of the fact that Wisdom overtaxes his powers; but his life is in ruins without it. It has to be granted; it exceeds human self-knowledge. Only those who acknowledge its transcendent, uncreated, or divine nature, can reveal it to the world. In Hymn 103 this is repeated time and again: "Jesus, uncreated Wisdom, come to me. Jesus, the Incarnate Wisdom, come to me. What is sweeter than to be with you, but what hell to be without you! O Wisdom, God made man, come to me. I acknowledge you, come to me. I shall be happier than any king". Those who want to become wise with Jesus have to rise above their primary inclinations and distance themselves from "the wise and honest people living in this World,... who speak well of the Cross in general, but not of the one that comes their way. They shun this as much as they can or else they drag it along reluctantly, grumbling, impatient and protesting" (LEW 178). This is why Montfort says in his *Letter to the Friends of the Cross*: "You may, and should, pray for the wisdom of the Cross, that knowledge of the truth we experience within ourselves and which by the light of faith deepens

our knowledge of the most hidden mysteries, including that of the cross" (LFC 45).

c. From 1707 until his death in 1715

"Jesus, uncreated Wisdom, come to me. Jesus, the Incarnate Wisdom, come to me. What is sweeter than to be with you, but what hell to be without you! O Wisdom, God made man, come to me. I acknowledge you, come to me. I shall be happier than any king".

As far as we know, Montfort stops writing about Wisdom for a period of time. In 1707-1708 he places a statue of Our Lady of Wisdom on the altar of St. Lazare, and in the hermitage of St. Lazare he writes the following prayer: "O all-powered Father, O most gracious God, from heaven bestow Divine Wisdom on us, grant her to us; grant, love urges you. Answer, answer the sighs of the poor. Gentle Virgin Mary, answer your children's plea, obtain from God Divine wisdom for us. Pray for us, pray, love urges you, be merciful to our pressing needs" (H 78). Once again *Sagesse* and *Charité* merge. According to H 5, *Charité* (God's love for humanity especially with regard to the poor and the sinners) is the most fundamental virtue, that is, the emanation of God. Only the Christian who really follows in the footsteps of Jesus is wise.

Once again, it is silent in regard to Wisdom. Until 1715, when he writes two hymns for the Daughters of Wisdom: H 148 (Hymn on Charity) and H 149 (Hymn to the Daughters of Wisdom). Again it is demonstrated how tight a unity *Charité* and *Sagesse* form. Simultaneously he has been working on the rule of the Daughters in which he writes: "Just

as divine Wisdom, who reigned in the heavens, came down to earth to obey from the first moment of his incarnation to his death. So, following his example, his daughters have left the World to the yoke of obedience" Original rule of the Daughters of Wisdom (RW 46). The Daughters are to be led by Wisdom in all respects. What the opening sentence of the Rule says about the ultimate goals of the Congregation, is to the point: "the acquisition of Divine Wisdom". And this comes to a conclusion in the name of the Congregation. Initially, Montfort considers calling the sisters *Filles de la Providence*, but in the manuscript the name is crossed out and substituted by *Filles de la Sagesse* (RS 1; 7; 281; 286). Two weeks before his death, Montfort writes in a letter to Marie-Louise that the Daughters should strive to "obtain Wisdom and true freedom and to become partakers of the divinity of the heart of Jesus crucified" (L 34).

Strangely enough, Wisdom is hardly ever mentioned in Montfort's texts about the Montfortians. He only mentions the wisdom of the preacher (PM 22; RM 60). Apparently, Wisdom is about the practice of life and the hands-on attitude of the Daughters. According to H 148,16, true Wisdom and the care for orphans and the incurable go hand in hand. It is the duty of the sisters, not of the fathers and the brothers, even though Montfort greatly takes their fate to heart.

1. The essence

"Sagesse increée et incarnée" denotes what God brings about in our midst. In those words things are combined that do not seem to

have much of a connection on the surface of it: the wisdom of God and human wisdom, the eternal and the temporary, heaven and earth. However, divine Wisdom intertwines with life on earth. In the obedience of Jesus to the Father, it comes to light how much the Son in the highest heaven echoes, obeys, and responds to the Father's creativity, mercy, and compassion.

Painters have portrayed this in the **Majestas Domini**, in which it is depicted how the Son or Wisdom emanates from the Father in order to embrace the Cross on earth (humanity struggling with the meaning of life) inspired by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is not above us and far away: he comes towards us, wants to seize us, embrace us. He wants to share our world, renew its context, and thus enrich life with unexpected lustre. When Montfort speaks of Wisdom, he is referring to this emanation from God who wants to transform us into wise people. What can happen then, is shown in the way Jesus has lived, in the words he has spoken and in the creative way he has been merciful, honest, communicative, kind-hearted for others, the poor, the sick, and the despised in particular. But also in the way he has died. That is why painters have painted the Cross in the life of God; the Cross in the Holy Trinity puts an end to a purely esthetic, other-worldly and easy faith.

Divine Wisdom intertwines with life on earth. In the obedience of Jesus to the Father, it comes to light how much the Son in the highest heavens echoes, obeys, and responds to the Father's creativity, mercy, and compassion.

The words and the deeds of Jesus are aimed at living in accordance with God's love for humanity. Being touched by his Wisdom results in deeds of mercy, kindness, and peace. Wisdom and the imitation of the Crucified One go hand in hand. The path that Jesus has taken all the way to the Cross is its parable and criterion. On his way he is surrounded by Mary, poor apostles, saints from Abel onwards, the just from the nations, from Israel and Christianity. Such Wisdom is often beyond us, but we are showered with joy, if we follow in the tracks that Wisdom has made in creation and in the history of salvation, above all in the life and death of Jesus, Wisdom Incarnate.

According to Montfort, the focus on the *Croix de la Sagesse* is "the most noble of all sciences because its subject is the most noble and the most sublime: Wisdom uncreated and Incarnate. He possesses in himself the fullness of divinity and humanity alike and all that is great in heaven and on earth, namely, all creatures visible and invisible, spiritual and corporal" (LEW 9). Only if we go along with the way that Jesus has gone, we truly get in touch with Wisdom. By placing the Crucified One on his right, the Father reveals that Jesus' way is pure truth and true wisdom. After all, he gave his life for the salvation of others and death did not scare him off. Through his life and his death he has made visible how much God loves us, how much He is touched by our unfree state, and how He wants to lead us along the path that brings life to fullness. Not the fullness of rich palaces and the like, but of life in solidarity and peace. This concretely, this corporally was and is the divine fullness present in the Crucified One (Col 2,9). Forever and ever Wisdom wants

"to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the Cross" (Col 1,20).

Under the influence of St. Paul

All of Montfort's writings on Wisdom Incarnate are based on St. Paul. To be sure, he does not quote the apostle frequently, but he has been profoundly inspired by the man from Tarsus. He mentions three central passages: 1 Cor 1,18-2,16; Phil 2,7; Col 1,16.

The first one is the famous exposition on wisdom and folly and about wisdom and the folly of the cross. Montfort quotes this passage several times, in LEW 12, 14, 74, 75, 84, 168. When I combine these quotes, the following text ensues: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (1,19). The Greeks look for wisdom (1, 22), but I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified (2, 2). It is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1, 23). We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature in faith (2,6)".

The second passage is from the no less famous Phil 2: he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.

The third passage runs: "In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." In LEW, Montfort writes that these words imply that "Wisdom uncreated and Incarnate possesses in himself the fullness of divinity and humanity alike".

Montfort's summary of Paul runs as follows: (LEW 18). Put differently, Paul's theology of wisdom collapses, if the Cross is ignored. However, it does not imply that its presence can be found on the Cross alone. In reading Col 1,16 in the light of the Old Testament wisdom literature, the kenotic nature of wisdom becomes a creative source for our entire life.

We are able to see the joyful horizon of God's commitment to the world and to humanity, if we do not give in to the temptations of riches and possessions, but voluntarily become poor in spirit with the poor and crucified Jesus.

The Love of Eternal Wisdom – God's solicitude for creation, which has become manifest in the life, the suffering, and the death of Jesus – wants this breakthrough “through Jesus, with him, and in him” to take place in his people as well. However, we tend to think that the uncreated and incarnate Wisdom exaggerates in his love for humanity. Moreover, *prima facie* Jesus has not achieved anything. After all, has he not been crucified and lost his life outside the walls of the city of man, after all? Nonetheless, the New Testament claims that the power of God has become manifest in him. The

fact that the Crucified One sits at the right hand of the throne of God questions the values and virtues that we hold in high esteem, and our image of God as well. For good reason Hymn 50 puts God's mercy and meekness before His Majesty. And in Hymn 109 (The Principal Mysteries of Faith) God's meekness has priority over His Majesty. According to Hymn 5, God's primary virtue is *Charité*, i.e. commitment to and compassion for those who are suffering. This influences the entire theology of Montfort, also his views on Wisdom. From this point of view, he adopts a critical attitude towards the state of mind of the world, the leaders of the Church, and his own as well. But he is no Jansenist pessimist. He emphasizes that we are able to see the joyful horizon of God's commitment to the world and to humanity, if we do not give in to the temptations of riches and possessions, but voluntarily become poor in spirit with the poor and crucified Jesus. Montfort's attention to Wisdom and to humanity that is endangered in all sorts of ways go hand in hand. That is quite a job. For good reason LEW concludes with these two quotes from the Vulgate: “Let those accept it who can” (Mt 19.12) and “Let the wise consider these things” (Hos 14,10).

JOKES

A little boy in church, who had just been aroused from his nap, said to his father, “Daddy, has he finished?” The father replied, “He's finished, but he isn't stopped yet.”

God created the world and rested
God created man and rested,
But after God created woman,
Neither God nor man has rested.

MARIE LOUISE TRICHET- THE FIRST DAUGHTER OF WISDOM

Sr. Lucy Joseph DW

In the small city of Poitiers three hundred and forty kilometers southwest of Paris, France on 7th May 1684 Marie Louise Trichet was born. She was the fourth child of eight children born of Julian Trichet and Francoise Lecoq and was baptized on the same day in the church of St. Etienne. Her father Julien Trichet son of a "Sergeant at-arms" master of arts, was procurator at the city hall. Her mother Francoise Le coq, Native of Caen, was the Daughter of master cloth-dyer. One son Julian became a Lawyer and another Alexis became a Priest. The girls were given solid primary education at the school of the Sisters of Our Lady.

Her childhood

Marie Louise, fourth child of Trichet's family, rarely attracted the attention to herself, either for reprimands or for praise. One day her mother became impatient and complained to the father "What shall we do with this child? She is stupid" Immediately father replied "No, you are mistaken. God will do great things through her". Her father understood Marie Louise and respected certain characteristics of her personality, for example, an innate gentleness, which put her in conflict with those who lose patience and serenity. She had a touch of firmness, in the decisions she made, for example when it was time to begin her school life, she refused to a male tutor and preferred to go to the school run by the Sisters of our Lady.

At the convent of Our Lady she received spiritual formation. She learned to read and write, to sew and in general, everything that a young girl must know to live well in the world. She learned the notions of arithmetic, history and geography and also the gentle art of good manners, social and feminine virtues, and grew in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her childhood was serene. She was in deep sorrow during her childhood due to death of her two younger siblings which made her to become more quiet and she developed the quality of mental prayer, a simple manner of being in the presence of God.



Marie Louise' passage from childhood to adolescence was spent by caring for her elder sister Jeanne who was struck with paralysis, and studying her school books. She learned the art of spending long hours beside of the sick. The sufferings and difficulties in the family helped her to become more sensitive and refined. She developed delicate empathy towards those who suffer.

Her Adolescence

Marie Louise finished school, she learned to pray, embroider and count. As a result of her home life and her experience of God, she was guileless and humble. She re-entered fully into the mainstream of domestic life with its ordinary

duties.

She learned the art of spending long hours beside of the sick. The sufferings and difficulties in the family helped her to become more sensitive and refined. She developed delicate empathy towards those who suffer.

At an age when young girls become graceful, Marie Louise distinguished herself by a distinctive trait - simplicity. She did not seek adornments, but followed her own ideals; she did not want brilliance, but sincerity. This sincerity would be out of place if it were not tempered by her vibrant sensitivity and her rich interior gentleness. One of her biographers said, "She inherited an upright, generous, and compassionate heart; a good mind; a gentle, kind nature; and a healthy body. She avoided idleness and had a marked inclination of virtue." She had a "just and solid" spirit, an upright heart. The attorney Trichet's daughter resembled her father in several qualities: loyalty, sensitivity to others, practical, lively intelligence. Marie Louise' silence was sometimes placid, sometimes discreet, and at times timid; her promptness in making decisions, characteristic of a heart that is simple and unswerving, revealed the passion with which she pursued her ideals.

THE VOCATION OF MARIE LOUISE

We do not know when the thoughts of Marie Louise began to turn towards religious life. But she made frequent visits to the General Hospital of Poitiers which housed a large number of sick, handicapped, homeless poor

and even criminals who lived in extreme poverty.

In 1701, Marie Louise was 17yrs old, when Fr. de Montfort after a year of his ordination went to Poitiers to serve as chaplain at the General Hospital. Elizabeth, sister of Marie Louise spoke to her about this saintly preacher who was the new chaplain at the hospital. Marie Louise decided to go to confession to him and perhaps to confide in him her aspirations to become a religious. As soon as she entered the confessional, Montfort asked her "My daughter, who sent you to me?" "It is my sister" was the reply. "No my daughter, it was not your sister but the Blessed Virgin who sent you to me." These prophetic words confirmed her desire to become a religious and decided to take him as her spiritual guide. Following this incident Marie Louise, confided her heart's desire to become a religious to serve the poor like Fr de Montfort. Montfort asked her to come and live in the hospital. She obeyed him and she faced the challenges with courage and trust in the Lord. On February 2nd, 1703, in the chapel of the hospital at Poitiers, Marie Louise received from the hands of Montfort an ash colored religious habit blessed by him, as a social symbol and a life programme. Probably, on that same day, Marie Louise pronounced her private vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Father de

"No my daughter, it was not your sister but the Blessed Virgin who sent you to me." These prophetic words confirmed her desire to become a religious and decided to take him as her spiritual guide.

Montfort added, with gentleness “My name is Louis Marie, yours is Marie Louise: add to it that of Jesus, whom you take as your sole inheritance”. Thus Marie Louise Trichet became Sr. Marie Louise of Jesus.

Ten Years at the Hospital

Sr. Marie Louise of Jesus, the first Daughter of Wisdom, started her Journey with the poor like one among them. Montfort said to her “Do not leave this workhouse until ten years have passed by.” In the light of this injunction, Marie Louise of Jesus would live her long fidelity day after day with hope and perseverance. Compassionate love kept her there for many years caring for the sick with immense gentleness and comforting the poor with a smile full of kindness. She had shown her talent for order and organization. She was raised to the post of governess and later in 1709, at a time of great economic crisis in France, she took the responsibility as Bursar of the hospital. By 1713, Sr. Marie Louise received a companion, Catherine Brunet. On the 8th December 1714 Catherine Brunet received her religious habit. Marie Louise achieved more confidence within her that she was no longer alone.

“Do not leave this workhouse until ten years have passed by.”

Leaving the Known to the Unknown

In 1715 Montfort wrote to Marie Louise and her companion to be ready to leave Poitiers Hospital for La Rochelle to start a charitable school for girls, within six months time. He wrote, “I know you will have difficulties to overcome; but it is necessary that an enterprise

which is going to do so much for the glory of God and the salvation of souls will have its way strewn with thorns and crosses. If you don't take risk for God, you will never do anything worthwhile.....”

Tearfully, but with joy, Marie Louise prepared herself to get ready to leave. This was profoundly a human hour in the story of Marie Louise, the liberating call of her youth, “leave your land”. She approached the joy and glory of Wisdom remembering that Wisdom is “incorporated” in the Cross and that the generation of life always implied moments of agony. Her ability to make clear decisions and her simplicity which helped her through difficult moments in the past came to her aid at this moment. She sought a final confirmation from her spiritual director Fr. Carcault. He affirmed, “...it is God's will that you leave immediately for La Rochelle”. Marie Louise and her companion left the known paths behind and took the rough roads that leads to broader horizons. The Wisdom family was born for the first time among the poorest of the hospital of Poitiers. Now it was going to be reborn among the poor children of La Rochelle.

In La Rochelle, Fr. de Montfort the founder of the congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom handed over the Rule for the Daughters of Wisdom to Marie Louise and told her “Receive this Rule. Observe it yourself and see that it is observed by all those who shall be confided to your authority.” Bishop de Champflour (Bishop of La Rochelle) gave it his unreserved approval. In fact one might say that was a harmonious blend and delightfully proportioned balance of the work of the active life with the prayer of

contemplative life.

Within a year, on 28th April 1716, Fr. de Montfort left this world while preaching a mission at St. Laurent sur Sevre. He was just 43 years old. Marie Louise had to take up the whole responsibility of the little group of the Daughters of Wisdom, their mission and the future development of the congregation.

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St. Laurent Sur Sevre

After much reflection and sharing with well-wishers of Fr. de Montfort Marie Louise finally decided to establish the foundation and organization of the Motherhouse of the Congregation in St. Laurent where the founder of the congregation has died and was buried. Marie Louise the head of the congregation formed the postulants and novices, prepared them for the mission. The novitiate was full of well prepared young women who asked only to serve. The school was a good training ground for future teachers. At the pharmacy, the novices became familiar with and learned to mix the common remedies of the time. With the sick, they learned basic nursing techniques. Everything they did was in the spirit of the Lord, lived and taught by Fr. de Montfort and

inculcated into their souls with love by Marie Louise.

As the years rolled on, the foundations continued to be established more or less slowly. From 1725 to 1748 Marie Louise founded about twenty communities that she personally organized, spending long period of time with the sisters and assuring the aim of each foundation be one of loving service to the poorest .

Final years

The new foundations continued. Marie Louise mandated another sister for the organization and the follow up. In December 1758, she had a bad fall which caused her much suffering and inactivity. In April 1759, her illness aggravated. On April 25th, being unable to write by herself, she dictated her last will.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

"In the name of Jesus Christ and as the moment approaches when I shall render an account to my Creator of the way in which I have dealt with the Daughters of Wisdom, having had the happiness of being the first one to wear the habit and seeing clearly I've fulfilled all that Fr. de Montfort foretold: that I should one day be at the head of a numerous community and in the course of time many candidates would present themselves to be trained as Daughters of Wisdom, I feel obliged to recommend all of them in the present and in the future, never to deviate from the primitive spirit of our holy founder, which is a spirit of humility, of poverty, detachment, of charity and union with each other."

“In the name of Jesus Christ and as the moment approaches when I shall render an account to my Creator of the way in which I have dealt with the Daughters of Wisdom, having had the happiness of being the first one to wear the habit and seeing clearly I've fulfilled all that Fr. de Montfort foretold:

THE FINAL GOOD BYE

Towards evening on the 27 April 1759, she was given the sacrament of the sick which she received with fervor. Motivated by her great humility, the Mother Foundress gave her last blessing to the congregation, all her daughters: those who were present, those who were unable to be there, and those who would come in the future, using for this purpose the statue of the Blessed Virgin which Father de Montfort had always carried with him. On April 28, at the age of seventy-five, Marie Louise left for her eternal reward saying, “My Lord and My God", It is striking that she died in the same month, on the same day, at the same hour, and in the same place where Fr. de Montfort died forty three years before. On May 16, 1993, Marie Louise Trichet was beatified in Rome.

The attractive personality of Marie Louise Trichet draw us to love her and venerate her. The potential she received at birth was far above the ordinary. The Lord obviously gifted her in proportion to the demands He would make upon her. But it must also be acknowledged that she worked with all her heart to respond to God's gifts and to be deeply faithful to His grace.

FIDELITY: This trait in her was outstanding. Marie Louise was totally faithful. Always ready to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit, she never

seems to have failed with regard to this virtue. Fidelity to the Lord meant fidelity also to him who represented God for her, and to the various counselors whom God sent to her in the course of her life. We can say without any exaggeration that she was faithful to a heroic degree.

SIMPLICITY: One thing that made the personality of Marie Louise particularly attractive was the simplicity that attracted people and kept them close to her. She was straight-forward and uncomplicated in nature.

HUMILITY: Her simplicity flowed from authentic humility which made her naturally modest and respectful toward everybody. In total sincerity she considered herself to be nothing at all, and less than nothing.

COMPASSION: Seeing the plight of the poor she said..... “If I were a piece of cloth I would clothe the poor myself”. The complete spontaneity of her compassion is clear in this cry. Her heart vibrated with burning love for the poor .confronted by the misery of the poor she channeled the compassion of Jesus to them. One of her biographers describes her as “a living copy” of the virtues of Jesus Christ, the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom.

FORTITUDE: Her reflective temperament helped her greatly to use to the utmost the gift of fortitude. Always more inclined to remain silent than to speak, she drew from her recollection and silence reserves of energy far in excess of the norm. Because of her incomparable presence of mind accompanied by powers of strong concentration nothing distracted her.

HUMAN KINDNESS: Marie Louise was filled with openness and modesty, anticipating the

needs of everybody all the time, and this she did out of kindness and love, and not for personal gain. She was sensitive to the needs of others. She encouraged frankness and cheerfulness.

SPIRITUAL LIFE: Seized from her earlier childhood by the Lord who had chosen her, she responded with all her love and all her energy. Sensitive to the action of the Holy Spirit, she always tried to discern the motions of grace within her in order to conform to them. Her theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity found fertile soil particularly favourable to harmonious growth. She was pleased to “honor Jesus by the name of Wisdom Incarnate.... And contemplated all His mysteries ceaselessly in her heart...” This Christ, her beloved Lord, was someone she lived with in continuous intimacy nourished by inward prayer and especially by the Eucharist. Marie Louise built an inner oratory to live this intimacy with Wisdom which had four pillars- *Obedience, Detachment from all creatures, Love of suffering and Prudence*.

Her devotion to Blessed virgin was obviously a faithful echo of Montfort's own devotion. He is the one who directed her toward “a full and entire gift of herself to Mary, Mother of Incarnate Wisdom.” She considered the Mother of God as the true superior of the community.

These character traits combine the balanced personality of Marie Louise Trichet, the First Daughter of Wisdom and Co-foundress of the congregation of Daughters of Wisdom.

{Reference: “WISDOM OF THE HEART” by Benedetta Papasogli and “UNCOMMON WISDOM” by Agnes Richomme.}

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JOKES

Curate: So you really think you would have run through all your money had it not been for your wife?

Young Man: Sure of it.

Curate: And, my good man, how did she stop your spending it all?

Young Man: She spent it first.

“Minister, I believe the Bible says it is wrong to profit from other people's mistakes?”

“That's substantially correct, yes.”

“In that case, how about refunding the twenty dollars I paid you for marrying us last year?”

REV. FR. GABRIEL DESHAYES, SUPERIOR GENERAL FROM 1821-1841)

Lawrance Sg

Early days: Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was born on 6 December 1767, at Beignon in Brittany, France. He lost his mother when he was five. His father was both a fanner and local butcher. Gabriel, had a brother and two sisters, and was the second child. As a boy he looked after sheep. Even at that tender age he was very generous. *He gave away everything he could lay his hands on... Such a generosity had his father's approval, who would say, "What Gabriel gives away at the door, comes back through the window."* He did his early studies staying with the Parish Priest. As a youth he showed much joviality, common sense, leadership and ability. He joined the minor seminary in 1782, and the major seminary in 1788. These two seminaries were run by the Vincentians, founded by St. Vincent de Paul. Throughout his life, Gabriel Deshayes was fascinated by the figure of St. Vincent de Paul. During the French Revolution, he went into exile to the Island of Jersey and there, he was ordained a priest on March 4, 1792.

The difficult years of 1792-1800: Coming back to France under disguise, with exceptional courage he ministered to the faithful along with six or seven priests grouped around the parish priest of Beignon, during the difficult years of 1792 - 1800. As a young priest who had refused allegiance to the civil authority; he spent ten years celebrating Mass, administering baptism and the sacrament of the sick, in people's

homes. He moved from place to place, disguised now as a poor man, now as a rich man, now as a policeman or playing the village idiot. It is difficult to say on how many occasions, he risked his life. In 1801 a Concordat was signed between Napoleon and the Pope, and thus peace was restored to the Church in France.

Parish Priest of Auray (1801-1805-1820): In 1801, he was appointed Assistant Parish Priest in Paimpont and, in 1802, in Beignon, where he worked with much enthusiasm till the beginning of 1805. In 1805, Fr. Deshayes was appointed Parish Priest of St. Gildas, Auray, in the diocese of Vannes. Years spent under the French Revolution necessitated a re-evangelization of the parish. He organized a number of retreats; he himself was a brilliant preacher with a well-modulated and strong voice, sober and meaningful gestures and with a deep love for God.

His deep concern for the poor prompted him to launch bold undertakings. He had a great trust in Providence and did not bother about lack of finance. His great enthusiasm made people help him and much money passed through his hands. He had a prodigious capacity for work and he started a number of institutions: a school for boys, a school for girls, a college and minor seminary. His inventiveness was amazing: he preached parish retreats, recruited seminarians, looked

after the poor, the sick, prisoners. He started a co-operative to give loans to the poor and also started a spinning mill and a hospice for them. He went out of his way to help prisoners.

He loved children, especially the handicapped, immensely. He bought the old Carthusian Abbey of La Chartreuse, and in it, started a school for them and invited the Daughters of Wisdom to take charge of it. Further on, he bought a property belonging to Cannelite Fathers and, in it built a big shrine in honour of St. Anne. In 1816, he was appointed Vicar General of his diocese, the diocese of Vannes.

In 1816, he started a novitiate to form Brothers to teach in rural schools, and in 1819, he got this institute amalgamated with a similar one started by Fr. La Mennais, and in 1824, he bought the Ursuline Convent in Ploermel, which became the Mother House of the Brothers of Ploermel. For the education of poor girls, in 1807, in Beignon, he started another institution and, in 1820, the Sisters of this institution had their first profession. In 1828, he bought the old Benedictine Abbey at St. Gildas des Bois as their Mother House and the Institute of the Sisters of St. Gildas was established.

Superior General of the Montfortian Congregations: We have already mentioned how Fr. Deshayes became the Assistant to Fr. Duchesne, the Superior General. On the latter's death, on December 22, 1820, Sr. Calixte, the Superior General of the Daughters of Wisdom and the missionaries, in a collective letter dated 30 December, sent through Bro. Jacques, requested Fr. Deshayes to come over to St.

Laurent without delay. The Bishop of La Rochelle also wrote making a similar request. He went and met his own Bishop, who said, *If I consider the interests of my diocese, I have to say "Stay", yet, if I consider the general good of the Church, I have to say "Go".*

Fr. Deshayes came to St. Laurent on January 13, 1821. After a three-day retreat with the missionaries, he was, on January 17, 1821, elected Superior General of the Montfortian Congregations. On January 25, the Bishop of La Rochelle confirmed this election and conferred extra powers on him by appointing him as one of the Vicars General of the Diocese of La Rochelle.

In September 1821, Fr. Deshayes came to stay in St. Laurent as the Superior General of the Company of Mary and of the Daughters of Wisdom. Yet he did not disown the foundations he had started in Brittany; actually he participated in all the annual retreats of the Brothers of Ploermel. *He was to be Superior General for 20 years, pressing ahead, going straight to the point, guided by the hand of Providence, seizing the opportunities that came his way rather than holding on to definite rules.* Mother Flavien wrote of him, *"I had many opportunities to admire his great zeal, his kind-heartedness, his living charity, his lively faith, his dependence on and confidence in Providence."*

His biographers agree that he was an active single-minded leader. *When an idea seemed right and workable, he would try to act on it despite the difficulties; he was a fighter by temperament, and this helped him when trying*

to break or get around obstacles. When a foundation had been established, he watched its progress but at the same time he launched into other undertakings, so much so that his activities appeared very varied and productive. (Biography by Mgr Laveille, p. 164)

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In 1825 he went to Rome and was received in audience with Pope Leo XII. He wanted to have the Constitutions of both the congregations approved by Rome and to obtain the beatification of Montfort. He could not succeed in his objectives, but still he was happy as the Pope listened to him sympathetically and told him, *“It will be missions and education that will save France.”* On his return to St. Laurent, he initiated the process of beatification of Montfort.

His actions in favour of the Fathers: When he came to the Holy Spirit House in St. Laurent, there were only 7 priests and out of that number three were to leave the community in 1821-1822. He started by trying to know each one and, for this purpose, he organized a retreat for all, and all were requested to share their thoughts. He thought of getting new recruits, and in 1823, he opened an apostolic school.

From 1823 onwards, he re-launched the giving of missions by the Missionaries. Often, as he was good at preaching, he was the leader of the team. Like Montfort, he organized the missions well. *“Deshayes wanted the missions to be solemn and splendid and, as far as possible, all the missions given by the Company of Mary were such”* (Biography by Fr. Laveau, p.133). From 1822 onwards, he organized retreats for lay people in St Laurent, and later on he built a retreat house on rocky land in the property in St. Laurent known as “Haute-Grange”, which later on came to be known as St Michel. From 1821 to 1830, 24 missions were preached. Then, there was a break till 1836. From 1836 to 1841, 24 missions were preached, all in the “Montfort style”.

Montfort had prescribed vows, but, since 1773, the Fathers were not taking the vows as Fr. Besnard was forced to suppress the vows in order to get the government approval for the society. Fr. Deshayes knew the only way to rejuvenate the congregation was to re-introduce the vows. There was opposition and hence he had to proceed carefully and slowly. In 1834, this question was discussed in a Chapter grouping 14 priests. Nine priests including Fr. Deshayes agreed to take the vows and five did not want to, two of these left the Institute later on. A decision was taken to re-introduce the vows and this decision was approved by the Bishop of Luçon on February 2, 1834, as by that time St. Laurent was detached from La Rochelle and was attached to the Diocese of Luçon. On February 5, 1835, the Fathers had their first profession and thus the Company of Mary once again became a religious Institute, of

which Fr. Gabriel Deshayes can be called a second Founder. In 1837, a new Rule was drafted inspired by the Original Rule written by Montfort and it was approved by the Bishop. The Bishop also appointed Fr. Deshayes as one of the Vicars General of his diocese.

A decision was taken to re-introduce the vows and this decision was approved by the Bishop of Luçon on February 2, 1834, as by that time St. Laurent was detached from La Rochelle and was attached to the Diocese of Luçon.

His actions in favour of the Sisters: Fr. Deshayes was also the Superior General of the Daughters of Wisdom, in accordance with the tradition kept alive at St. Laurent and without the Sisters having any say in the matter. The Sisters were jointly governed by the Father Superior General and the Sister Superior General elected by their own Chapter, was assisted by a Central Council and their deliberations were presided over by Fr. Deshayes.

From 1821, Fr. Deshayes organized annual retreats for the Sisters in different centres. To a Sister who complained that she did not have enough beds, he said cheerfully, *"You will see that we will find them; just make sure you have a good supply of straw"*. In 1825, he founded a Second Novitiate in St. Laurent for those preparing for the Final Vows. From 1834, he made the General Chapter a regular feature in the Congregation. *"Under a superior who does not doubt of anything, who does not stop at anything, the Superiors set to work resolutely to improve the building of the Mother House."* *"Always ready to accept any inconvenience,*

any privation, Fr. Deshayes imposed great sacrifices upon himself, and so no one reproached him."

When Fr. Deshayes came to St. Laurent there were 778 Sisters (of whom 47 were novices) in 96 communities. At his death the number was 1668 Sisters in nearly 130 communities. *"As he was constantly with them, his contagious enthusiasm inspired those renovating or building his foundations, whose walls would have a good deal to say."* One of his mottos was: *"Do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today."* In 1835, the Sisters started looking after women prisoners and they also started the instruction of young children in asylums. In 1839, Sr. Flavien became the Superior General.

He introduced the Daughters of Wisdom into the mission of teaching the deaf and the blind. We have already seen how in 1812 he entrusted the school for the deaf girls at La Chartreuse, Auray, to the Daughters of Wisdom. In 1841, he started in Lille an Institute for the blind. *"At Larnay, in the diocese of Poitiers, the Sisters managed to educate a deaf-mute-blind child, a pedagogical success that attracted universal attention, even outside Europe."* *"In spite of a thousand and one difficulties. Gabriel Deshayes did not hesitate to promote Montfort's charism and to awaken an apostolic thrust among the Daughters, following Marie Louise of Jesus. More than a memory, the first disciple was for him a kind of acting presence to maintain the Montfortian work in the Church and make it advance in the society of his time."* (Gabriel Deshayes in the prism of Wisdom. p. II)

“At Larnay, in the diocese of Poitiers, the Sisters managed to educate a deaf-mute-blind child, a pedagogical success that attracted universal attention, even outside Europe.” *“In spite of a thousand and one difficulties. Gabriel Deshayes did not hesitate to promote Montfort's charism and to awaken an apostolic thrust among the Daughters, following Marie Louise of Jesus.*

His actions in favour of the Brothers: When Fr. Deshayes came to St. Laurent, there were only four Brothers of whom one (Bro. Elie), was in charge of the parish school. He sent 2 novices (Augustin and Pierre Marie) and 5 postulants from Auray to St. Laurent to join the Holy Spirit community. He recruited many young men and started a novitiate for the Brothers and thus by the end of 1822, the number of Brothers, novices and postulants put together came to 40. Because of the increase in numbers, Fr. Deshayes and Mother Callixte, Superior of the Daughters of Wisdom, worked out a financial agreement which they signed on April 18, 1823... When a Sister complained about the extra expenses involved, Father Deshayes replied to her; “Why, Sister, by increasing the number of Brothers, I only carry out Venerable Montfort's wishes”. He could then add: “The Brothers engaged in teaching cover their expenses in cash; as for those doing manual work, you reap the fruits of their hard work”. (Magazine N° 102).

In 1823, he wrote a Directory for the conduct of the Brothers. The Rule of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary was no longer suitable to the new situation of the Brothers, and Fr. Deshayes gave them as

Directory. The rule followed by the Brothers in Brittany, which he had started. Besides, as legal approval for teaching in school was obligatory, he got an official recognition from the government as the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit, and the Brothers were allowed to teach in five Provinces. As a consequence of this, the Brothers of the Holy Spirit became a legal body distinct from the Company of Mary, while still retaining the unity as a religious congregation with the same Superior General. On September 24, 1824, 42 Brothers including Bros Augustin and Simeon had their first profession of the three vows. Fr. Deshayes consulted the Brothers and as a result, appointed Bro. Simeon as the Master of Novices. He was the first Brother to pronounce his Final Vows; that was on December 15, 1831. Bro. Augustin pronounced his Final Vows only on November 1, 1832.

Fr. Deshayes felt the need to start schools, in order to provide Christian education to poor children in their own parishes. He started or took charge of, a number of schools. He sent Brothers or even novices, after entering into an agreement with the parish priest concerned. In 1822, he started two schools, one at Montmorillon in the diocese of Poitiers and the other at Beaupreau in the diocese of Angers. In 1823, nine schools, in 1824 twelve, etc., were started mainly in Western France. In 1826, Fr. Deshayes and Fr. Lamennais signed at Ploermel an agreement which made the river Loire the demarcation line between the teaching Congregations of Ploermel and St. Laurent. The number of schools run by the Brothers of St. Laurent went on increasing.

The Revolution of 1830 resulted in a government hostile to the clergy and to religious congregations, especially in the West of France. Eight schools had to be closed on account of the pressure from anticlerical town councils. A number of Brothers wavering in their vocation left the congregation. The number of postulants declined.

From 1836 on, Fr. Deshayes started founding schools in the South of France. He founded 11 schools in the region of Provence. 1838 saw the foundation of St. Gabriel's Boarding school in St. Laurent. At the beginning of 1838, an eight-year old boy from Le Boupere, Vendee was brought to Bro. Augustin to be admitted as a boarder. Bro. Augustin accepted him and he was to have meals with the novices, sleep at Salpatriere House and follow classes in the parish school. It soon became known that the Brothers were taking boarders, and a few more came along. Bro. Gabriel was in charge and he also gave tuition to 12 day pupils attending classes in the parish school. Altogether 76 schools were started between the years 1822 and 1841, out of which 47 were still in existence in 1841. A number of schools were closed down or Brothers were withdrawn, because, in some cases things did not go well, as the Brothers were not trained enough, and in some other cases, because the parish priests did not keep up to the agreement.

One of the greatest achievements of Father Deshayes was the founding of schools for the deaf and schools for the blind. In 1827, Brothers took charge of the Boys' Section in the Chartreuse Institution for the deaf in Auray. Later this section became a separate school

and it was transferred to La Persagotiere in Nantes. In 1837 Fr. Deshayes started another Centre at Rouillé. The premises soon proved very small, so the following year an extension was added to the boarding school at Loudun, to accommodate the deaf boys from Rouillé. In 1865, this school was transferred to Poitiers.

Fr. Deshayes wanted to start a school for deaf boys in Orléans and he wanted to put these boys under the charge of a missionary, Fr. Laveau, who was keen on this type of work. Fr. Deshayes found a disused dilapidated house for them, but Fr. Laveau did not show much interest because of the expenses involved at the repairs. He asked Fr. Deshayes, *"Well, Father, you want to start a school for deaf boys in this place. That's fine, but who is going to maintain us?"* Fr. Deshayes' reply was typical, *"Are you taking me for a child? If we were to be put off by such difficulties, we wouldn't undertake anything"*. Fr. Laveau opened the school on January 15, 1839, and he was assisted by three Brothers. In October 1839, Fr. Deshayes started the fourth school in Lille. He had further plans, including even one in the United States, as in 1825 Mgr Flaget, the Bishop of Bardstown had written to him as "founder of schools for the deaf", but he did not get enough time to execute them.

In 1825, as the missionaries were fully taken up with their missions, Fr. Deshayes wanted to appoint two Brothers to be in charge of the Brothers under his authority: one was to be overall director and the other, his deputy. At the end of the 1825 retreat after consulting each member of the group he appointed Bro. Augustin as the overall director and Bro.

Simeon as his deputy. In 1830, he published the Rule governing the conduct of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit. It was similar to the 1823 Directory, except for the three small chapters added at the beginning. This Rule was signed by the Fathers and by the Brothers in authority. Bro. Augustin did not like this Rule, since it prescribed that a missionary should be the Superior of the Brothers. The number of teaching Brothers increased rapidly and this resulted in two different groups of Brothers: those who worked in the classroom and those who looked after the upkeep. Tension between the two groups increased when Fr. Deshayes was away, and as time went on, it proved necessary to separate the two groups.

One of the greatest achievements of Father Deshayes was the founding of schools for the deaf and schools for the blind. In 1827, Brothers took charge of the Boys' Section in the Chartreuse Institution for the deaf in Auray. Later this section became a separate school and it was transferred to La Persagotiere in Nantes.

On October 16, 1835, the teaching Brothers (with a few who were doing manual work) numbering 33 came to stay in Supiot House. We already saw that on September 15, 1797, Fr. Supiot bought in St. Laurent the house of the Bertonderie, which was later called Supiot House. It was bought for the Sisters and the Sisters had started a boarding there. Later the house was used as a Military Hospital. In 1835 this house still belonged to the Sisters and it was to this house that the 33 Brothers were sent. Later on, Fr. Deshayes paid the Sisters the cost of the property. One priest made the suggestion

that this house could better be named St. Gabriel's House and Fr. Deshayes agreed to it. In 1835 there were Brothers, novices and postulants, all together 132, 57 of whom continued to stay in the Holy Spirit House while 75 were attached to St. Gabriel's House, 33 of them had their residence there and 42 were teaching in various schools. Fr. Deshayes appointed Bro. Augustin Director of this house under his own authority, and Bro. Simeon was the assistant Director.

In 1834, Fr. Deshayes confidentially told Brothers Augustin and Simeon about an alternative Rule he made to the 1830 Rule and discussed the wording with them. He worked for three years at improving it. He signed the altered Rule on January 7, 1837, and had it approved by the Bishop of Lucon on April 9, 1838. However, he kept a secret. The Rules of 1837 was not a new Rule, as it took up again the 1830 Rule. The Superior of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit is also to be the Superior of the Brothers. One of the Brothers is to be Director, another Deputy Director, and one or several of them masters of novices, but all of them are to be chosen by the Superior. As Bro. Augustin objected to this wording it was altered as: "The Brothers choose from their own number a Superior who is to govern the Congregation; he will be helped by one or two Assistants according as the Congregation increases in number". Twenty-two articles were added to the chapter on Superiors, as well as one on the Assistants, one on the Procurator, that is the Bursar, and one on the novice master. The Patronal Feast was to be the feast of the Annunciation, instead of the feast of Pentecost. (cf. Magazine N° 102)

Fr. Marcel Sibold, s.m.m., in an article has stated, "From the beginning of his generalate Fr. Deshayes paid much attention (and also with what zeal!) so that his confreres did not deviate even an inch from the goal set by the Founder, including the itinerant Montfortian missions, now worked for fully realizing the original idea of Fr. De Montfort: institute with religious vows, and thus merit in the History of the Montfortian Missionaries the title of being the authentic second Founder." In a similar way, Fr. Deshayes, by prescribing the election of a Brother General after his death, definitely deserves the title of Second Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit, which later on became the Institute of the Brothers of St. Gabriel.

"From the beginning of his generalate Fr. Deshayes paid much attention (and also with what zeal!) so that his confreres did not deviate even an inch from the goal set by the Founder, including the itinerant Montfortian missions, now worked for fully realizing the original idea of Fr. De Montfort: institute with religious vows, and thus merit in the History of the Montfortian Missionaries the title of being the authentic second Founder."

His last days and death: In July 1841, Fr. Deshayes suffered a cerebral congestion and had to take rest at La Chartreuse. On September 13, 1841, he returned to St. Laurent. He then organized a retreat in St. Michael's Retreat House for the Brothers from both communities. On 15th December, as Bro. Augustin was away, he summoned Bro. Simeon and dictated his Testament and last Will:

"I, Gabriel Deshayes, declare that I have nothing of my own; and my intention is that all the money that I may have at my death be handed over to M. Doublet, my nephew, so that he distribute it for good works in such a way that a major portion is given to the Brothers in St Gabriel's House, as their needs are greater than those of the other Congregations.

The money that is in my secretariat at the Daughters of Wisdom's is for the Brothers of the Holy Spirit. In a special way I request my confreres, the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit and the Brothers of all the congregations, and the Sisters and their students, particularly especially the deaf and mute, to pray for me in a special manner.

In a special manner, I recommend to all the issue connected with the beatification of our holy Founder; and if I do not have the consolation of assisting at that Feast which will be celebrated on that occasion here on earth, I beg of him to ask God for me for the grace to celebrate it with him in heaven. As, in my opinion all the congregations are equally important, I ask them all to be united and to support each other."

Saint-Laurent-Sur-Sèvre, December 15, 1841

I approve what is written above.

Gabrie Deshayes

On December 21st, Fr. Deshayes said to the 300 Sisters who assembled in St. Laurent to celebrate the Feast of the Mother General, Sr. Flavien, "*You may think that I am too old to plan so many things. You may be right; however, if I were to have only another week to live, even*

then I would still plan to do good". It looked as if he never imagined that eight days later he would leave this world. Till his death, he proved what others said of him to be true: *"Father Deshayes only goes to bed to dream of the great things he will do the following day"*. On Christmas night Fr. Deshayes was able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and that was his last. His strength slowly declined, and he asked for the sacrament of the sick and also asked pardon of his confreres. Then he added, *"I had never the intention of hurting any one, I forgive everyone from the bottom of my heart and I wish that they show the same indulgence towards me."* The last sacraments were given on 26th. On the morning of the 28th the fever was high and at about 3 p.m., Fr. Deshayes peacefully surrendered his soul to his Creator. Many came for the funeral. Fr. Angebault, the Vicar General of Nantes, many priests from the dioceses of Lucon, Nantes, Poitiers and Angers led the

funeral procession, followed by the members of the Montfortian congregations, the Superior of the Sisters of St. Gildas, boarders, students, orphans and a large number of friends and faithful. After the solemn blessing, the body was taken to the tomb at the end of the cemetery of the Daughters of Wisdom, actually the XIV station of the Way for the Cross, where Fr. Deshayes himself had desired to be buried, and there Fr. Deshayes was buried on 29th December 1841. Fr. La Mennais was not informed in time. But before the funeral, Fr. Deshayes' right thumb, which had signed the Rule of the Brothers of Ploermel, was removed and it was later on sent to Ploennel to be buried at Fr. La Mennais' along with his body. The index finger too was removed and sent to the Sisters of St. Gildas. Both the thumb and the index finger were kept in the respective chapels of the Mother Houses.

JOKES

To a person arriving in Heaven,
Said St. Peter, "We dine sharp at seven,
Then breakfast's at eight-
Never mind if you're late,
And there's biscuits and milk at eleven."

The nun gave a long talk on sin, prayer, and forgiveness. When she had finished the lesson, she asked little Mary, "What do we have to do before we asked the Lord to forgive us?"
"Sin," replied Mary confidently.

DESIRE & DEVOTION OF ST. MONTFORT

Aswani Kumar smm

There are two kinds of saints. The first type, everyone loves, everyone appreciates: peaceful, meek men and women like Francis de Sales, Bernadette, Therese of Lisieux. There is, also, another type of saints, the editor insisted, appear to us like a rushing torrent cascading down a mountainside, overturning everything not sealed with the name of Jesus, leaving us stunned, if not shocked, says Pierre Lermite. Pierre Lermite believed that the metaphor of a thundering mountain torrent captured the essence of the saint from Montfort. Others prefer “artist,” or “mystic,” or “missionary,” “man of the Absolute,” or “Our Lady's troubadour” and even “the vagabond,” “Wisdom's Fool.” And St. John Paul II who counted St Louis Marie among his favorite saints, called him an “excellent theologian” primarily because of his masterpiece, 'True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.'

Louis Grignion was ablaze with his love for God. He participated so ardently in the very nature of God that he became the Holy Spirit's flame: jumping, leaping, igniting towns and villages into living fires of God's love. Montfort's ministry scorched off the rust of sin and was like a refiner's fire, burning all impurities, transforming his hearers into the pure gold. Montfort is a raging fire. It not only signifies his boundless zeal; it primarily points to the fire who is God, a “consuming fire,” and more specifically to the Holy Spirit, the infinite flame uniting the Father and the Son.

He ardently desired that the fire of God's special love for the poor, the sick, the uneducated, would burn in the hearts of more and more followers of Jesus. He therefore founded, right in the poorhouse, the community of the Daughters of Wisdom. Marie Louise Trichet, a young girl from a middle class Poitiers family became the first member of the new religious order (1702). The poor house would be her novitiate. And he yearned for a missionary congregation of priests and brothers, who like him, would boldly light up the world with God's firm tenderness by their Spirit-filled preaching. When news of all this spread, many regarded the young priest – ordained only two years before - absolutely mad, a fire gone out of control, but Montfort was in fact burning away the rust of sin, preparing the soil for new growth of life in Christ.

Montfort had a special devotion to Mary which is the complete belonging to Jesus Christ through Mary. “The greatest means of all and the most wonderful of all secrets for obtaining and preserving divine Wisdom is a loving and genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin. No one but Mary ever found favour with God for herself for the whole human race” (LEW 203). It is our devotion “that which conforms us most completely to Jesus Christ, says Montfort. The perfect devotion to Mary is a Holy slavery. It has its root in Jesus Christ who took the form of a slave when Word became flesh. Jesus completely surrendered in the womb of Mary. By becoming a slave, he

becomes more humble, more obedient. For Montfort, slavery is total belonging to another, because a servant is paid, and, he can go or stay as he wants after the work. But slave always belongs to his master. Slavery is complete belonging to Jesus Christ, Jesus is slave because he completely gave himself to his Father for our salvation. Therefore, Montfort submits himself totally, saying "I am all yours O my people, and all I have is yours through the hand of my mother Holy Virgin Mary. For Montfort devotion to Mary is necessary, not optional. A spiritual life that never realizes Mary is not at its potential. To be a good Catholic, one has to participate in the church's celebration of Our Lady because the church has a devotion to Mary, and she is essential to the Catholic church. Mary is not at all optional for the faith of

the church. Mary is part of the life of the church. The body of Christ has devotion to Mary and we are members of that body. It is not Mary who gives us Jesus, but it is Jesus who gives us Mary. Mary is the key to fully living the Spirit. Devotion to Mary is at the service of participation in the walking in obedience to Cross and is to be glorified. Jesus gives himself completely in to the care of Mary which is perfect and his goodness is completely communicated through Mary. Mary is essential, Christ is the center and with him in the center is Mary. Montfort is not interested in good ways or possible ways, but in the best way. God is to be served in the best way; and we have to follow the best way, and there is no better way than that way chosen by God himself.

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MONTFORT IS A INSPIRATION

Michael Menezes smm

In the world we see many people who have achieved great things or have made a name for themselves. If we ask them the secret of their achievement we get to know that they were inspired by some role models they had.

On 2 October 1869 the father of our Nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born. He speaks about inspiration of his life. The Indian classics, especially the stories of Shravana and king Harishchandra, had a great impact on Gandhi in his childhood. Gandhi was deeply influenced by his mother Putlibai, an extremely pious lady who "would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers, which later on led him to see the Harijannas as the people of God, to fight for freedom of the country in a non-violence way.

Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu was one of the most effective activists against South African apartheid. He was born of Xhosa and Tswana parents at Klerksdorp in South Africa in 1931. From his family he learned tolerance and sympathy. "I never learnt to hate", he said.

"One day I was standing in the street with my mother when a white man in a priest's clothing walked past. As he passed us he took off his hat to my mother. I couldn't believe my eyes - a white man who greeted a black working class woman! This gesture inspired me a lot and taught me life's goal."

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort who was inspired by his own mother later on by Blessed Virgin Mary became a holy and loving

priest of God. All his treatises on Mary tell us how deeply he was inspired by this Heavenly Mother. Mary is called the Queen of Heaven and of Earth. We Catholics deeply respect her Queenship and we bow before the King of the universe, The Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus.

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort all through his life experienced difficulties, afflictions, misunderstandings, suffering, rejections, yet he was firm in his mission and was clear in his goal. According to Ps. 119:71 "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees". He accepted everything in order to learn the will of God in his life. He never failed to trust in God's providence and mercy. Ps. 120:1 Teresa wrote in her diary that her first year was fraught with difficulties. She had no income and had to resort to begging for food and supplies. Teresa experienced doubt, loneliness and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life during these early months. She wrote in her diary:

"Our Lord wants me to be a free nun covered with the poverty of the cross. Today, I learned a good lesson. The poverty of the poor must be so hard for them. While looking for a home I walked and walked till my arms and legs ached. I thought how much they must ache in body and soul, looking for a home, food and health. Then, the comfort of Loreto [her former congregation] came to tempt me. 'You have only to say the word and all that will be yours again,' the Tempter kept on saying ... Of free choice, my God, and out of love for you, I desire

to remain, and do whatever be your Holy will in my regard. I did not let a single tear come."

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort in his life too had a call within the call to serve the poor, destitute, leprosy patients, and the marginalized. To experience this type of call Mary our Mother inspired him. He in his writing 'True Devotion of Mary' 55 'he says, "[The] Blessed Mother... is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus."

He always approached Jesus through Mary and inspired the people of the world to go to Jesus through Mary, who would help in every situation, gives us spiritual protection, and shows the way to experience Jesus, to take up the mission and the missionary journey, who also provides for daily needs.

His treatise on Mary specially, 'True Devotion to Mary', 'Secret of Mary' and 'Secret of Rosary' are so inspirational, that after having read them many people have experienced turning points in their lives.

St. Pope John Paul II

St. Pope John Paul II was well-known during his papacy for having a deep and abiding love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. His devotion to Mary was evident in all that he did: his words, his prayer life, his motto and even his coat of arms, were all dedicated to the Blessed Mother.

But how did he develop this life-long devotion to Mary? In his book, St. Pope John Paul II credits his home parish and the nearby Carmelites for their early influence. However, as he matured in his faith, he singles out one overwhelming influence which changed his life:

"At one point I began to question my devotion to Mary, believing that, if it became too great, it might end up compromising the supremacy of the worship owed to Christ. At that time, I was greatly helped by a book by Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort..."

There I found the answers to my questions, Yes, Mary does bring us closer to Christ; she does lead us to him, provided that we live her mystery in Christ... The author was an outstanding theologian. His Mariological thought is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and in the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God".

St. Pope John Paul II thought so highly about the writing of, that he spoke about the saint on many occasions. In addition, on December 8, 2003, he wrote a special letter on the occasion of the 160 Anniversary of De Montfort's publication. In this letter he wrote: "I myself, in the years of my youth, found reading this book a great help."

The book was such a great influence that when he was elected Pope in 1978, he chose his motto from words written by .

"As is well known, (in) my episcopal coat of arms ... the motto Totus Tuus is inspired by

There I found the answers to my questions, Yes, Mary does bring us closer to Christ; she does lead us to him, provided that we live her mystery in Christ... The author was an outstanding theologian. His Mariological thought is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and in the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God".

the teaching of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. These two words express total belonging to Jesus through Mary: "Tuus Totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt." ("I am all Yours, and all that I have is Yours.") . . . "This Saint's teaching has had a profound influence on the Marian devotion of many of the faithful and on my own life."

"I myself, in the years of my youth, found reading this book a great help."

John Pridmore had a conversion experience aged 27 and is now a full-time Catholic evangelist. He wrote, "The late Holy Father...stated that through reading this consecration his life was transformed. He said 'This Marian devotion has since remained an integral part of my interior life and of my spiritual theology.'" He asked me to go for retreat and I went. There something more beautiful happened. I made my confession at the age 27, I received Jesus. An amazing thing happened: is that a preacher gave me two small booklets written by St. Louis De Montfort. 'Total Consecration to Mary' and 'Secret of Rosary'. This changed my total life style and I was inspired by St. Louis De Montfort's Secret of Rosary. For the past 17 years I have worked full-time to bring hope to others and show them that if God can love someone like me through Mary our Mother, He can love anyone.

His Eminence Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect, Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples', Vatican.

Permit me to start with a personal testimony. All that I am about to say to you is not an academic exposition of Fr. Montfort's

teachings, but a witness to a spirituality which has strongly influenced and supported me all through the almost fifty years of my priestly life. As a ordained priest, only 22 years old, I was searching for some means to keep up the priestly ideals and to fan the spiritual fervour that had been inculcated in me during my seminary formation. I providentially came across the book 'True Devotion to Mary' in a bookstore in Bombay. It brought back so many pleasant memories of the years when I was a Junior member of the Legion of Mary, the lay association founded by Frank Duff with the Montfortian spirituality. While meditating on this treatise, it dawned on me that de Montfort's thoughts, although meant for Christians in general, could be applied in a special way to priests.

"This Saint's teaching has had a profound influence on the Marian devotion of many of the faithful and on my own life."

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort reveals a beautiful secret, a shortcut to holiness. And the secret is MARY, the masterpiece of God's creation. De Montfort shows how one can best know, love and serve Our Lord, with Mary as our Mother, Model and Guide. True Devotion to Mary is an invaluable treasure, indeed.

Lastly in my own experience an unworthy servant, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort inspired me in my formation and priestly life. When I was a little boy every Sunday at about 3 O'clock my mother used to take me to the Church premises about 3 km distance from my home. There almost 20 women used to get together around the statue of Blessed Mother, pray the rosary

and report some of the events that took place in that week, lastly pray the litany and say 'St. Louis-Marie de Montfort pray for us'. This name kept on coming back to my mind. When the time came for me to join the seminary in 1985, my parish priest told me that he would send me to the religious congregation called Montfort Fathers. I said I had heard that name in the prayer of Legion of Mary every Sunday when my mother brought me to the church. Parish priest told me then that St. Louis-Marie de Montfort was very famous saint especially for Marian devotion. Without knowing and reading about St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, I was inspired. Now since 27 years of my religious life and 19 years of priestly life, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's writings have great influence in my life and my ministry. Especially when the people make untruthful, unwanted accusations, branding the

person with what he/ she is not, when the suffering and afflictions come we have to say in the words of St. Peter "Lord whom shall we go for you have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). It is the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary that makes the people to trust in the Providence of God and to fulfill His will in us. According to Jer 29:11 "For surely I know the plan I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope". St. Louis-Marie de Montfort accepted everything in his life as the plan of God for him and lived a life worthy of his call. May this great saint continue to inspire everyone to experience the call of God, to live that call with a specific purpose and mission in the world through the intercession of the Most Blessed Mother Mary, the Queen mother of our Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus.

JOKES

The new minister had asked Arthur to lead in prayer. It was Arthur's first experience of that kind of thing. Twenty minutes passed and he was still praying.

The congregation became restless. Finally, from one of the deacons said a strong "Amen." Arthur looked up and exclaimed, "Thanks." That's the word I've been trying to think of ever since I started."

A newly-wed young lady went to a parish priest to seek his blessings. The priest laying his hand on her head concluded his benediction as follows: "May God grant you a son at His earliest convenience!"

A minister asked a man, "Why don't you go to church?" quick as a flash he answered, "The dying thief didn't join a church and he went to heaven."

"Have you been baptized?" the questioner continued.

"The dying thief never was."

"Do you give to missions?"

"No, the dying thief never did."

"Well," said the minister, "the only difference between you and that thief is that he was a dying thief and you are a living thief."

TERCENTENARY OF MONTFORT'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Selva Kumar smm

"If you don't take risks for God, you won't give anything worthwhile" (Letter, no. 27). I am extremely happy and feel privileged to write a short article on the occasion of the Tercentenary of St. Louis Marie de Montfort (1716-2016). In this article I wish to elucidate some points at length to help us to appreciate the Tercentenary celebration.

1. Who is Montfort? St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was born in 1673 in France. Ordained a priest in 1700, he showed himself to be a mystic with great missionary enthusiasm in his life. Exploring the social and geographical boundaries, he travelled around the West of France, striking the crowds both by his fervour and his original ways of proclaiming the Gospel, in a world fixated on enjoyment and luxury. He lived like a poor man, denouncing false values by his very existence. The essence of Montfort's spirituality, which the Fathers inherited from our founder, is 1. GOD ALONE 2. Jesus the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom 3. The Care for the Poor 4. The Cross 5. Renewal of the Baptismal Promises 6. Mary - consecration to Jesus through Mary. Montfort died in 1716 leaving a rich spiritual legacy that fascinated St. John Paul II. The three Montfortian congregations and their lay associates seek to live by his charism in our world.

2. Who is to be celebrated? It's none other than St. Montfort, the founder of three congregations. This Tercentenary celebration is an occasion to recall who he was in his life, who he was for the church at his time and who he is now? A lot

depends upon how we appropriate the values of our founder. What could possibly please Montfort who is now in heaven? It could be by doing the following:

1. To discover and welcome God's immense love for each of us and for the world. This love was manifested in Christ who is the Eternal and Incarnate wisdom. And it was in Mary that Jesus Incarnated.

2. To proclaim the joy of the good news by word and deed by one's personal life and through good relationship with others.

3. To bring the Father's compassion and mercy to the poor by welcoming them and being one with them, by our concrete commitment to defend and help them.

3. With whom should we celebrate: This Tercentenary celebration should remind us to bring Montfort's values to the people we serve. Our aim should be to reach as many people as possible. However we believe that more intense collaboration and participation should be made with the following groups where the members of the three Montfortian congregations are present, Montfort Fathers, Daughters of Wisdom, Brother's of St. Gabriel and along with the Montfortian Lay Associates. On account of this Tercentenary celebration, there was a formal inauguration on May 24th 2015, the day of Pentecost at St Laurent-Sur- Serves. The Daughters of Wisdom were responsible for this event. St Brothers of Gabriel organised a Symposium to explore the **Legacy of Montfort**

Today in various places of the globe, and we are proud of them. From the 19-21 August 2016, there will be a symposium on St. Montfort held at Hyderabad, Telangana State. This is a wonderful opportunity for the entire Montfortian family comprising of Montfort Fathers, Daughters of Wisdom and the Brothers of St. Gabriel to be together and to express our gratitude to God for giving us such a great saint for our congregation and for the universal church. Various resource persons from different places will deliberate on different aspect of Montfortian life and his Spirituality. And the closing ceremony of the Tercentenary will be organised by the Montfort Fathers on Sep 11, 2016 at the Calvary of Pontchateau in France. This Tercentenary celebration invites each entity and the congregation to rediscover the spirituality of Montfort because he is the spiritual master who walked before us toward the living God. Secondly, we are called to share the missionary zeal by feeding on the Word of God, and exploring new ways of communicating the Gospel to the world; it is the prime duty of our apostolate.

4. Never forget Montfort: The following incidents enlighten us on how we have to remember Montfort in our apostolate. In Montfort's last letter to Marie-Louise Trichet in April 2016, ten days or so before his death, he wrote: "My dear daughters, I think of you always, especially during holy Mass. I will never forget you." (L, no.34)." Through the activities and celebrations of the Tercentenary, we too must to say to Montfort that we will not forget him ever. The day before his death on April 28th Montfort said to Fr Rene Mulot (1722- 1749) to head the community and to start the mission. Fr Rene Mulot said, "I can't preach like you, I can't

write like you," but Montfort said "Do not worry how to preach and how to start a mission, "I will be with you." In fact, he was with him in his apostolate. Likewise we too are invited to remember him in our prayers, our mission and in our life. May this Tercentenary be not only a memorial of the past, but also a recognition of his spirituality, an ecclesiastic blessing to offer to the people of God.

5. His contribution: Montfort's greatest contribution to the church and to the world is "Montfort's Marian Teaching", Pope Leo XIII was concerned about secular attempts to destroy the faith in Christ. He dedicated the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But in his analysis based on Montfort writings any re-evangelization was not possible without the Blessed Virgin Mary, and therefore in ten encyclicals on the Rosary he promulgated Marian devotion. On the occasion of the golden Jubilee of Montfort's canonization St John Paul II wrote a long letter to the Superior Generals of three Montfortian congregations and in it he said, "With the Company of Mary, Brothers of St Gabriel and Daughters of wisdom, I am extremely happy to offer thanks to the Lord for the growing influence of this missionary saint whose apostolate was nourished by a life of intense prayer, by an unshakable faith in the Triune God and by a deep devotion to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Redeemer." Dear friends, may this Tercentenary celebration help us to imitate our founder Montfort more closely and personally, because he had a sense of mission for the universal church. Let this celebration inspire all the Montfortians around the globe to live and toil like him.

LENTEN RETREAT



We are advised by our physician to go for medical checkup every year so that we remain healthy and fit. The health of our soul and spiritual life needs to be renewed and rejuvenated at least once a year and the Church offers us this opportunity during lent.

We are privileged to have a Lenten retreat every year as being the members of 'Montfort Lay Associates'. This year too under the guidance of Fr. Peter Mascarnehas we attended the retreat at Maria Bhavan in the month of March. We had spiritual conference by Fr. Peter Mascarnehas who spoke on Montfort and the Cross, which made us reflect on the passion of Christ, death and resurrection. He also helped us to reflect on love of Christ and our response to the poor and needy. The slides on the theme of

service to the helpless and the needy were very appealing and inspiring. He stressed the need to bear our Crosses for the sake of Christ.

We had a very interesting 'Way of the Cross' organized by the Brothers of Maria Bhavan around the campus. This was followed by the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Jerome Gonsalves. He delivered a very inspiring message on love and shared his insights on his mission experience. I am sure all appreciated it. We concluded with a fellowship meal. I am sure all were pleased with the program and went home as changed persons to witness the gospel values and to bear good fruits for his kingdom. We remain ever grateful to Maria Bhavan community.





God Alone

*We
Montfortians
in India are happy
to invite you
to participate
in our mission
and*

**TO BE PART OF US TO SERVE THE LORD AND OUR
BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE WORLD IN THE SPIRIT
OF OUR FOUNDER ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT**

**DO YOU DESIRE TO ANSWER THE CALL OF THE LORD
BY BEING A MONTFORT RELIGIOUS PRIEST?**

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MONTFORT MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

