

**The Spirituality of Marian Consecration
According to the Teachings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort
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This conference is on the Spirituality of True Devotion to Mary which St. Louis Marie de Montfort says “is the easiest, fastest, safest path and most perfect way to union with Jesus in which Christian perfection consists.”¹ He says that “I do not believe that anyone can acquire intimate union with our Lord and perfect fidelity to the Holy Spirit without a very close union with the most Blessed Virgin and an absolute dependence on her support.”² Pope St. John Paul II did not consider Marian consecration to be a just another devotion that might be helpful to pious individuals. Instead, he said that “this ‘perfect devotion’ is indispensable to anyone who wants to give himself without reserve to Christ and to the work of redemption.”³

Some of you are renewing your consecration, some making it for the first time. Either way, it is a good idea. One of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta’s sisters said, “[Mother Teresa] encouraged us to make the Total Consecration to Our Lady with 30-days preparation according to St. Louis de Montfort. We do that very faithfully and renew our total consecration to Our Lady every year ... Mother taught us that when we go to Our Lady with childlike confidence, everything becomes easy. Mother always led us to Our Lady and continually gave Our Lady as an example for everything.”⁴

The Spirituality of the Consecration involves giving ourselves totally in the service of Jesus through Mary. Last year, I gave a conference on the “Wonderful Effects of this Devotion.” In it I covered some aspects of the spirituality of Marian consecration since in some sense the effects of this devotion become the spiritual life of the devotee. I talked about the following effects:

- **Knowledge of our unworthiness**
- **Sharing Mary’s Faith**
- **The Gift of Pure Love**
- **Great Confidence in God and Mary**
- **Communication of the Spirit of Mary**
- **Transformation into the Likeness of Jesus**
- **Giving more glory to Jesus in a month than in many years of a more demanding devotion.**⁵

In another conference entitled “The Perfect Consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary,” I explained what De Montfort means when he says: “We must give her (1) our body, with all

¹ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #152, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 74.

² St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #43, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 17.

³ Andre Frossard, *Be not Afraid*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 126.

⁴ Testimony of an M.C. sister. Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 73). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁵ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #213-225, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 109-116.

its senses and its members; (2) our soul, with all its powers; (3) our exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future.”⁶ Once again, this addresses the spirituality of Marian consecration.

If you want a copy of these conferences, they are available online. This year, in an effort to give you all new material, I am going to look at the spirituality of Marian devotion with regard to its necessity and timeliness and secondly, with regard to the characteristic qualities of True Devotion.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that Mary in heaven “by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home.”⁷ The Mother of God has been given a special role in the Church to protect and guide those of us on their pilgrimage to the Promised Land. Historically, she has always done that, but especially in times of great need.

In 1487, when Juan Diego was just 13 years old, the 89-year-old Aztec ruler, dedicated the new temple to the two chief gods of the Aztec pantheon (the god of hell and darkness) in the center of what is now Mexico City. The temple pyramid was 100 feet high with 114 steps to reach the top. During one four day period, more than 80,000 men were sacrificed to the gods of hell and darkness.⁸ This was the culture into which Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared with her miraculous image on the Tilma. Seeing the image, the Bishop honored Our Lady’s request to build a church and ten million natives were converted and baptized to the one, true faith within the next 10 years. Human sacrifice ended in Mexico forever. Our Lady of Guadalupe, which means Crusher of the serpent's head, brought the light of the true faith, crushed the false gods of Mexico, and established an era of peace.⁹

Fr. Michael Gaitley, in his book *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told*, explains how St. Maximilian Kolbe was an instrument of Our Lady in preparing Poland for the suffering that was about to come during World War II.¹⁰ In reflecting on his priesthood, Pope St. John Paul II said World War II had a profound influence on his discernment to become a priest. “More specifically, he highlighted two main factors that deeply influenced him: man’s evil and man’s goodness . . . the future Pope, Karol Wojtyla, had firsthand knowledge of Nazi brutality. Not only did he himself experience hunger, hostility, and humiliation at their hands, but his own friends, neighbors, and coworkers were also daily tormented, arrested, and even killed. But while the evil certainly hit close to home, so did the goodness. During the hellish years of the occupation, amid terrible suffering, the young

⁶ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #121, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 59.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, Chapter 8: Our Lady

⁸ For more information, see *Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Conquest of Darkness* by Dr. Warren Carroll

⁹ Dan Lynch, *The Amazing Truth of Our Lady of Guadalupe*,

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-amazing-truth-of-our-lady-of-guadalupe.html>

¹⁰ Claude R. Foster, *Mary’s Knight: The Mission and Martyrdom of Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe* (Libertyville, Ill.: Marytown Press, 2002), p. 567-568. Gaitley, Michael E. (2015-02-22). *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* (Kindle Locations 2334-2340). Marian Press. Kindle Edition.

Wojtyla witnessed many acts of kindness, generosity, and heroism among his friends and neighbors. For example, they courageously fought off despair with their lively faith, shared what little food they had with those who were worse off, and often risked their lives for God, neighbor, and country.”¹¹

Fr. Gaitley asks “Where did the Polish people find this heroic strength? I mean, if a similar tragedy were to happen today, would there be such widespread goodness in American cities? . . . When I read the news and learn of so many daily acts of cruelty and selfishness, I have my doubts. So what made the Poles so extraordinarily great in the midst of their suffering?” Our Lady, used St. Maximilian Kolbe to accomplish her mission of helping her children. And this makes sense. Imagine you’re a mother with billions of children, and you clearly see that 35 million of them are citizens of a country (Poland) that will go through intense suffering. You can’t stop it — although you surely tried at Fatima. So, what do you do? You take one of your children (Kolbe) and use him and his faithful Knights to publish a magazine (Knight of the Immaculate). The aim of that magazine was to draw everyone to Mary’s Heart, especially through the consecration. In fact, with its circulation of a million copies a month, the magazine became the largest, most intense promotion of Marian consecration in the history of the Church. Then, when the terrible fire of war finally comes, because your children are in your arms and near your Heart, you give them strength to be heroic in suffering and valiant in death.

But why was the consecration so essential in all this? I mean, if Mary wanted to prepare the Poles for the war and help them in their suffering, why not emphasize the Rosary or some other Marian devotion? It’s because in this case, unlike Fatima, Mary was not trying to prevent suffering but rather to prepare for it — and the consecration is particularly effective in helping those entrusted to her care in carrying their Cross.¹²

Fr. Michael Gaitley wrote a book entitled *33 days to Morning Glory*, a well-written, inspirational and informative book about how to make the Marian consecration according to the mindset of four saints: John Paul II, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, St. Maximilian Kolbe and, of course, St. Louis Marie de Montfort. In just three years, over two million copies have been distributed in the United States and Canada alone.¹³ Here at Our Lady of Peace over 7,000 people have signed up to make or renew their consecration in the past two years. Fervent Catholics all over the world are being inspired to make this consecration. Why?

We are living in a world where the sins of mankind have reached epidemic proportions. We now have gay marriage legal in all 50 states, millions of abortions, euthanasia, great masses of people addicted to internet porn, drugs and alcohol and there are more violent crimes

¹¹ Gaitley, Michael E. (2015-02-22). *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* (Kindle Locations 2348-2362). Marian Press. Kindle Edition.

¹² Cf. Gaitley, Michael E. (2015-02-22). *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* (Kindle Locations 2362-2416). Marian Press. Kindle Edition.

¹³ Gaitley, Michael E. (2015-02-22). *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* (Kindle Locations 2741-2744). Marian Press. Kindle Edition.

than ever before. These are sins against God and man that cry out for the justice of God to intervene.

The apparitions of Our Lady of Akita (Japan) currently have ecclesiastical approval. They have been approved by the local bishop and have not been overturned by a higher ecclesiastical authority. One of the apparitions occurred on October 13, 1973, the anniversary of the final visions and miracle of Fatima. The message of this apparition is very dire. The Mother of God said that “if men do not repent and better themselves, the Father will inflict a terrible punishment on all humanity. It will be a punishment greater than the deluge, such as one will never have seen before. Fire will fall from the sky and will wipe out a great part of humanity, the good as well as the bad, sparing neither priests nor faithful. The survivors will find themselves so desolate that they will envy the dead.”¹⁴

Now I am not saying there is going to be a nuclear holocaust soon, but like Cardinal Ratzinger said in the interpretation of the Third Secret of Fatima, it certainly seems possible because of our own technological advances.¹⁵ Even on a natural level, when I think about it, countries with nuclear weapons hate us and want to destroy us. In God’s time God’s justice is certain to happen because every sin incurs a debt of punishment and the sins that are being committed worldwide today are staggering.

Maybe the recent reemphasis of Marian consecration is part of God’s providence. Like the Polish people during World War II, perhaps Our Lady is preparing her knights to receive the graces they need to remain faithful during a period of great suffering.

The other way to see the special necessity of Marian consecration is from the angle of remnant theology. It is estimated that in the United States just over 80% of Catholics attended Mass each Sunday in the 1950s. Today it is estimated that about 25% of Catholics go each Sunday. It is even worse in Europe where only 10% of Catholics assist at Mass each week. Even in the once very Catholic Philippines, the faith is eroding. A survey conducted in February, 2013 shows that weekly church attendance has significantly gone down from a high of 64 percent in July 1991 to a low of 37 percent in February 2013. According to the Red-C poll taken in Ireland in 2005 69% of the people considered themselves ‘a religious person’ whereas in 2012 the figure dropped to 47%.¹⁶ Those are sharp declines in what were once very devout Catholic countries.

What we are experiencing does have a Biblical precedence. In the Old Testament as well as the New, there are times when only a remnant of the people remain faithful. The vast majority of followers fall away and only a small portion remain to begin again.

¹⁴ A Terrible Warning: The Message of Our Lady of Akita, <https://www.olrl.org/prophecy/akita.shtml>

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html.

¹⁶ Patrick Counihan, *Ireland losing its faith at an alarming rate suggests new poll*, <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/ireland-losing-its-faith-at-an-alarming-rate-suggests-new-poll-165396106-237520491.html>

A classic example in the Old Testament has to do with the Twelve Tribes in Israel. Ten of them were lost in the Assyrian Conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC. The Prophets had warned the Northern Kingdom of its wickedness but a refusal to repent brought the destruction promised. Those who did not die in the war were deported and disappeared by assimilating into the peoples around them. They are known as the Ten Lost tribes of Israel. Only a remnant, the Tribes of Judah and Levi survived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Judah too, then grew wicked and prophets warned of destruction. The Babylonians then destroyed Judah, and Jerusalem with it, in 587 BC. They deported the survivors to Babylon. Eighty years later the Persians conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Jewish people to return to the Promised Land. But only a remnant went back, most preferred to stay in Babylon instead of returning to the Land promised by God.¹⁷

I looked up Dr. Scott Hahn's definition of remnant in his *Catholic Bible Dictionary*. He defines remnant as "a biblical term for 'those who are left' of a people or nation. Normally, this is either a faithful minority who refuses to join the apostasy of a majority, or it is the fortunate few who survive a catastrophe that overtakes the majority. Sometimes the remnant is both faithful and fortunate: theologically, it is often the case that the remnant is "chosen" by God and is the object of his special blessing and protection. The notion of a remnant left behind is a theme that recurs throughout the Bible."¹⁸

Interestingly, when Cardinal Prospero Grech delivered a meditation to the cardinal-electors at the beginning of the 2013 conclave, he emphasized the value of the new evangelization in the face of Europe's loss of faith. "In the West . . . Christianity itself is in crisis . . . there is a rampant secularism and agnosticism which has diverse roots," . . . [he] told the 115 cardinal-electors in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel on March 12, 2013 . . . Yet even in the West, he said, God will "preserve a remnant of Israel that will not kneel before Baal," adding that the remnant is seen especially in the new movements which "contribute strongly to the new evangelization."¹⁹

John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* says "As the third millennium of the redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs."²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI has publicly stated that he is also "convinced there will . . . be a new springtime for Christianity."²¹ How will this new springtime of Christianity come about? John Paul II says only if people strive to become holy can they be "a sign of God in the world."²²

¹⁷ Cf. Msgr. Charles Pope, *What does Remnant Theology have to teach us about the Church Today?*, <https://blog.adw.org/2012/11/what-does-remnant-theology-have-to-teach-us-about-the-church-today/>

¹⁸ Scott Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 762.

¹⁹ Catholic News Agency, *Before Pope's election, conclave warned of Europe's waning faith*, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/before-popes-election-conclave-warned-of-europes-waning-faith/>

²⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, #86.

²¹ National Catholic Register, *Pope Benedict XVI Believes Christianity Will Rekindle in Europe*, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-benedict-xvi-believes-christianity-will-rekindle-in-europe/#ixzz3mmFvfe1T>

²² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, #91.

Now great sanctity follows up great suffering. That is why Pope St. John Paul II says that “Suffering is an invitation to manifest the moral greatness of man, his spiritual maturity.”²³ Dr. Susan Muto, an expert of the life and work of St. John of the Cross says that “St. John's clarion cry is that the proximate way to wisdom is . . . through profound suffering, both physical, emotional and spiritual.”²⁴

In the office of reading for the feast of St. Rose of Lima on August 23, she is quoted as saying “Our Lord and Savior lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty: ‘Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray and be deceived. This is the only true stairway to paradise, and without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven.’

When I heard these words, a strong force came upon me and seemed to place me in the middle of a street, so that I might say in a loud voice to people of every age, sex and status: “Hear, O people; hear, O nations. I am warning you about the commandment of Christ by using words that came from his own lips: We cannot obtain grace unless we suffer afflictions.

We must heap trouble upon trouble to attain a deep participation in the divine nature, the glory of the sons of God and perfect happiness of soul” . . .

[Then she says something very interesting] “If only mortals would learn how great it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful, how noble, how precious. How many riches it hides within itself, how many joys and delights! Without doubt they would devote all their care and concern to winning for themselves pains and afflictions. All men throughout the world would seek trouble, infirmities and torments, instead of good fortune, in order to attain the unfathomable treasure of grace. This is the reward and the final gain of patience. No one would complain about his cross or about troubles that may happen to him, if he would come to know the scales on which they are weighed when they are distributed to men.”²⁵

Think of the great saints who lived out their consecration to Mary in recent years. They were models of heroic virtue. St. Gregory the Great says that “It is characteristic of holy men that their own painful trials do not make them lose their concern for the well being of others”²⁶ and that is precisely what we saw with our recent Marian saints. We are all familiar with the last years of Pope St. John Paul II. His courage in carrying out his activities as pope despite immense physical limitations. He would walk slowly, at times merely shuffling his feet; his speech was slurred and his hand sometimes trembled. We all saw the images of him drooling, taking a towel and wiping his chin. He was old and

²³ John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, #22.

²⁴ Helen Whitney, *Frontline*, “Faith,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/etc/faith.html>

²⁵ Office of Readings, *Feast of St. Rose of Lima*, August 23.

²⁶ Cf. Office of Readings, October 13, 2015, From the Moral Reflections on Job by Saint Gregory the

feeble.²⁷ “Many of us, faced with the same tests, would be tempted to shrink from public view, as if infirmity were an embarrassment or personal disgrace . . . his humble, unpretentious and unembarrassed acceptance of suffering was a dramatic form of witness to us.”²⁸ Often clinging to his crucifix, John Paul II found solidarity with our Lord in his suffering, which he knew was an instrument of grace for himself and others.²⁹ It is significant that John Paul II not only lived out his consecration to Jesus through Mary according to the method of St. Louis Marie de Montfort, but also recommended it to everyone in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*.³⁰

With the publication of her letters to her spiritual director we know that Blessed Teresa of Calcutta “soon after she left the convent and began her work among the destitute and dying on the street . . . experienced a spiritual darkness that would remain with her until her death.”³¹ No consolation from God for the last 40 or 50 some years of her life. And yet she remained faithful to the challenging work of caring for the sick and the dying. She said that “I must be willing to give whatever it takes to do good to others. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me.”³² Knowing her interior trials and her perennial joyful disposition one can now understand that she was probably speaking from experience when she says “Cheerfulness is a sign of a generous and mortified person who forgetting all things, even herself, tries to please her God in all she does for souls. Cheerfulness is often a cloak which hides a life of sacrifice and a continual union with God.”³³

Finally, we have the heroic example of St. Maximilian Kolbe. On July 31, 1941, in reprisal for one prisoner's escape, ten men were chosen to die. Father Kolbe offered himself in place of a young husband and father.³⁴

Bruno Borgowiec, a Polish prisoner who was charged with serving the prisoner later gave a report of what he saw:

The ten condemned to death went through terrible days . . . The man in-charge of emptying the buckets of urine found them always empty. Thirst drove the prisoners to drink the contents . . . At every inspection, when almost all the others were now lying on the floor, Father Kolbe was seen kneeling or standing in the center as he looked cheerfully in the face of the [guards].

²⁷ Doug McManaman, Pope John Paul II, http://fmmh.ycdsb.ca/teachers/fmmh_mcmanaman/pages/jp2.html

²⁸ Cf. Jack Wintz, *St. Anthony Messenger*, “Pope John Paul II and Suffering,” <http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jul2002/Feature3.asp>

²⁹ Robert G. Schroeder, *John Paul II and the Meaning of Suffering: Lessons from a Spiritual Master*, (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2008), 15.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, #48.

³¹ Carol Zaleski, *First Things* (May 2003), “The Dark Night of Mother Teresa,” <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2003/05/the-dark-night-of-mother-teresa>

³² Kirov, Blago (2014-03-23). *Mother Teresa: Quotes & Facts* (p. 24). Blago Kirov. Kindle Edition.

³³ Kirov, Blago (2014-03-23). *Mother Teresa: Quotes & Facts* (p. 18). Blago Kirov. Kindle Edition.

³⁴ Catholic Online, *Maximilian Kolbe*, http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=370

Father Kolbe never asked for anything and did not complain, rather he encouraged the others . . . [Even] one of the SS guards remarked: this priest is really a great man. We have never seen anyone like him.³⁵

After two weeks of dehydration and starvation, only Kolbe remained alive. The guards wanted the bunker emptied, so they gave Kolbe a lethal injection of carbolic acid. While praying, Kolbe raised his left arm and calmly waited for the deadly injection.³⁶

All the recent Marian saints not only suffered, but they did so with a supernatural joy. Remember joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit so the holier one becomes, the more joyful one should be. St. Maximilian Kolbe said that “The way of the Immaculate, even though it be strewn at times with crosses and suffering, is not, nevertheless, all that burdensome and obscure. We always feel this maternal affection.”³⁷ How prophetically he said “At times, we will taste the joyful serenity of the little child who, abandoning itself without reserve in the hands of its own mother, worries about nothing, fears nothing, confident in the wisdom, goodness, and power of its good mother. At times, the storm will rage around us, thunderbolts will fall, but we, consecrated without limits to the Immaculate, will be sure that nothing will happen as long as our good little mother doesn’t permit it, and we will rest peacefully, working and suffering for the salvation of souls.”³⁸

In my opinion, we do have a small minority of very faithful Catholics, a remnant of devout Catholics devoted to the Eucharist and Our Lady and they are going through a great trial that is only going to escalate. A news article quoted former Philippine ambassador to the Vatican, Howard Dee, as saying that Cardinal Ratzinger had personally confirmed to him that the messages of Akita and Fatima are “essentially the same.”³⁹ Even from a theological point of view, a period of intense suffering seems inevitable. Every sin incurs a debt of punishment and the crimes of humanity are grave and manifold.

John Bosco had a dream about a time when there will be great attacks and persecutions against the Church. The imagery is a war at sea. The enemies of the ship realized they couldn’t sink it, so they shot the one steering it. A red blood stain appeared on his white cassock, but he is miraculously healed and gets back up and continues steering the ship. The Pope guides the ship safely though Two Columns in the sea, the Eucharist is perched on top of one and Our Lady Help of Christians on the other. His interpretation is that only those in the Church will survive who have “Devotion to Mary Most Holy and Frequent communion, making use of every means and doing our best to practice them.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Biography, *Maximilian Kolbe*, <http://www.biographyonline.net/spiritual/maximilian-kolbe.html>

³⁶ Blessed Maximilian Kolbe-Priest Hero of a Death Camp by Mary Craig,"

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/KOLBE2.HTM>. Retrieved October 13, 2015.

³⁷ Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate*, #69, (Kindle Locations 389-390). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

³⁸ Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate*, #73, (Kindle Locations 394-398). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

³⁹ Akita, Japan, http://www.marianland.com/tearsoflove02_akita.html

⁴⁰ St. John Bosco, *Forty Dreams of St. John Bosco: The Apostle of Youth*, compiled and edited by Fr. J. Bacchiarello, (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.1996), 205-211.

He said his dream was a prophecy that concerns the Church of the next century, which is us. Many Salesian Scholars believe the pope that was shot refers to John Paul II. He was shot on May 13th, 1981, the anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. To this day the doctors say that the Pope should not have recovered from his bullet wound and that his recovery was miraculous. And John Paul II has led the Church through troubled times by emphasizing devotion to the Eucharist and consecration to Mary.⁴¹

I think many of the parishioners that come to Our Lady of Peace parish are part of a remnant of faithful Catholics. Devotion to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ and the Mother of God are two of the most certain signs that one is in union with God, that one is part of that remnant. St. John Bosco says we must make use of every means available and that would entail making the Consecration to Jesus through Mary since it is the highest form of Marian devotion.⁴² De Montfort says “this devotion is a perfect way to reach our Lord and be united with him.”⁴³

As noted above, both Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI are prophesying a “springtime of Christianity” and this can only happen in a climate with many persecutions and trials. John Paul II in his encyclical *On the Meaning of Christian Suffering* says, “It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls.”⁴⁴ According to a recent study published in Italy that I got off EWTN’s website 65% of the total martyrs, Christian killed defending their faith, occurred during the 20th century and there are no signs of that number abating soon.⁴⁵ What Tertullian wrote around the year 197 is still true today: “The blood [of martyrs] is the seed of Christians.”⁴⁶

In a 1980 interview for the German magazine *Stimme des Glaubens* published in October 1981, John Paul II was asked explicitly to speak about the third secret. He said: “if there is a message in which it is said that . . . from one moment to the other, millions of people will perish... there is no longer any point in really wanting to publish this secret message.” Asked what would happen in the Church, he said: “We must be prepared to undergo great trials in the not-too-distant future; trials that will require us to be ready to give up even our lives, and a total gift of self to Christ and for Christ. Through your prayers and mine, it is possible to alleviate this tribulation, but it is no longer possible to avert it, because it is only in this way that the Church can be effectively renewed. How many times, indeed, has the renewal of the Church been effected in blood? This time, again, it will not be otherwise. We

⁴¹ Akita, Japan, http://www.marianland.com/tearsoflove02_akita.html

⁴² Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange says “The third degree [and highest] of the true devotion to Mary, that proper to proficients, consists in consecrating oneself entirely to our Lord through her.” Garrigou-Lagrange O.P., Reverend Reginald (2013-10-11). *The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude of Eternal Life* (Kindle Locations 12633-12634). Catholic Way Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁴³ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #157, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 77.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, #27.

⁴⁵ Zenit News Agency, 20TH CENTURY SAW 65% OF CHRISTIAN MARTYRS, <http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=26402>

⁴⁶ Antonio Miralles, *The blood of martyrs, the seed of Christians*, <http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2004-05/31-13/12MarIn.html>

must be strong, we must prepare ourselves, we must entrust ourselves to Christ and to His holy Mother, and we must be attentive, very attentive, to the prayer of the Rosary.”⁴⁷

St. Louis Marie de Montfort says that “Mary’s power over the evil spirits will especially shine forth in the latter times . . . her humble servants . . . will be rich in God’s graces, which will be abundantly bestowed upon them by Mary.”⁴⁸ Now I am not saying that we are close to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, nobody knows when that will be, but we are certainly in a time of a great apostasy and True Devotion to Mary will always be especially important during times like these, especially important if one wants to stay in a state of grace and become a great saint.

The Soul of True Devotion

Next, I want to talk about the soul of True Devotion, i.e., the thoughts and sentiments of the mind and heart of the devotee. John Paul II wrote that this consecration to Our Lady produces “a life of intense communion and familiarity with the Blessed Virgin, as a ‘new way’ of living for God.”⁴⁹ When he says “intense communion,” it should be taken literally. De Montfort says, “The soul of our Blessed Lady will communicate itself to you, to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will enter into the place of yours, to rejoice in God her salvation, provided only that you are faithful to the practices of this devotion.”⁵⁰

The saints also took this literally. St. Maximilian Kolbe says “[We must] belong to the Immaculate as . . . [her] property . . . The fundamental element of such a transformation consists . . . in uniting our will with hers . . . When we shall have become her. . . [Our] supernatural obedience will be her will; our chastity, her virginity; our poverty, her detachment from earthly goods.”⁵¹ He says that “we have heard of persons who are . . . possessed by the devil, through whom the devil thinks, speaks, [and] acts. We want to be obsessed in this way, and even more, without limits, by her: may she herself think, speak, and act through us.”⁵²

Mother Teresa would pray that Our Lady would “keep her in her heart,” and even “lend her her heart” that she might love her Lord and her neighbor in the way Mary did.⁵³ When Mother Teresa was asked “How can Our Lady lend us her heart?” She said “that this was not a mere pious sentiment, but a concrete, lived reality. Our Lady’s relationship with

⁴⁷ Akita, Japan, http://www.marianland.com/tearsoflove02_akita.html; See also, La Salette Journey, <http://lasalettejourney.blogspot.com/2014/11/the-rosary-is-remedy-for-evil-facing.html>.

⁴⁸ St. Louis Marie De Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #54.

⁴⁹ Angelus Meditation (July 24, 1988). Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 71). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁰ Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #258, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 112.

⁵¹ Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate*, #77-81 (Kindle Locations 430-448). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵² Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate* (Kindle Locations 438-439). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵³ Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 47). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

Christ her Son is not something she keeps for herself. It is for her children, and she is more than able to dispense such gifts abundantly.”⁵⁴

That means that Our Lady will enlighten us. And that is important because the most fundamental grace we need is to understand reality. In this respect, De Montfort tells us that “Mary will share her faith with you.”⁵⁵ I always tell people if we are sincerely asking Our Lady about how to live our lives, we will not be thinking alone. The majority of the time we have no idea that Our Lady is helping us understand what is important, but she is. For instance, John Paul II says in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* that the Christian people have “always very rightly sensed a profound link between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist . . . Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist.”⁵⁶ If someone has been away from the Church for many years and they start praying the rosary every day, Our Lady will first lead them to confession and then the Eucharist. Gradually, mysteriously, but most certainly, they will not only recognize, but have a deeper and deeper devotion to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

St. Maximilian Kolbe says that when you do spiritual reading in union with Our Lady, “you are entering into contact with a living being who loves you . . . She herself will manifest herself through the intermediary of the thoughts you will read and will communicate thoughts, convictions, and sentiments that the author himself was utterly incapable of imagining.”⁵⁷

Fr. John Hardon says “the nearer a person's soul is, to the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary . . . the more sinless, the holier that person becomes . . . growing in understanding and firmly accepting God's revealed truth. In other words, holiness determines clarity; . . . holiness determines certitude in the faith that we already possess. Our faith will grow in the measure of our holiness approximating, at any given point in time, the holiness of Christ's Mother.”⁵⁸

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta says that if “we give her our heart in consecration,” she will lend us her heart and “prepare our soul for unimagined gifts of the Spirit.”⁵⁹ What does she mean by give her our heart in consecration?

First, let me give the most basic characteristic of True Devotion to Mary and it comes from the very meaning of the word devotion. St. Thomas Aquinas defines devotion as “the will to do readily (*prompte*) what concerns the service of God”⁶⁰ and that is exactly what Our Lady

⁵⁴ Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 48). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁵ De Montfort, *True Devotion*, 109.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, #44.

⁵⁷ Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate* (Kindle Locations 59-62). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁸ Fr. John Hardon, Maximilian Kolbe, *Apostle of Mary*, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/kolbe.htm>

⁵⁹ Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 49). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q. 82, a.1, c.: “Manifestum est autem quod voluntas prompte faciendi quod ad Dei servitium pertinet est quidam specialis actus. Unde devotio est specialis actus voluntatis” (Leon 9.187).

wants. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said that she was a “pencil in the hand of God.”⁶¹ This is not easy. Fr. Antonio Royo Marin calls the act of consecration a heroic act⁶² precisely because it is not possible to reach the heights of sanctity without receiving and accepting a heavy cross from God. De Montfort himself says that this devotion is “known and practiced by very few persons”⁶³ because “it is too sublime to be appreciated and undertaken by everyone.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Kolbe says that when a person offers himself entirely to Mary, he is disposed to receive “the greatest possible influx of grace.”⁶⁵

In the next section, I want to talk about some more of the interior aspects of this devotion. More specifically, De Montfort says that the characteristics of True Devotion are that it must be (1) interior, (2) trustful, (3) holy, (4) constant, and (5) disinterested.⁶⁶

De Montfort says that “First, true devotion to our Lady is interior, that is, it comes from within the mind and the heart, and follows from the esteem in which we hold her, the high regard we have for her greatness, and the love we bear her.”⁶⁷

Catholics all over the world love Our Lady so much because she really helps them. For many people --- maybe the majority of people--- she was instrumental in their conversion. John Paul II says she is “example of perfect love for God and for his brothers and sisters.”⁶⁸ St. John Eudes says that all “our imperfections and innumerable offenses are not able to extinguish Mary's love, for it is stronger than death and hell. This love perseveres . . . until our last breath.”⁶⁹ St. Maximilian Kolbe says that “she herself who will manifest herself more and more clearly to the soul. . . . Approaching directly to her heart you will attain a greater knowledge of her and be inflamed by a greater love for her than all human words together could teach you.”⁷⁰ I’ve often quoted St. Augustine as saying that “the most compelling reason to love somebody else is because you know they love you”⁷¹ and this certainly applies in a preeminent way to Our Lady. That is why de Montfort says that our love for her comes from the mind and heart.⁷² We love her because she first loved us.

This leads to our second characteristic of True Devotion which follows upon the first one. It is trustful. De Montfort says that this devotion “is trustful, that is to say, it fills us with

⁶¹ EWTN News, *Mother Teresa's confessor: She was 'a pencil in the hand of God,'*
<http://www.ewtnnews.com/catholic-news/World.php?id=1529>

⁶² Antonio Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1962), 214.

⁶³ St. Louis de Montfort, *The Secret of Mary*, (Charlotte, Tan Books, 1947), 23.

⁶⁴ De Montfort, *True Devotion*, 116.

⁶⁵ Fr. Manteau-Bonamy, *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, (Libertyville: Prow Books, 1977), 108

⁶⁶ De Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #105.

⁶⁷ De Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #106.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, December 4, 1996.

⁶⁹ Eudes, St. John (2014-08-10). *The Admirable Heart of Mary* (Kindle Locations 3957-3960). KIC. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁰ Kolbe, St. Maximilian (2013-05-28). *Let Yourself Be Led by the Immaculate* (Kindle Locations 62-65). Angelus Press. Kindle Edition.

⁷¹ St. Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Chapter 4.

⁷² Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #106.

confidence in the Blessed Virgin, the confidence that a child has for its loving Mother.”⁷³ Mother Teresa says that Our Lady “will give us her spirit of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness”⁷⁴ and these are natural responses to the “infinite longing to love and be loved.”⁷⁵ In other words, we feel loved so we trust and surrender ourselves to her.

Fr. Joseph Langford in his book entitled *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* gives a helpful analogy from nature. He says:

Take someone who has had a happy childhood surrounded by the love of his parents . . . he felt loved . . . Without much thought he found himself spontaneously trusting his parents and their care for him. If they brought him somewhere or did something that he was too young to understand, he went along without question or complaint.⁷⁶

I was reading a totally secular book entitled *How Children Succeed* and it confirmed that studies show that “Babies whose parents responded readily and fully to their cries in the first months of life were, at one year, more independent and more intrepid than babies whose parents had ignored their cries.”⁷⁷ It showed that children raised in environments where they felt loved were more trustful when their loved ones place them in difficult situations later in life.⁷⁸

Something similar happens to us when we have a True Devotion to Mary. She will give us a share in her faith and the Catholic faith teaches us that nothing happens in this life (apart from sin) unless God wills it. If a family member dies, it was God who decided it was time for that person to leave this world. If I am in a traffic jam, God has arranged it thus and He wants me to remain at peace. This insight into reality enables one to abandon oneself to divine providence and that has always been linked to the heights of sanctity.⁷⁹ Jean-Pierre de Caussade in his classic work *Abandonment to Divine Providence* says that “The divine action incites souls to aim at the most eminent sanctity; all that is required on the part of the soul is abandonment to this action.”⁸⁰

This leads to our next characteristic of True Devotion which in turn follows upon the abandonment to divine providence. De Montfort says “true devotion is disinterested. It

⁷³ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, #107, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 50.

⁷⁴ Mother Teresa to the M.C. Sisters, July 31, 1996. Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 51). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁵ Testimony of an M.C. sister. Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (pp. 52-53). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁶ Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 53). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition

⁷⁷ Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012), 33-34.

⁷⁸ Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012), 33-37.

⁷⁹ Saint-Jure, Father Jean Baptiste; Saint Claude La Colombière (2013-02-11). *Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence* (p. 46). Catholic Way Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁰ de Caussade, Jean-Pierre (2010-03-23). *Abandonment to Divine Providence* (p. 25). . Kindle Edition.

inspires us to seek God in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves. The true subject of Mary does not serve her for selfish gain.”⁸¹

Fr. Langford notes that “It has recently been revealed that, like so many other great saints, Mother Teresa experienced a painful and prolonged ‘dark night of the soul.’ In the midst of her pain, she was able to find God through her faith . . . having a total reliance on God without insisting to see or to understand.”⁸² De Montfort says one loves and serves her just as faithfully in weariness and dryness of soul as in sweet and sensible fervor. One loves her as much on Calvary as at Cana.⁸³

Mary wants to give us that same spirit of self-abandonment that she had. Mary never insisted on understanding everything that happened in her life and this gave her tremendous freedom.⁸⁴ How can being a slave of Mary gives us freedom? Pope St. John Paul II explains that:

It is well known that [de Montfort] defines his devotion as a form of “slavery.” . . . I think we are confronted here with the sort of paradox often to be noted in the Gospels; the words ‘holy slavery’ means that we could not more fully take advantage of our freedom, the greatest of God’s gifts to us. Freedom is measured by the love of which we are capable.⁸⁵

So being a slave of Mary actually frees us to do God’s will, i.e., to love. St. Paul says that when we are slaves to sin the outcome is death and by that he means eternal death (Rom 6:20-21). That is why Christ says the truth will set you free since perfect freedom consists in being able to always choose what will lead us to happiness and that is exactly what the consecration to Jesus through Mary does so effectively.

De Montfort says that “True devotion to our Lady is holy, that is, it leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary.”⁸⁶ But more specifically, De Montfort says that Christian holiness consists in bearing one’s cross. He says that Christian holiness consists in this:

1. Resolving to become a saint: “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine;”
2. Self-denial: “Let him renounce himself;”
3. Suffering: “Let him take up his cross;”
4. Acting: “Let him follow me.”⁸⁷

⁸¹ Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #110.

⁸² Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 53). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁸³ Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #110.

⁸⁴ Joseph Langford, MC (2007-10-24). *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady* (p. 54). Our Sunday Visitor. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Be Not Afraid*, Andre’ Frossard; translation from the French by J.R. Fossier, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), p. 126.

⁸⁶ de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #108.

⁸⁷ de Montfort, Louis (2013-01-24). *Friends of the Cross*, #13, (Kindle Locations 112-114). . Kindle Edition.

Let us take the first one: resolving to become a great saint. He says something very similar in another place. In describing True Devotion, he says it is constant. “It strengthens us in our desire to do good and prevents us from giving up. . . [The] person truly devoted to Our Blessed Lady is not changeable,”⁸⁸ i.e., he is always ready to do God’s will. The key to becoming a great saint is determination. Fr. Thomas Dubay in his book *Seeking Spiritual Direction* listed forty-four conditions for making serious progress on the road to sanctity and the number one reason is determination. He says that “most of us assume that world-class excellence in music, scholarship, or sports is due mainly to extraordinary talent, but studies of the question find that while talent does play a part, the chief factor is drive and determination. So it is with sanctity. Saints are not born saints. They do not have a superior human nature. The difference lies in their resolution. They make up their mind to take the Lord at his word and with no dilution of his message.”⁸⁹ That is why when St. Thomas Aquinas’ sister asked him how to become a saint, he answered her in two simple but very profound words, “Will it.”⁹⁰

As we’ve seen, the consecration means accepting suffering and practicing self-denial. In *The Dialogue*, God the Father told Catherine that “if the soul elect to love Me, she should elect to endure pains for Me in whatever mode or circumstance I may send them to her. Patience cannot be proved in any other way than by suffering, and patience is united with love.”⁹¹ St. John of the Cross says that “Piercing pain embraced with love for the crucified plunges one into the thicket of divine wisdom.”⁹²

De Montfort says that “They shall carry on their shoulders the bloody standard of the cross, the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left . . . and the . . . mortification of Jesus Christ in their own behavior. These are the great men who shall come.”⁹³

This is the third conference I’ve given on Marian Consecration and each of them emphasized different aspects. This devotion is not easy to understand. I remember when I first picked up *True Devotion* in an adoration chapel back in 1995, I read it and thought this book was important for me, but it was way over my newly converted head. Even John Paul admitted that he needed to reread *True Devotion* to Mary several times in order to understand it.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, #109, (Bay Shore: Montfort Publications, 1980), 51.

⁸⁹ Thomas Dubay, *Seeking Spiritual Direction*. Part Three: Making Progress: How can I continue to grow?

⁹⁰ Connie Rossini, *Can you become a saint by sheer willpower?*, <http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2013/03/22/can-you-become-a-saint-by-sheer-willpower/>

⁹¹ Catherine of Siena, Saint (2010-06-20). *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena* (Kindle Locations 467-468). . Kindle Edition.

⁹² Fr. Thomas DuBay, *Fire Within*, Chapter 17: Liberating Contemplation.

⁹³ de Montfort, Saint Louis (2012-05-15). *True Devotion to Mary: With Preparation for Total Consecration* (p. 32). Catholic Way Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁴ John Paul II Fondly Recalls Louis de Montfort’s Marian Doctrine in a Message on the 160th Anniversary of “True Devotion.”

I want to end this conference with the most important and most effective way to understand the consecration through Mary and I'll let Saint Maximilian Kolbe explain how. He says that: "True knowledge of the Immaculata can only be acquired in prayer. The purer a soul is, the greater efforts it makes to avoid sin . . . the more and the better will it get to know the Immaculata."⁹⁵

This is in accord with the teaching of Jesus Christ. He says "The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him" (John 15:10). Hence, the best way to understand the consecration is to try to live it out. If we are not willing to do what Our Lady wants, it is better for her to leave us in darkness, better for us not to know the more subtle movements of God's will lest we incur more guilt by openly refusing to follow it. Remember, De Montfort says this practice is not for everybody, but only those who seriously want to pursue sanctity in life.

De Montfort says that "It is Mary alone to whom God has given the . . . power to enter into the most sublime and secret ways of perfection, and the power likewise to make others enter in there also."⁹⁶ Indeed, he wrote a more concise explanation of True Devotion entitled *The Secret of Mary*. All of us, making or renewing this consecration are being taught the secret path to perfection, the path to the highest degree of happiness for all eternity and that is without doubt the greatest and most important secret that we can know in this life, if we but put it into practice.

⁹⁵ Fr. Manteau-Bonamy, *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, (Libertyville: Prow Books, 1977), 124.

⁹⁶ de Montfort, Saint Louis (2012-05-15). *True Devotion to Mary: With Preparation for Total Consecration*, #45, (p. 26). Catholic Way Publishing. Kindle Edition.