

# St. Louis de Montfort's Total Consecration to Jesus Through Mary

## Part II Introduction Days (13-19) Knowledge of Self

### Theme: Knowledge of Self

We should employ all our pious actions in asking for a knowledge of ourselves and contrition of our sins: and we should do this in a spirit of piety. During this period, we shall consider not so much the opposition that exists between the spirit of Jesus and ours, as the miserable and humiliating state to which our sins have reduced us. Moreover, the True Devotion being an easy, short, sure and perfect way to arrive at that union with Our Lord which is Christlike perfection, we shall enter seriously upon this way, strongly convinced of our misery and helplessness. But how do we attain this without a knowledge of ourselves'?

### Additional Reading on the Knowledge of the Self

Man know thyself, said the philosopher Socrates.

Our Lord pointed to the importance of the knowledge of self in the parables of the two disagreeing kings, each of whom needed to know the capability of his army before going to war, (St. Luke 14:31-32), the builder, who needed to sit and consider his finances and other logistics before starting to build, (St. Luke 14:28-30) and the Crafty Steward who knew he was lazy and did something about it (St. Luke 16:1-8).

But what is the self?

The word self is used in two different contexts. First, it is used to identify the totality of an individual, body and soul. Philosophers use the word self in this context. Thus, the pronoun yourself, myself.

Second, it is used to denote the corrupted state of man's soul after the fall.

To understand the self in the first context, it will be helpful to refer to the account of creation. The Bible said that God formed man out of dust, then He breathed unto him and the lifeless body of man, became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). In another place, it said that God made man in His own image and likeness. St. Louis De Montfort elaborating on this said that we are copies of Jesus, a shining likeness of His Intelligence, Memory and Will. And that God infused these powers into the soul of man so that he might become the living image of the Godhead. He continued: man is the compendium of all the various perfection of the angels, animals and other created things. He is the supreme masterpiece, the living image of His beauty and His perfections. Man was created pure without stain, perfectly proportioned without deformity, his body was endowed with immortality, gifted with the light of wisdom, understood perfectly both Creator and creature. In short, man was so godlike that he had no unruly passions to subdue and no enemies to overcome. He enjoyed perfect harmony. (Love of Eternal Wisdom # 36 & 37).

The self in the second context describes the corrupted state of man after the fall. St. Louis De Montfort describes it thus: "But alas, the vessel of the Godhead was shattered into a thousand pieces". This beautiful star fell from the skies, this brilliant sun lost its light. Man sinned and by his sin lost his wisdom, his innocence, his beauty and his immortality. By this, he became the friend of the devils who made him their slave. Even creatures rose up in warfare against man. (Love of Eternal Wisdom # 39 & 40)

God in his justice, banished him, shut the gate of heaven which automatically opened the gate of hell. Man was miserable and hopeless. But in his infinite mercy, decided to send His Son, Jesus, to restore man to his former beauty (John 3:16) and to open the gate of heaven.

Our Lord came through Our Lady and by the merits of His life, suffering and shameful death established the sacraments as the means of our sanctification and salvation. Baptism being the chief means (cleanses us from original sin and opens the gate of heaven). The rest of the sacraments helps us to overcome the concupiscence (tendency to sin) of the flesh, senses and will and to unite us with God. Therefore, we have to utilize the sacraments in order to be

fully restored to the beauty we are made. There is no other means.

During this first week, De Montfort refers to the self in the second context (man's state after the fall). He wants us to thoroughly understand this state and so see the need for salvation. In fact, for him, True Devotion to Mary is all about knowing the self, emptying and dying to it. He said, "if we do not die to the self and if our holiest devotion do not lead us to this necessary and fruitful death, we shall not bear fruit of any worth and our devotion will cease to be profitable" (True Devotion #81). He describes what it means to die to the self: this involves our renouncing what the powers of our soul and the senses of the body incline us to do. We must see as if we did not see, hear as if we did not hear and use the things of this world as if we did not use them. (True Devotion #81). This means we will no longer be impulsive (or react too quickly) rather, we will begin to consider our thoughts and our tendencies and try to align them to the will of God. We will try to purify our intentions. This involves purifying our five senses and using them to the glory of God. St. Thomas Aquinas said that our knowledge starts with our senses. Thus, our souls acquire knowledge through the senses. Thus, to purify our intentions (soul), we will need to purify our senses.

So, the challenge this week will be to narrow down what the self really means for each of us and to empty and die to it. In another place De Montfort said that we need Mary to die to ourselves. As we clearly understand the self, we shall begin to seek out Mary as the means to gradually conquer it, which is what the week ahead presents.

Let us carefully ponder these words and ask Our Lady whose self was perfectly subject to the Spirit to help us.