



Catechesis 3

The meaning of the Cross and the love of the Divine
Wisdom

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Introduction

In this third month of the novena, in preparation to renew our fourth vow of *Marian slavery*, which – with the grace of God – we will do in France on the coming 30th of July, we will talk about and deepen **the fundamental points of the spiritual doctrine of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort about the meaning of the Cross and the love of the Divine Wisdom.**

I want to specify something that, although it is evident to many, is necessary to say. When we talk about Divine Wisdom, we mean, *Eternal Wisdom*, because it is synonymous with it – as well as *Incarinate Wisdom* with *Incarinate Word*.

1. **The meaning of the Cross: The Cross as a necessary means for our sanctification and union with Christ.**

Now we will begin by analyzing the meaning of the Cross in the doctrine of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort. In his book *Love of the Eternal Wisdom* we read: “*Since the Incarnate Wisdom had to enter heaven by the Cross, you also must enter by the same way.*”¹

He also says that through the Cross ‘*this Great God wished to redeem the world, to cast out and chain up the devils, to seal the gates of hell and open heaven to men, and give infinite glory to His Eternal Father*’.²”

Therefore, as Christ chose to pass through the Cross to open for us the gates of heaven, every true disciple of His who wants to enter paradise, must pass through the Cross. He must go through the same path travelled by the teacher, that is, the **master path of the Cross**³.

In the *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary*⁴, in the numbers 152 to 154, the saint reminds us how, for us, **the cross is necessary in this life to be able to reach union with Christ**, and that there is no other way.

Jesus Himself reminds us in the gospel: “*If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross every day and follow Me*” (Lc 9, 23; cfr. Mt 16, 24).

Therefore, also for Saint Louis Marie, the cross is a **necessary means** for our sanctification. We can say that it is a “*sine qua non*” condition. That is, a condition without which no one can enter paradise.

¹ The Love of the Eternal Wisdom, nr 180.

² The Love of the Eternal Wisdom, nr 167.

³ As are the persecutions, misunderstandings, temptations, spiritual aridity, dark nights of the soul...

⁴ Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary, nr 152-154.



Saint Louis Marie explains the full meaning of the cross with his entire strength in a circular letter addressed *to the Association of the Friends of the Cross*, more commonly known as the ***Letter to the friends of the Cross***.

The theme of the cross is recurring in the writings of Saint Louis, but in this writing, ***The Letter to the friends of the Cross***, the saint shows that he is a true **lover of the cross of Christ**. We can perfectly apply to him these words of Saint Paul: “*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*” (Gal 4, 16)

Saint Louis encourages *the friends of the cross* to be *real* friends of the Cross. In fact, he says that many Christians, “*while with their hand they make the sign of the cross, in their heart they are its enemies*⁵”. And why does Saint Louis love the Cross so much? Because it is the only way to truly be conformed to Jesus, to be more like Him, to reach eternal salvation.

Therefore, he will strive to persuade *the friends of the cross* to be such sincerely, to be true friends of the cross. In this letter to the friends of the cross, he uses this example, writing like this:

‘You are the members of Christ, a wonderful honour indeed, but one which entails suffering.

If the Head is crowned with thorns, can the members expect to be crowned with roses?

If the Head is jeered at and covered with dust on the road to Calvary, can the members expect to be sprinkled with perfumes on a throne?

If the Head has no pillow on which to rest, can the members expect to recline on feathers and down?

That would be unthinkable! No, no, my dear Companions of the Cross, do not deceive yourselves. Those Christians you see everywhere, fashionably dressed, fastidious in manner, full of importance and dignity, are not real disciples, real members of Christ crucified. To think they are would be an insult to our thorn-crowned Head and to the truth of the Gospel. How many so-called Christians imagine they are members of our Saviour when in reality they are his treacherous persecutors, for while they make the sign of the cross with their hand, in their hearts they are its enemies! If you are guided by the same spirit, if you live with the same life as Jesus, your thorn-crowned

⁵ A letter to the friends of the Cross, nr 27



*Head, you must expect only thorns, lashes and nails; that is, nothing but the cross; for the disciple must be treated like the master and the members like the head.*⁶

Saint Paul reminds us that on the Cross resides the power of God as he writes to the Corinthians. *“For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”*(1Cor 1, 22-25)

Saint Louis not only reminds us of the necessity to endure the cross, but even to desire it and ask for it, as a grace. As in the Spiritual Exercises, Saint Ignatius of Loyola makes us ask in the meditation of the two standards, for this grace: *‘in suffering insults and wrongs, to imitate Him more in them, if only I can suffer them without the sin of any person, or displeasure of His Divine Majesty’*(Cfr ES 147). In short, he makes us ask for the Cross.

Examples in the present life

Today more than ever, we live in a world that refutes, rejects and hates the Cross of Jesus. It hates anything that involves sacrifice, anything that implies effort, and anything that even looks like a cross. On the one hand, this is something natural about this rejection of the cross, of suffering. However, we don't seek the cross by itself, because we like to suffer, but for the fruits of the grace that it brings with it, because we unite our crosses and sufferings to the Cross of Jesus.

It is the privileged means of purification, sanctification and redemption. It is the cross which makes us similar to the one who embraced it first: the Incarnate Word!

Let's give some examples with which we can understand better how the world rejects the cross.

For example, today's world does not accept the cross that is present in **physical suffering**. Therefore, for the world it is better for a person young or old, who is bedridden because they are paralyzed or in a coma from an accident, or simply because of sickness from old age – to die. It is better for him to die with euthanasia because that way we end his suffering as well as the suffering of those who care for him (relatives, parents, friends...).

⁶ A letter to the friends of the Cross, nr 27



Also in the case of children, still in their mother's womb, who unfortunately have illnesses, malformations, syndromes of various types... Then they (the world) tell them that *these children would have a life that does not deserve to be lived, that it would be a suffering for the parents, relatives, friends ...* And then, abortion is advised...

Or today's world rejects the cross of **marriage**, or the faithfulness to the sacrament, that is to the spouse himself in difficult times, in pain, in illness, in misunderstanding and humiliation etc... and so the couples, out of foolishness, separate... and if they have children, they are the ones who always have the worst part. The spouses, rejecting their cross thus impose the cross of the suffering on their children, who are smaller and therefore less prepared to endure its heavy weight.

The world today rejects the cross proper to young people, understood as the sacrifice to remain **pure and chaste**, preserving the virtue of purity until marriage.

The world today also rejects the cross of leaving everything to **consecrate oneself to the Lord**, in the priestly and religious life. One is afraid to leave his own home, parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, and possessions, comfort, and the things of the world.

The world today also rejects the cross of **humiliations** and **contempt** that can be received from anyone in the family, at work, or anywhere else.

This world that makes us reject and run away from the cross, doesn't know its deepest meaning... It doesn't know the redeeming value of the Cross, its importance and our need of the cross for the good of our souls!

The saint says: *"He has enclosed in the cross such an abundance of grace, life and happiness that only those who enjoy his special favour know about them. One must be humble, little, self-disciplined, spiritual and despised by the world to learn the mystery of the Cross."*⁷

For the Saint, **the Cross is a Gift**, that God only gives to His closest friends⁸.

He writes, *"If we knew the value of the Cross, we would, like St. Peter of Alcantara, have novenas made in order to acquire such a delightful morsel of paradise."*

⁷ The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 174

⁸ The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 175



We would say, like St. Theresa, "**Either to suffer or to die;**" or with St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "**Not to die but to suffer.**" Like blessed John of the Cross we would ask only for the grace of suffering for Jesus Christ: "**To suffer and be despised. Heaven esteems nothing in this world except the Cross,** he said after his death to a servant of God. Our Lord said to one of his servants, "**I have crosses of such great value that my Mother, most powerful as she is, can procure from me nothing more precious for her faithful servants.**"⁹

Conclusion with the Cross

To conclude this first part, Saint Louis tells us: "*And if you were to be offered, as was St. Catherine of Sienna, a crown of thorns and one of roses, you should, like her, choose the crown of thorns without hesitation and press it upon your head, so as to be like Christ.*"¹⁰

2. The Love of the Divine Wisdom

Saint Louis De Montfort writes: "*True wisdom is not to be found in the things of this world nor in the souls of those who live in comfort. He has fixed his abode in the Cross so firmly that you will not find him anywhere in this world save in the Cross. He has so truly incorporated and united himself with the Cross that in all truth we can say: **Wisdom is the Cross, and the Cross is Wisdom.***"¹¹

This is what Saint Louis writes in his work 'The Love of Eternal Wisdom'. It means that loving the Divine Wisdom, means loving the cross and vice versa. And who is the Divine Wisdom if not the Incarnate Word? Therefore, it can also be said that **whoever loves the cross loves the Incarnate Word, and whoever loves the Incarnate Word loves the cross.** In fact, the Incarnate Word, Incarnate Wisdom has not desired and has not loved anything other than the Cross out of love for us, as Saint Louis reminds us. He writes: "*It is upon this cross that He (The Incarnate Wisdom) casts his eyes; he takes his delight in it; he cherishes it more than all that is great and resplendent in heaven and on earth. He decides that that will be the instrument of his conquests, the adornment of his royal state. He will make it the wealth and joy of his*

⁹ The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 177

¹⁰ A Letter to the Friends of the Cross, nr 27

¹¹ The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 180



empire, the friend and spouse of his heart. (...) But how inexpressible his love for that cross! (Rom 11.33)''¹².

The Incarnate Wisdom loved the cross from his infancy. At his coming into the world, while in his Mother's womb, he received it from his eternal Father. He placed it deep in his heart, there to dominate his life, saying, "My God and my Father, I chose this cross when I was in your bosom. I choose it now in the womb of my Mother. I love it with all my strength and I place it deep in my heart to be my spouse and my mistress."¹³

As Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, has shown us His love, desiring and loving the cross, giving His life for us, so we should love Christ: desiring and loving the Cross, and giving our life for Him! To love the cross is to love Christ.

Our directory reminds us precisely how each one of us, each member of our Religious Family, must love the cross. In number 135 of our Directory of Spirituality we read: *"Therefore, we need to love the living Cross of toils, humiliations, insults, tortures, pains, persecutions, misunderstandings, annoyances, disgraces, scorn, shame, slanders, death... and be able to say with Saint Paul: I die every day (1 Cor 15, 31), in order to nail in our heart the One who was nailed to the cross for us."*¹⁴

Still more in number 136: *"We must have an intense desire for the cross ... It is necessary to pray for this grace... and especially to ask for the grace of the science of the cross and of the joy of the cross which are only achieved in the school of Jesus Christ."*¹⁵

3. The consecration to Mary in Marian slavery of love, privileged means and great secret to carry the crosses that God gives us, including the heaviest ones.

In conclusion, I wanted to talk about how the consecration in Marian slavery of love, is the secret to carry more easily our crosses and also to carry heavier ones to reach holiness. In the Treatise on the True Devotion, Saint Louis says that ***the true Devotion to Mary is the easiest way*** to reach the union with Jesus, the perfection and holiness. He says that thanks to the consecration that he proposes, the way of the cross becomes easier **because Mary sweetens our crosses and makes them so sweet that it even gives us the ability to carry crosses that are even bigger.**

¹² The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 168

¹³ The Love of Eternal Wisdom, nr 169

¹⁴ Directory of Spirituality, IVE, nr 135

¹⁵ Directory of Spirituality, IVE, nr 136



He writes verbatim in number 154 of True Devotion: “*the most faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin, being her greatest favourites, receive from her the best graces and favours from heaven, which are crosses. But I maintain too that these servants of Mary bear their crosses with greater ease and gain more merit and glory ... For this good Mother, filled with the grace and unction of the Holy Spirit, dips all the crosses she prepares for them in the honey of her maternal sweetness and the unction of pure love. They then readily swallow them as they would sugared almonds, though the crosses may be very bitter.*”

The consecration to Mary sweetens our crosses and therefore, we can carry more, even the heaviest ones.

Let us ask the Most Holy Virgin, our Heavenly Mother, the grace to understand in depth the meaning of the cross and to love our crosses and carry them with joy so that we might more easily reach the maximum degree of union with the Eternal Wisdom that God wants for each one of us. May Our Lady obtain for us this grace.



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