



CATECHESIS 06

Mary's life in the soul

The effects of the Total Consecration to Jesus Through Mary

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*“This devotion faithfully practiced
produces countless happy effects in the soul”
The Secret of Mary, 55*

1. Introduction

Our Blessed Mother has the wonderful characteristic of being “*generous to the generous*”¹. These words are said by St. Louis de Montfort in his famous book *True Devotion*, where he points out the wonderful effects the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary brings about. These effects are, then, a result of Mary’s outstanding generosity. He who gives himself completely to Mary receives in exchange wonderful and countless graces. And the more we penetrate in this Slavery of Love, living it wholeheartedly and unreservedly, the more we obtain graces from it.

As we all know, St. Louis is one of the greatest teachers of Marian Spirituality² and has expounded this devotion in a marvelous way. He dedicated himself entirely to make the Blessed Mother better known, so that the Kingdom of her divine Son might be established on earth. According to him: “If the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ must come into the world, it can only be as a necessary consequence of the knowledge and reign of Mary. She who first gave him to the world will establish his kingdom in the world”³.

Now, it is part and consequence of this new kingdom of Mary a wide range of wonderful effects of holiness, which are given to the faithful servants. St. Louis is not only aware that to consecrate totally to Jesus through Mary entails renunciation and sacrifices, but he also knows that this consecration brings with it countless benefits for the soul and for the world.

In addition, he uses and enumerates these benefits so that we may not delay in giving ourselves totally to her in Maternal Slavery of Love.

Let’s then analyze these effects as are explained by St. Louis in both *True Devotion to Mary* (TD, 213-225) and *Secret of Mary* (SM, 53-59). In these two books, the saint, presents several effects, and although they are not exactly the same, still they contain the main core of them, which is *a new life in Mary*. Now, all of these effects that we will see now, are presented by St. Louis as *his personal experience*. Indeed, he experienced the effects that giving oneself to Mary brings along, because he did so first. He is not talking speculatively, as if it were from some far distance; on the contrary, he talks out of his personal experience. The Montfortian Fr. Alphonse Bossard affirms this same idea when saying: “The section [of SM] on the ‘wonderful effects’ that ‘this devotion’ must produce if it is faithfully undertaken, can be read as Montfort’s personal testimony of his own experience”⁴.

Once we understand this, that what St. Louis explains about the effects of this wonderful devotion comes from his inner experience, we realize that he is *unveiling a secret*, which is both the very Virgin Mary and the devotion to her in Maternal Slavery of Love. This secret, in turn, takes its full meaning by practicing it⁵.

2. The Principal Effect

When St. Louis speaks about the effects of this new and old devotion⁶, he doesn’t seem to

¹ *True Devotion to Mary* (TD), n. 216.

² Cf. St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 48.

³ TD, 13.

⁴ Alphonse Bossard, *True Devotion*, In *Jesus Living in Mary*, Bay shore, NY, Montfort Publications, 1994, p. 1220.

⁵ Cf. Alphonse Bossard, *Secret of Mary*, In *Jesus Living in Mary*... p. 1115 and 1117.

⁶ Cf. Alphonse Bossard, *Secret of Mary*, In *Jesus Living in Mary*.... p.1117.

be very systematic. On the contrary, he writes without order, which tells us that he is talking of inner experiences difficult to list. He just speaks of the wonders his soul is undergoing. That's why, his presentation of the effects of this Total Consecration to Mary, vary from one book or place to another.

Nevertheless, there is a lot to be mentioned, which by a careful reading can be organized and present more schematically... and this is the objective of this brief presentation.

Now, according to Alphonse Bossard, the book *Secret of Mary*, is a work of St. Louis' maturity⁷. We all know that *Secret of Mary* is a summary of *True Devotion*, and that brings as a kind of compendium of this wonderful Marian doctrine. Whereas *True Devotion* enumerates many effects, *Secret of Mary* is more concise in presenting them, although they are ordained according to their importance. In this regard, then, *Secret of Mary* presents the effects in a graded order. The first of this effect is the most important. He says:

"This devotion, faithfully practiced, produces many happy effects in the soul. The most important of them all is that it establishes, even here on earth, Mary's life in the soul, so that it is no longer the soul that lives, but Mary living in it; for Mary's life becomes its life." (*SM*, 55).

This text is central for our topic. The Slavery of Love makes us to have Mary in us, and her life is our life. St. Thomas Aquinas explains the phenomenon when saying that: "Love bears the lover into the beloved, so that he now lives the life of the beloved"⁸. Mary lives within us because of the love we have for her. The Slavery of Love, which is the highest way of loving Mary, makes Mary to be in us, as the object loved. Loves tends naturally to unity, hence the love for Mary makes us to be one with her, in such a way that we can say — echoing St. Paul's words (Gal 2:20) — that we do not longer live, but is Mary living in us.

When St. Thomas comments on this Pauline passage ["I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"], he explains that "a man is said to live according to that in which he chiefly puts his affection and in which he is mainly delighted. Hence men who take their greatest pleasure in study or in hunting say that this is their life. [...]. Therefore, when someone lives seeking only what is his own, he lives only unto himself; but when he seeks the good of others, he is said to live for them. Accordingly, [... when the Apostles says...] 'I live, now not I', [it means] *I no longer live as though having any interest in my own good*, but 'Christ lives in me', [it means], *I have Christ alone in my affection and Christ Himself is my life*"⁹.

All of this it can be said of the soul who lives perfectly this Total Consecration: it doesn't look anymore its own interests but those of Mary. It doesn't have any affection but Mary and those of Mary. Hence it is said that it doesn't live any longer, but Mary lives in it.

This Slavery of Love, consequently, is a devotion that unifies all the powers and desires in a single one: *to do Mary's will*, directing all the soul's affections to her. That's why, this devotion is rightly called a *slavery*, because — as it happens in the true and faithful slave —, it identifies all one's concerns and goals with the master's. We have no other end but that of Mary's¹⁰.

St. Louis explains this Principal Effect in several ways and, somehow, he keeps it as the background of many of his arguments and prayers¹¹. He even says that this Slavery makes

⁷ "Montfort's control of his subject and style invite us to see in *Secret of Mary* a work of his maturity". Alphonse Bossard, *Secret of Mary*, In *Jesus Living in Mary*.... p.1116.

⁸ *Commentary to the Sentences* III, 32, 1, obj 3. Cf. also: *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 28.

⁹ *Commentary to the Letter to the Galatians*, Ch. 2, 20. Lect. 6.

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. 1: "As the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another's, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake".

¹¹ See, for instance, the prayer at the end of *SM* (n.68). Here St. Louis describes in detail how Mary takes possession of the whole of the person.

“happily lose yourself in her”¹². He also says that is a *communication* of the spirit of Mary: “The soul of Mary will be communicated to you to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will take the place of yours to rejoice in God, her Savior, but only if you are faithful to the practices of this devotion. As St. Ambrose says, ‘May the soul of Mary be in each one of us to glorify the Lord! May the spirit of Mary be in each one of us to rejoice in God!’”¹³.

This Principal Effect, in turn, is a consequence of performing all actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary. Evidently, this way of acting establishes Mary’s life in the soul.

Now, this effect contains many others within it, because it marvelously unfolds in many other aspects and lights. The fact that Mary is *living* in the soul is like a diamond that the more you bring it to the light, the more colors and reflections it shows. That’s why, St. Louis affirms:

“And when, by an unspeakable yet real grace, the Blessed Virgin is Queen in a soul, what wonders does she not work there! She is the worker of great wonders, particularly in our soul, but she works them in secret, in a way unknown to the soul itself, for were it to know, it might destroy the beauty of her works”¹⁴.

Let’s now focus on these wonders, which are, somehow, the natural consequences of Mary’s life in the soul. We will follow both *Secret of Mary* and *True Devotion*, trying to unify them and present them as a single thing.

3. Many wonders

A. Perfect Consecration to Jesus

In *Secret of Mary*, the saint of Montfort says that once Mary is living in the soul, she “causes Jesus to live continuously in that soul, and that soul to live in continuous union with Jesus. If Jesus Christ is the fruit of Mary in each individual soul, as well as in all souls in general, He is, however, her fruit and her masterpiece, more particularly in a soul in which she dwells”¹⁵.

Jesus is the *blessed fruit* of Mary, and most especially in the soul that has enslaved itself to her. Hence the first fruit and effect of Mary living in us is the union with Christ. In this sense, we need to recall the long and well-fought fight St. Louis underwent against those who, disrespectfully, dared to say that Mary is an obstacle to encountering Jesus. On the contrary! She is the best way to go to Him: “If then we are establishing sound devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ”¹⁶.

In addition, Mary is always with Jesus, their union is greater than that of the sun and the light¹⁷. Where Mary is present, there is Jesus also, and vice versa. They cannot be separated from each other¹⁸. Hence Mary’s life in the soul is no other than that of Jesus as well. Wonderful

¹² *SM*, 70.

¹³ *TD*, 217.

¹⁴ *SM*, 55.

¹⁵ *SM*, 56.

¹⁶ *TD*, 62.

¹⁷ Cf. *TD*, 63.

¹⁸ Cf. *TD*, 63-65. Here St. Louis makes a wonderful colloquy with Our Lord on this topic: “Here I turn to you for a moment, dear Jesus, to complain lovingly to your divine Majesty that the majority of Christians, and even some of the most learned among them, do not recognize the necessary bond that unites you and your Blessed Mother. Lord, you are always with Mary and Mary is always with you. She can never be without you because then she would cease to be what she is. She is so completely transformed into you by grace that she no longer lives, she no longer exists, because you alone, dear Jesus, live and reign in her more perfectly than in all the angels and saints. If we only knew the glory and the love given to you by this wonderful creature, our feelings for you and for her would be far different from those we have now. So intimately is she united to you that it would be easier to separate light from the sun, and heat from the fire. I go further, it would even be easier to separate all the angels and saints from

mystery!

Moreover, Mary transforms us into the likeness of Jesus, by her being a fitting model; “You are worthy to be called the mold of God”, says St. Augustine¹⁹. And St. Louis adds: “Mary is a mold capable of forming people into the image of the God-man”²⁰.

After considering all of this, we can say, without any doubt, that the perfect consecration to Mary brings about the perfect consecration to Jesus... and even more: without a perfect consecration to her there cannot be a perfect consecration to Jesus.

B. Increase in faith and hope

In *True Devotion*, St. Louis mentions that the Holy Spirit desired that Mary’s virtues may be in all faithful: “let all your virtues take root in my chosen ones”²¹. That’s why, St. Louis points out as proper effects of this consecration, the increase in several virtues, especially in the theological ones.

This devotion, therefore, makes us to share in Mary’s faith and to have great confidence in her and in God; it increases our faith and hope. Our faith, because she shares with us her unmatched faith, “stronger than that of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and saints”²².

“Therefore, the more you gain the friendship of this noble Queen and faithful Virgin the more you will be inspired by faith in your daily life. It will cause you to depend less upon sensible and extraordinary feelings [...] It is a firm faith, unshakable as a rock, prompting you to remain firm and steadfast in the midst of storms and tempests. It is an active and probing faith...”²³.

It also increases our hope. Actually, St. Louis speaks of *confidence*, which is a part of the virtue of hope²⁴. This theological virtue is greatly increased by the Slavery of Love, by which we have given her everything. Since we have given her everything, she will give us back many more things, even heaven, because she is not outdone in generosity. In addition, this devotion makes us be owners of God’s treasury, which is Mary. Hence there is nothing so hopeless that can shake our trust in her and in God.

C. Increase in love

Our Lord said: ““If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn 14:15), because love is manifested more in deeds than in words²⁵. It is in this way in which our love of God is increase by this devotion to Mary. Indeed, our Blessed Mother, “will open and enlarge it to obey the commandments of her Son with eagerness and with the holy freedom of the children of God”²⁶.

As a consequence of this, “she will fill your heart with pure love of which she is the treasury. You will then cease to act as you did before, out of fear of the God who is love, but rather out of pure love. You will look upon him as a loving Father and endeavor to please him at all times”²⁷.

Moreover, this devotion to Mary makes us increase our filiation to God, because of the fact of having her as mother: “You will speak trustfully to God as a child does to its father. If you should have the misfortune to offend him you will abase yourself before him and humbly beg

you than Mary; for she loves you ardently, and glorifies you more perfectly than all your other creatures put together” (n.63).

¹⁹ Cf *SM*, 16 and *TD*, 219.

²⁰ *TD*, 29.

²¹ *TD*, 34.

²² *TD*, 214.

²³ *TD*, 214.

²⁴ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 129, 6.

²⁵ Cf. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 231.

²⁶ *TD*, 215.

²⁷ *TD*, 215.

his pardon. You will offer your hand to him with simplicity and lovingly rise from your sin. Then, peaceful and relaxed and sustained with hope you will continue on your way to him”²⁸.

D. Increase in humility

The Slavery of Love, produces humility as well. It increases the awareness of our unworthiness, of our sinful and fallen nature.

“As a consequence of this knowledge you will despise yourself and think of yourself only as an object of repugnance. [...] the humble Virgin Mary will share her humility with you so that, although you regard yourself with distaste and desire to be disregarded by others, you will not look down slightly upon anyone”²⁹.

Another way in which this devotion increases humility is by making us to approach Jesus through Mary:

“To go to Jesus through Mary is truly to honor Jesus Christ, for it denotes that we do not esteem ourselves worthy of approaching His infinite holiness directly and by ourselves because of our sins; that we need Mary, His holy Mother, to be our advocate with Him, our Mediator. It is to approach Jesus as our Mediator and Brother, and at the same time to humble ourselves before Him, as before our God and our Judge. In a word, it is to practice humility, which is always exceedingly pleasing to the heart of God”³⁰.

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These are some of the effects this devotion produces in us... but, actually, this devotion produces thousands of wonders in the soul, which can only be known and experienced by those who enslaves themselves to her.

4. Conclusion

Mary is *generous with the generous*, the more we give her, the more we obtain from her. Shall we give our time, works, actions, desires and good works, she will give us all the more. She will make us possess her totally. She *shares her life with us*.

The effects of this consecration, and especially the total consecration to Jesus, are wonders of her outdone generosity. She practices what the Lord commanded us: “Freely you received, freely give” (Mt 10:8). All her virtues and glories are given to her by the Lord freely, on account of her divine motherhood... Hence, she also makes us participate on them freely.

Our task, then, in order to receive all these wonderful effects is to be her true slaves, by doing all our actions in her, through her, with her and for her.

²⁸ TD, 215.

²⁹ TD, 213.

³⁰ SM, 36.