

The Secret of Mary



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*The Secret
of Mary*

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To order copies contact:



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Editrice Shalom

Via Galvani, 1 (Zona Industriale)
60020 Camerata Picena (An)

Tel. 071. 74 50 440 r.a.
from Monday to Friday
9.00 A.M. to 7.00 P.M.

Fax 071. 74 50 140
At any time day or night including
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e-mail: ordina@editriceshalom.it
<http://www.editriceshalom.it>

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*St. Louis Marie
Grignion de Montfort
has enlightened me
at important moments
of life*

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

For me, St. Louis Marie de Montfort is a significant person of reference, who has enlightened me at important moments of life. When I was working as a clandestine seminarian at the Solvay factory in Kraków, my spiritual director advised me to meditate on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Many times and with great spiritual profit I read and re-read this precious ascetical booklet with the blue, soda stained cover.

By relating the Mother of Christ to the Trinitarian mystery, Montfort helped me to understand that the Virgin belongs to the plan of salvation, by the Father's will, as Mother of the

Incarnate Word, who was conceived by Her through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary's every intervention in the work of regeneration of the faithful is not in competition with Christ, but derives from Him and is at his service. Mary's action in the plan of salvation is always Christocentric, that is, it is directly related to a mediation that takes place in Christ. I then realized that I could not exclude the Mother of the Lord from my life without disregarding the will of God-the-Trinity, who wanted "to begin and complete" the great mysteries of salvation history with the responsible and faithful collaboration of the humble Handmaid of Nazareth.

Now, I also thank the Lord for enabling me to experience what you too have had the opportunity to study at this colloquium, that is when the believer accepts Mary into his life in Christ and the Spirit, he is brought into the very heart of the Trinitarian mystery: an aspect which is characteristic of Montfort's teaching.

He does not, in fact, offer a theology without influence on practical life and nor a Christianity "by proxy" without personal acceptance of the commitments stemming from Baptism. On the con-

trary, he invites us to an intensely lived spirituality; he encourages us to make a free and conscious gift of ourselves to Christ and, through him, to the Holy Spirit and to the Father. In this light, we understand how reference to Mary makes the renewal of the baptismal promises perfect, since Mary is indeed the creature “most conformed to Jesus Christ” (True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, 121).

Yes, the whole Christocentric and Marian spirituality taught by Montfort flows from the Trinity and leads back to it. In this connection, we are struck by his insistence on the action of the three divine Persons in Mary’s regard. God the Father “gave his Only-begotten Son to the world only through Mary” and “wishes to have children through Mary until the end of the world” (ibid., 16, 29). God the Son “became man for our salvation but only in Mary and through Mary” and “wishes to form himself and, so to speak, incarnate himself every day in his members through his dear Mother” (ibid., 16, 31). God the Holy Spirit “has communicated his unspeakable gifts to his faithful Spouse, Mary” and “wishes to form elect for himself in her and through her” (ibid., 25, 34).

Mary therefore appears as the place of the love

and action of the Persons of the Trinity, and Montfort presents her in a relational perspective: “Mary is entirely relative to God. Indeed, I might well call her the relation of God. She exists only in reference to God” (ibid., 225). For this reason, the All-Holy One leads us to the Trinity. By repeating “Totus tuus” to her everyday and living in harmony with her, we can attain an experience of the Father in confidence and boundless love (cf. ibid., 169, 215), docility to the Spirit (cf. ibid., 258) and transformation of self into the likeness of Christ (cf. ibid., nn. 218-221).

*It sometimes happens that in catechesis and exercises of piety “the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them” remains implicit (Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus*, 25). In Grignon de Montfort’s vision, however, Trinitarian faith totally permeates his prayers to Mary: “Hail Mary, well-beloved daughter of the eternal Father, admirable Mother of the Son, most faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit, glorious temple of the Blessed Trinity” (*Methods for Saying the Rosary*, n.15). Similarly, in the Prayer for Missionaries, addressed to the three divine Persons and focused on the last times of the Church, Mary is contem-*

plated as “the mountain of God” (n. 25), the place of holiness that lifts us up to God and transforms us in Christ.

May every Christian make his own the doxology that Montfort puts on Mary’s lips in the Magnificat: “May our one true God / be adored and blessed! / May the universe resound / and everyone sing: / Glory to the eternal Father; / glory to the adorable Word! / The same glory to the Holy Spirit / who unites them with his love in an unspeakable bond” (Canticle, 85, 6).

As I implore for each of you the constant help of the Blessed Virgin, so that you can live your vocation in communion with her, our Mother and model, I cordially give you a special Apostolic Blessing.

Joannes Paulus n. II

*Excerpt from the speech to the participants
at the 8th International Mariological Colloquium.
Rome , October 13, 2000*



Introduction and History of the Book

St. Louis Marie de Montfort (1673-1716) is known above all for his Treatise of the True Devotion to Mary, the book that contains his spiritual and Marian teaching in a more diffused way.

The Secret of Mary presents the same contents to that of the True Devotion but in a shorter form and often with a more incisive language.

Like the True Devotion, the date of composition of the Secret is indicated around 1712-1713, having been written just before or immediately after the True Devotion.

We do not have the original manuscript but two copies, made probably right after the death of its author; one of them is found in the General House of the Company of Mary, in Rome, and the other is in the General House of the Daughters of Wisdom, still in Rome. The two copies are substantially concordant to each other. The authenticity of the writing is certain since its content is evidently the same to that of the True Devotion, of which the original handwriting

by St. Louis Marie is preserved.

The difference of the True Devotion, which was found again only in 1842, the Secret seems to have been used since the beginning as fountain of inspiration, both by the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, in their preaching; and by the Sisters of the Daughters of Wisdom in their spiritual formation. Since then they started to print and to spread the True Devotion, the editions and the translations of the Secret also were rapidly multiplied.

The two copies of the manuscript bring forth the beginning of the wording: God Alone! A copy of the manuscript that Father de Montfort had composed by his hand and sent to a person of faith on the slavery to the Blessed Virgin. This “person of faith” was probably one of the three responsible persons of the Hospital of the Incurables in Nantes, of whom Montfort had entrusted the work in 1710. The phrase also serves as the title of the short work, that often, besides the Secret of Mary, was published with the title: Letter on the Slavery to the Holy Virgin.

In all respect to the True Devotion that has come to us devoid of some of its parts, the Secret is complete in its simple and fascinating structure. The style is limpid, clear and strong. In its brevity, one reads it in a jiffy and desires to read it immediately, until almost to learn it by heart. Besides the leading rea-

sons that consist in the exhortation to take Mary as a secure guide in the path towards holiness, we find two very beautiful prayers, to Jesus and to Mary, and in conclusion, the parable of the Tree of Life, symbol of our spiritual life, planted, cultivated, protected and made to grow until it bears mature fruits.

Don Giuseppe de Luca wrote: “Of the brief booklet of the Saint, reader, you do not lose a single word... In a few lines, the Saint has showed his skill, and that is with the extraordinary power and liveliness, conciseness and richness of a man of love, the secret of a heroic life, lived under the sign and in the name of Mary.

Battista Cortinovia



The Secret of Mary

GOD ALONE!

Letter concerning
the Holy Servitude
of the Blessing Virgin

1. 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, with these conditions:

- 1.** That you share it only with people who deserve to know it because they are prayerful, give alms to the poor, do penance, suffer persecution, are unworldly, and work seriously for the salvation of souls.

2. 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. Under no circumstances must you let this secret make you idle and inactive. It would then become harmful and lead to your ruin.
3. That you thank God every day of your life for the grace he has given you in letting you into a secret that you do not deserve to know.

As you go on using this secret in the ordinary actions of your life, you will come to understand its value and its excellent quality. At the beginning, however, your understanding of it will be clouded because of the seriousness and number of your sins, and your unconscious love of self.

2. Before you read any further, in an understandable impatience to learn this truth, kneel down and say devoutly the Ave Maris Stella, and the Veni Creator, to ask

God to help you understand and appreciate this secret given by him. As I have not much time for writing and you have little time for reading, I will be brief in what I have to say.



