

VIDEO 4

THE SECRET OF MARY by St. Louis de Montfort

B. TO FIND THE GRACE OF GOD, WE MUST DISCOVER MARY

CONTINUED:

21. Let us not imagine, then, as some misguided teachers do, that Mary being simply a creature would be a hindrance to union with the Creator. Far from it, for it is no longer Mary who lives but Jesus Christ himself, God alone, who lives in her. Her transformation into God far surpasses that experienced by St Paul and other saints, more than heaven surpasses the earth. Mary was created only for God, and it is unthinkable that she should reserve even one soul for herself. On the contrary she leads every soul to God and to union with him. Mary is the wonderful echo of God. The more a person joins himself to her, the more effectively she unites him to God. When we say "Mary", she re-echoes "God". When, like St Elizabeth, we call her blessed, she gives the honor to God. If those misguided ones who were so sadly led astray by the devil, even in their prayer-life, had known how to discover Mary, and Jesus through her, and God through Jesus, they would not have had such terrible falls. The saints tell us that when we have once found Mary, and through Mary Jesus, and through Jesus God the Father, then we have discovered every good. When we say, "every good", we except nothing. "Every good" includes every grace, continuous friendship with God, every protection against the enemies of God, possession of truth to counter every falsehood, endless benefits and unending headway against the hazards we meet on the way to salvation, and finally every consolation and joy amid the bitter afflictions of life.

22. This does not mean that one who has discovered Mary through a genuine devotion is exempt from crosses and sufferings. Far from it! One is tried even more than others, because Mary, as Mother of the living, gives to all her children splinters of the tree of life, which is the Cross of Jesus. But while meeting out crosses to them she gives the grace to bear them with patience, and even with joy. In this way, the crosses she sends to those who trust themselves to her are rather like sweetmeats, i.e. "sweetened" crosses rather than "bitter" ones. If from time to time they do taste the bitterness of the chalice from which we must drink to become proven friends of God, the consolation and joy which their Mother sends in the wake of their sorrows creates in them a strong desire to carry even heavier and still more bitter crosses.

C. A TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS INDISPENSABLE

23. The difficulty, then, is how to arrive at the true knowledge of the most holy Virgin and so find grace in abundance through her. God, as the absolute Master, can give directly what he ordinarily dispenses only through Mary, and it would be rash to deny that he sometimes does so. However, St Thomas assures us that, following the order established by his divine Wisdom, God ordinarily imparts his graces to men through Mary. Therefore, if we wish to go to him, seeking union with him, we must use the

same means which he used in coming down from heaven to assume our human nature and to impart his graces to us. That means was a complete dependence on Mary his Mother, which is true devotion to her.

2. WHAT PERFECT DEVOTION TO MARY CONSISTS IN

A. SOME TRUE DEVOTIONS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

24. There are indeed several true devotions to our Lady. I do not intend treating of those which are false. 25. The first consists in fulfilling the duties of our Christian state, avoiding all mortal sin, performing our actions for God more through love than through fear, praying to our Lady occasionally, and honoring her as the Mother of God, but without our devotion to her being exceptional. 26. The second consists in entertaining for our Lady deeper feelings of esteem and love, of confidence and veneration. This devotion inspires us to join the confraternities of the Holy Rosary and the Scapular, to say the five or fifteen decades of the Rosary, to venerate our Lady's pictures and shrines, to make her known to others, and to enroll in her sodalities. This devotion, in keeping us from sin, is good, holy and praiseworthy, but it is not as perfect as the third, nor as effective in detaching us from creatures, or in practicing that self-denial necessary for union with Jesus Christ. 27. The third devotion to our Lady is one which is unknown to many and practiced by very few. This is the one I am about to present to you.

B. THE PERFECT PRACTICE OF DEVOTION TO MARY

1. What it consists in

28. Chosen soul, this devotion consists in surrendering oneself in the manner of a slave to Mary, and to Jesus through her, and then performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary, and for Mary. Let me explain this statement further.

29. We should choose a special feast-day on which to give ourselves. Then, willingly, and lovingly and under no constraint, we consecrate and sacrifice to her unreservedly our body and soul. We give to her our material possessions, such as house, family, income, and even the inner possessions of our soul, namely, our merits, graces, virtues, and atonements. Notice that in this devotion we sacrifice to Jesus through Mary all that is most dear to us, that is, the right to dispose of ourselves, of the value of our prayers and alms, of our acts of self-denial and atonements. This is a sacrifice which no religious order would require of its members. We leave everything to the free disposal of our Lady, for her to use as she wills for the greater glory of God, of which she alone is perfectly aware.

30. We leave to her the right to dispose of all the satisfactory and prayer value of our good deeds, so that, after having done so and without going so far as making a vow, we cease to be master over any good we do. Our Lady may use our good deeds either

to bring relief or deliverance to a soul in purgatory, or perhaps to bring a change of heart to a poor sinner.

31. By this devotion we place our merits in the hands of our Lady, but only that she may preserve, increase and embellish them, since merit for increase of grace and glory cannot be handed over to any other person. But we give to her all our prayers and good works, inasmuch as they have intercessory and atonement value, for her to distribute and apply to whom she pleases. If, after having thus consecrated ourselves to our Lady, we wish to help a soul in purgatory, rescue a sinner, or assist a friend by a prayer, an alms, an act of self-denial or an act of self-sacrifice, we must humbly request it of our Lady, abiding always by her decision, which of course remains unknown to us. We can be fully convinced that the value of our actions, being dispensed by that same hand which God himself uses to distribute his gifts and graces to us, cannot fail to be applied for his greatest glory.

32. I have said that this devotion consists in adopting the status of a slave with regard to Mary. We must remember that there are three kinds of slavery. There is, first, a slavery based on nature. All men, good and bad alike, are slaves of God in this sense. The second is a slavery of compulsion. The devils and the damned are slaves of God in this second sense. The third is a slavery of love and free choice. This is the kind chosen by one who consecrates himself to God through Mary, and this is the most perfect way for us human beings to give ourselves to God, our Creator.

33. Note that there is a vast difference between a servant and a slave. A servant claims wages for his services, but a slave can claim no reward. A servant is free to leave his employer when he likes and serves him only for a time, but a slave belongs to his master for life and has no right to leave him. A servant does not give his employer a right of life and death over him, but a slave is so totally committed that his master can put him to death without fearing any action by the law. It is easy to see, then, that no dependence is so absolute as that of a person who is a slave by compulsion. Strictly speaking, no man should be dependent to this extent on anyone except his Creator. We therefore do not find this kind of slavery among Christians, but only among Muslims and pagans.