

## VIDEO 5

## THE SECRET OF MARY by St. Louis de Montfort

### B. THE PERFECT PRACTICE OF DEVOTION TO MARY

CONTINUED:

34. But happy, very happy indeed, will the generous person be who, prompted by love, consecrates himself entirely to Jesus through Mary as their slave, after having shaken off by baptism the tyrannical slavery of the devil. 2. The excellence of this practice of devotion

35. I would need much more enlightenment from heaven to describe adequately the surpassing merit of this devotional practice. I shall limit myself to these few remarks:

1. In giving ourselves to Jesus through Mary's hands, we imitate God the Father, who gave us his only Son through Mary, and who imparts his graces to us only through Mary. Likewise, we imitate God the Son, who by giving us his example for us to follow, inspires us to go to him using the same means he used in coming to us, that is, through Mary. Again, we imitate the Holy Spirit, who bestows his graces and gifts upon us through Mary. "Is it not fitting," remarks St Bernard, "that grace should return to its author by the same channel that conveyed it to us?"

36. 2. In going to Jesus through Mary, we are really paying honor to our Lord, for we are showing that, because of our sins, we are unworthy to approach his infinite holiness directly on our own. We are showing that we need Mary, his holy Mother, to be our advocate and mediatrix with him who is our Mediator. We are going to Jesus as Mediator and Brother, and at the same time humbling ourselves before him who is our God and our Judge. In short, we are practicing humility, something which always gladdens the heart of God.

37. 3. Consecrating ourselves in this way to Jesus through Mary implies placing our good deeds in Mary's hands. Now, although these deeds may appear good to us, they are often defective, and not worthy to be considered and accepted by God, before whom even the stars lack brightness. Let us pray, then, to our dear Mother and Queen that having accepted our poor present, she may purify it, sanctify it, beautify it, and so make it worthy of God. Any good our soul could produce is of less value to God our Father, in winning his friendship and favor, than a worm-eaten apple would be in the sight of a king, when presented by a poor peasant to his royal master as payment for the rent of his farm. But what would the peasant do if he were wise and if he enjoyed the esteem of the queen? Would he not present his apple first to her, and would she not, out of kindness to the poor man and out of respect for the king, remove from the apple all that was maggoty and spoilt, place it on a golden dish, and surround it with flowers? Could the king then refuse the apple? Would he not accept it most willingly from the hands of his queen who showed such loving concern for that poor man? "If

you wish to present something to God, no matter how small it may be," says St Bernard, "place it in the hands of Mary to ensure its certain acceptance."

38. Dear God, how everything we do comes to so very little! But let us adopt this devotion and place everything in Mary's hands. When we have given her all we possibly can, emptying ourselves completely to do her honor, she far surpasses our generosity and gives us very much for very little. She enriches us with her own merits and virtues. She places our gift on the golden dish of her charity and clothes us, as Rebecca clothed Jacob, in the beautiful garments of her first-born and only Son, Jesus Christ, which are his merits, and which are at her disposal. Thus, as her servants and slaves, stripping ourselves of everything to do her honor, we are clad by her in double garments - namely, the garments, adornments, perfumes, merits and virtues of Jesus and Mary. These are imparted to the soul of the slave who has emptied himself and is resolved to remain in that state.

39. 4. Giving ourselves in this way to our Lady is a practice of charity towards our neighbor of the highest possible degree, because in making ourselves over to Mary, we give her all that we hold most dear and we let her dispose of it as she wishes in favor of the living and the dead.

40. 5. In adopting this devotion, we put our graces, merits and virtues into safekeeping by making Mary the depository of them. It is as if we said to her, "See, my dear Mother, here is the good that I have done through the grace of your dear Son. I am not capable of keeping it, because of my weakness and inconstancy, and also because so many wicked enemies are assailing me day and night. Alas, every day we see cedars of Lebanon fall into the mire, and eagles which had soared towards the sun become birds of darkness, a thousand of the just falling to the left and ten thousand to the right. But, most powerful Queen, hold me fast lest I fall. Keep a guard on all my possessions lest I be robbed of them. I entrust all I have to you, for I know well who you are, and that is why I confide myself entirely to you. You are faithful to God and man, and you will not suffer anything I entrust to you to perish. You are powerful, and nothing can harm you or rob you of anything you hold." "When you follow Mary you will not go astray; when you pray to her, you will not despair; when your mind is on her, you will not wander; when she holds you up, you will not fall; when she protects you, you will have no fear; when she guides you, you will feel no fatigue; when she is on your side, you will arrive safely home" (Saint Bernard). And again, "She keeps her Son from striking us; she prevents the devil from harming us; she preserves virtue in us; she prevents our merits from being lost and our graces from receding." These words of St Bernard explain in substance all that I have said. Had I but this one motive to impel me to choose this devotion, namely, that of keeping me in the grace of God and increasing that grace in me, my heart would burn with longing for it.

41. This devotion makes the soul truly free by imbuing it with the liberty of the children of God. Since we lower ourselves willingly to a state of slavery out of love for Mary, our dear Mother, she out of gratitude opens wide our hearts enabling us to walk with giant strides in the way of God's commandments. She delivers our souls from weariness, sadness and scruples. It was this devotion that our Lord taught to Mother Agnes de Langeac, a religious who died in the odour of sanctity, as a sure way of being freed from the severe suffering and confusion of mind which afflicted her. "Make yourself," she said, "my Mother's slave and wear her little chain." She did so, and from that time onwards her troubles ceased.

42. To prove that this devotion is authoritatively sanctioned, we need only recall the bulls of the popes and the pastoral letters of bishops recommending it, as well as the indulgences accorded to it, the confraternities founded to promote it, and the examples of many saints and illustrious people who have practiced it. But I do not see any necessity to record them here.

### **3. The interior constituents of this consecration and its spirit**

43. I have already said that this devotion consists in performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary, and for Mary.

44. It is not enough to give ourselves just once as a slave to Jesus through Mary; nor is it enough to renew that consecration once a month or once a week. That alone would make it just a passing devotion and would not raise the soul to the level of holiness which it is capable of reaching. It is easy to enroll in a confraternity; easy to undertake this devotion and say every day the few vocal prayers prescribed. The chief difficulty is to enter into its spirit, which requires an interior dependence on Mary, and effectively becoming her slave and the slave of Jesus through her. I have met many people who with admirable zeal have set about practicing exteriorly this holy slavery of Jesus and Mary, but I have met only a few who have caught its interior spirit, and fewer still who have persevered in it.

#### **Act with Mary**

45. 1. The essential practice of this devotion is to perform all our actions with Mary. This means that we must take her as the accomplished model for all we have to do.

46. Before undertaking anything, we must forget self and abandon our own views. We must consider ourselves as a mere nothing before God, as being personally incapable of doing anything supernaturally worthwhile or anything conducive to our salvation. We must have habitual recourse to our Lady, becoming one with her and adopting her intentions, even though they are unknown to us. Through Mary we must adopt the intentions of Jesus. In other words, we must become an instrument in Mary's hands for her to act in us and do with us what she pleases, for the greater glory of her Son; and through Jesus for the greater glory of the Father. In this way, we pursue our interior life and make spiritual progress only in dependence on Mary.