

3-1-12-Why Love Wisdom? Wisdom and the Cross

Jesus' love for the cross

Here are some extracts from Canticum 19 by Louis Marie which show us the extreme love of Jesus for "the object" that was to save the world:

*Jesus Christ, for it,
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*He found it so beautiful
that it pinned his bliss,
was his eternal companion,
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Since his childhood in the world,
if he ever sighed,
it was to see the presence
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*And since his youth,
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I long for a baptism,
to his people he said one day,
object of my love
is the cross, my dear cross. (stanza 11)*

Let us now return to the treatise on "The Love of Eternal Wisdom".

"The most powerful reason for loving Jesus Christ, Wisdom, are the pains He wanted to suffer to show us His love, (154) and the circumstances that accompany His pains. (155)

The second circumstance is the condition of the people for whom he suffers: they are men, despicable creatures, and his enemies of whom he could not anything to fear or expect... Jesus Christ demonstrated his love for us by dying for us, when we were still sinners and therefore his enemies. The third circumstance is the multitude, the enormity and the duration of his sufferings. He was called the man of all sorrows (157).

Moreover, he loved us so much that, instead of shortening his pains, he wanted to prolong them... That's why, on the cross, he cried out: "I'm thirsty!" This thirst came from the fire of his love, from the source and abundance of his charity. He thirsted for us, to give himself to us and to suffer for us. (165)

It is by the Cross that eternal Wisdom will triumph...

"Do not think that after his death, (the death of Jesus, the eternal Wisdom) in order to triumph better, he detached himself from the Cross or he rejected the Cross. Quite on the contrary! He joined and incorporated himself into the Cross in such a way that there is no angel, man or creature in heaven or on earth that can separate him from it. His bond is indissoluble, his covenant is eternal. Never the Cross without Jesus, nor Jesus without the Cross". (172)

"Wisdom has contained so many secrets, graces, life and joy in the Cross, that she only gives the knowledge of it to her favorites. She often reveals to her friends, as to her apostles, all her other secrets, but not those of the Cross, unless they have deserved it because of their great fidelity and their great works. How humble, small, mortified, interior and despised by the world, one must be, in order to know the mystery of the Cross which is, even today, ... the object of madness, contempt and desertion. (174)

If knowledge of the Mystery of the Cross is such an exceptional grace, what will not be its real joy and possession? It is a gift that Eternal Wisdom gives only to her best friends, and only after many prayers, longings and supplications. (175)

"The Cross, when carried with dignity, is a source of nourishment and a testimony of love. It kindles the fire of divine love in hearts, detaching them from creatures. It maintains and increases that love... The Cross is the surest testimony that one loves God. It is the same proof that God used to manifest his love to us; and it is also the proof that God asks of us to show him ours". (176)

3-1-13 How can we acquire wisdom?

How do we acquire Wisdom, that true Wisdom which is not found on earth, nor in the hearts of those who live comfortably? She has so much of her dwelling in the Cross, that outside of it you will not find her in this world."

Yes, but how to acquire this divine Wisdom?

- First of all, by wishing her: *"The desire of Wisdom leads to the eternal Kingdom... It is a great gift from God since this desire for Wisdom is the reward for the faithful observance of God's commandments... My son, if you desire Wisdom, keep justice, keep the commandments, and God will give her to you". (182)*

- Then, praying a lot: *"Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you, ask and it will be given to you," says the Lord.*

Wisdom also tells us: "If you want to find me, seek me; if you want to enter my palace, knock at my door; if you want to possess me, ask me..." (184)

We must ask Wisdom with a strong and firm faith, without hesitation, "with a pure faith, without experiencing in prayer sensitive consolations, visions or

extraordinary revelations". The greater the faith, the greater the Wisdom; and the greater the Wisdom, the greater the faith". (187)

We must also be persevering in our prayer: "God wants to be disturbed... and infallibly, sooner or later, he will open the door of his mercy and give us the three loaves of Wisdom: the bread of life, the bread of understanding and the bread of angels. (190)

*Here is, about it, **some advice from Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort:***

"Personally, I find nothing more effective in bringing the Kingdom of God to our souls, eternal Wisdom, than to unite vocal and mental prayer, by reciting the Holy Rosary and meditating on the fifteen mysteries contained in it". (193)

"Do all that you do in a spirit of prayer, that is, for the love of God, and in his presence. 16]" (Maxim 44).

"Appreciate more than all external things the things that are in the heart". (Max. 47)

- Afterwards, it is necessary to know how to mortify oneself. *"All who belong to Jesus Christ, Wisdom incarnate, have crucified their base instincts with their passions and desires, and bear, now and forever, in their person, the death of Jesus, are continually violating themselves, carry their cross every day, and are finally dead and even buried with Jesus Christ. (194) One must detach one's heart from these goods and possess them as if one did not have them... (197) One must not believe or follow the false maxims of the world... (199) One must know how to be silent: a silent man is a wise man..." (200)*

It is also necessary to combine mortification of judgment and of the will with holy obedience, because without this obedience, all mortification is contaminated by one's own will, and is often more pleasing to the devil than to God. (202)

Or else:

"Mortify your ears from evil, vain and useless speeches." [17] (Maxim30) and: "Mortify your tongue, speaking little, speaking only of me or of the things that concern me and keeping a continuous silence, if you can, about what you have done well, about the defects of your neighbour and your beautiful qualities. (Maxim 31)

3-3-Circular letter to the friends of the Cross

3-3-1-Father Montfort and the Cross

The Cross was one of the favorite themes of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. Indeed, he did not hesitate to declare: *"It is in this loving Cross that is contained the true wisdom that I seek day and night more ardently than ever"*.

To develop devotion to the Holy Cross, Father of Montfort planted large crosses at the end of each mission and created associations of the Friends of the Holy Cross. He gave, to these associations, regulations and practices approved by the bishops. He also addressed, to these associations, the ***Circular Letter to the Friends of the Cross***.

Already in his ***Maxims and Teachings of Divine Wisdom***, [23] Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort did not hesitate to write:

"Do not abandon good intentions because of contradiction; this is a sign of future triumph. A good work which is not contradicted, which is not marked by the sign of the cross, has no great value before me and will soon be destroyed. (13)

Make no mistake, there are only two roads: one that leads to life and is narrow, and another that leads to death and is wide; there are no roads in between. (41)

Pray, my daughter, for those who persecute you, who vilify you, who insult you and who steal your honor and your goods. (51)

Bear the faults of all, for the love of God, who sustains you" (53).

However, the essence of Father of Montfort's thought on the Cross is developed especially in his ***Circular Letter to the Friends of the Cross*** [24], from which we give a few excerpts below.

We have only gathered here what, in the Cross, is addressed more especially to Love and to the Heart of God.

3-3-2- According to the Letter to the Friends of the Cross, [25] who is a friend of the Cross?

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort wrote to the Friends of the Cross: *"This name is great, because it is the great name of Jesus Christ, true God and true man; it is the unequivocal name of a Christian .*

The Friend of the Cross is a man chosen by God, from among ten thousand who live only according to the senses and reason, to be a totally divine man, elevated above reason and the senses by a life and a light of pure faith and an ardent love of the Cross .

A Friend of the Cross is a holy man separated from all that is visible... It is an illustrious conquest of Jesus Christ, crucified on the Calvary, in union with his most holy Mother... The Friend of the Cross is a true bearer of Christ, or rather,

he is another Christ, so that he can truly say: I no longer live; but it is Christ who lives in me"(4).

Jesus said: "A Friend of the Cross carries his cross, the cross that I, in my wisdom, made for him with number, weight and measure; his cross to which I, with my own hand, have placed its four dimensions, with great accuracy, to know it: its thickness, length, width and depth; his cross, which I have carved for him from a part of the cross I carried on the Calvary for the infinite love I have for him; his cross, which is the greatest gift I can give to my chosen ones on earth; his cross composed in its thickness of the loss of his goods, humiliations, disdain, pain, sickness and spiritual suffering which must, by my providence, reach him day by day until his death; his cross composed, in its length, of a certain number of months or days, in which he will be overwhelmed with calamities, laid down on a bed, reduced to begging, and victim of temptations, dryness, abandonment, and other pains of the spirit; his cross composed, in its width, of all the hardest and most bitter circumstances, whether of his friends, servants, or relatives; his cross, finally, composed in its depth, of the most hidden sorrows with which I will afflict him, without his being able to find consolation in the creatures who, even by my command, will turn their backs on him and join with me in making him suffer". (18)

3-3-3-The Mystery of the Cross

Grignion de Montfort comments:

"The mystery of the Cross is a mystery unknown to the Gentiles, rejected by the Jews and despised by heretics and bad Christians. But it is the great mystery that you have to learn in practice, at the school of Jesus Christ. And only Jesus Christ can teach you and make you taste this mystery by his triumphant grace. (26) May he (the friend of the Cross) carry it on his shoulders, after the example of Jesus Christ. May he place it in his heart out of love, so that it becomes a burning bush, which, day and night, will burn with the pure love of God without being consumed". (19)

But we are all sinners, and "if God punishes our sins, according to us, the punishment will be loving: it will be mercy, which reigns in this world, that will punish, and not his rigorous justice.

"Let Jesus do it, he loves you, he knows what he's doing, he's experienced; every one of his blows is right and loving... (28) Our God is a devouring fire that remains, through the cross, in a soul to purify it, without consuming it. (29) Carry your cross with joy, and you will be burned with divine love, for, as the Imitation of Jesus Christ says, "without crosses and pain, one does not live in the love of the Saviour"(34).

3-3-4-Our suffering is our cross

We must carry our cross in the footsteps of Jesus, and never forget "that the Cross which gave Him the name above every name, did so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth and in the abyss. (38)

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort knows from experience how much suffering is often difficult to bear. That is why he advises us to look at Jesus: *"Look at the wounds and the pain of Jesus Christ crucified"*. He himself tells you: *"All of you who are passing through the way of thorns and crosses, through which I passed, look and see"*. *Look with the eyes of your body, and see with the eyes of contemplation, if your poverty, your nakedness, your contempt, your pains and helplessness are like mine. Look at me, I who am innocent, and complain, you who are guilty"*. (57)

3-3-5-Mary's example

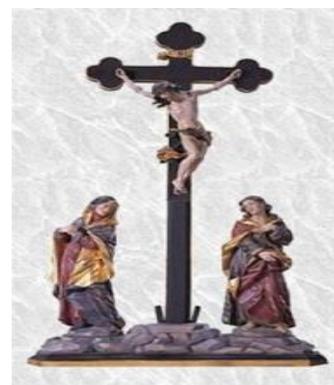
And to conclude this Letter to the Friends of the Cross

"If you are true friends of the cross, love, always ingenious, will make you discover a thousand little crosses and you will be enriched without realizing it, without fearing the vanity that often mixes with patience when brilliant crosses are endured. And because you will have been so faithful in the little, the Lord, as he has promised, will put you in charge of the much: that is, of the many graces he will give you, of the many crosses he will send you, of the immense glory he will prepare for you"(62).

We must not neglect the example of Mary: "Look, at the side of Jesus Christ, a sharp sword, which penetrates to the depths the tender and innocent heart of Mary, who never had any sin, either original or actual. [26] (31)



Cross of Poitiers of the Sisters of Wisdom- S, L.M. de Montfort



History of the Calvary

As a preamble to the amazing history of the Calvary of Pont-Château, it is good to remember an oral tradition passed down from generation to generation.

One day, on January 31st 1673, something happened in this place. Luminous crosses, surrounded by banners appeared in the sky, a terrible noise was heard. The herds that grazed on the moor fled in terror. For an hour, the celestial songs produced astonishment and mystery in the neighboring farms... That day, in Montfort-la-Canne, today Montfort-sur-Meu, was born who the Church calls by the beautiful name of the Herald of the Cross, Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, whom the people will like to call "the good Father of Montfort"...

It all began on May 1st 1709, during the reign of Louis XIV.

At the end of the mission he had just accomplished at Pont-Château, Father of Montfort, 36 years old, proposed to the enthusiastic parish a covenant contract and the establishment of a monumental Calvary. Montfort had had the idea of building a great Calvary in mind for a long time. In his missionary "baggage" he had a magnificent 2-meter high Christ.

The site that was finally chosen was situated on the moorland of the Madeleine, where the leper colony of Le Pont (so called Pont-Château before the Revolution) stood up.

Some writings indicate that Montfort had thought of building his Calvary at Sainte Reine de Bretagne. One can imagine that the first blows of the peak were given in what was then only a small village. Here we must relate a beautiful legend which tells that, as soon as the mound of earth began to rise, the volunteers noticed that regularly two little doves came to collect earth with their picks. Surprised by this coming and going of the birds, they followed their way and noticed with astonishment that they were meticulously depositing their precious cargo in the Magdalena moor. Montfort saw there a sign of Providence and decided that his project would be realized there. "Let us make a Calvary here, let us make a Calvary!"

In any case, from October 1709 to September 1710, thousands of volunteers from the region, and even from Spain and Flanders (no doubt pilgrims on their way to some famous sanctuary), erected a monument to the glory of the cross of Christ that seemed to defy time.

Father de Montfort's collaborator, Father Olivier, testifies: "I usually saw 400 to 500 people working together. Some were digging the earth, others were loading it, others were carrying it in carts. I counted up to 100 pairs of oxen to pull the carts. I saw stones weighing up to 800 kilos being pulled out of the pit. I saw all kinds of people working on these land levels. Gentlemen, ladies of rank, and even priests, who carried the earth out of devotion. I saw people coming from all over. There were even people from Spain and Flanders... Chants and "Hail Marys" set the pace for these "new crusaders"! However, Montfort continued to preach missions in the region. He came every week to visit the work place and to encourage his workers.

Montfort had set out to visualize, through figures, even biblical representations, the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Agony, ... But the essence of the message is deeper.

a) The great apostle of Mary could not forget here his favorite devotion, that of the Rosary. Attached to the pillars that topped the wall of the platform was an immense rosary whose grains were the size of a medium-sized ball and which, falling in a garland from one pillar to another, surrounded the summit of Calvary.

b) On the Way of the Cross, at the foot of the mountain, he reproduced the mysteries of the rosary. He planted 150 equidistant firs, representing the "Hail Marys". After every tenth, a cypress tree was planted, indicating the "Our Father", so that the pilgrims could, as they walked, recite the Rosary in its entirety and settle among the trees that had been planted there".

c) The "Good Father of Montfort", as the volunteers liked to call him, also wanted to build 15 chapels in which the mysteries of the Rosary would be represented in life-size figures.

The solemn blessing of Calvary was set by the missionaries for September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, commonly known as the feast of the Glorious Cross.

"The neighbouring villages of Pont-Château were full of pilgrims. Nothing was left to the unexpected. Four renowned preachers were appointed to "preach at the four corners"; the route of the procession was meticulously traced, the times of the ceremonies were fixed and the whole program of the day was decided with precision. The apostle poet had composed one of his beautiful hymns for the occasion:

"Dear friends, let us rejoice with joy,
we have the Calvary at home;
let us run there, charity urges us.
To go and see Jesus Christ who died for us."

On the night of the 13th, 20,000 pilgrims came from all over, from Nantes, Brittany, Anjou and Poitou. The family of the L M Grignion, led by his father, was originally from the region of Rennes.

Around 4 o'clock, a neighbouring priest arrived, with a letter from Mgr Gilles de Beauveau, Bishop of Nantes, informing Father of Montfort that an interdict from Versailles had ordered to destroy everything that had been done.

"His Majesty, Louis XIV, knowing that this Calvary was more appropriate to give refuge to people of ill will than to maintain the devotion of the people, ordered me (the bishop) to write to him so that everything that had been done would be destroyed, the ditches filled in, the crosses and other figures removed".

The reason for the ban was actually quite different: it was the revenge of a certain seneschal of La Chauvelière, representative of the Duke of Coislin, who was indignant about what had recently happened in the church of Campbon, where the graves of the literati and the lords had been, by order of Montfort, dispossessed of their privileges.

Immediately Father of Montfort set out for Nantes, wanting to try to explain himself to the Bishop in person, in the hope that permission would not be denied. He arrived in Nantes at about 6 a.m. and presented himself to the Bishop. Alas!, he obtained nothing: the decision of the Bishop of Beauveau was irrevocable.

On September 14th, while Louis-Marie, with his soul distressed by his renunciation, regained his strength before leaving, on the moor the Madeleine the festive program was celebrated: masses, hymns, processions, various ceremonies, glorified the cross of the Savior. The hero of the celebration was not there. He did not return until September 15, a little before noon. A large part of the crowd was still there. He could only confirm the terrible news.

Montfort only could think of continuing the work of the missions. The following Sunday, he opened a mission in Saint Molf, on the Guérande peninsula. However, from the first week, Mr. Olivier arrived in Saint Molf with another letter from the bishop addressed to Montfort. In short, the bishop of Nantes forbade Montfort to preach and hear confessions in his entire diocese. On reading this letter, Montfort wept. It was one of the most bitter disappointments of his life.

The mission of demolishing the Calvary was entrusted to Mr. de l'Espinasse, a company commander of soldiers, sent to Pont-Château to carry out the royal order of demolition.

Mr. de l'Espinasse recruited about 500 peasants from the surrounding area who refused to do the work for two days. They did not lower the Christ until they saw the leader of the militia take a saw to knock down the Cross and risk breaking the beautiful Christ of Father de Montfort. They took the statues to Pont-Château for safekeeping. The demolition took a long time.

In three months, the mountain was half razed to the ground. It all ends in this way...

In 1747, Father of Montfort's successors, under the leadership of Father Audubon and with the support of Louis Bourbon, Duke of Penthièvre, undertook to restore the Calvary. They faced the same difficulties as Montfort 37 years earlier. However, a chapel was built at the foot of the Calvary.

1783 - New mission preached by the sons of Montfort at Pont-Château. Some work was done and three crosses were planted.

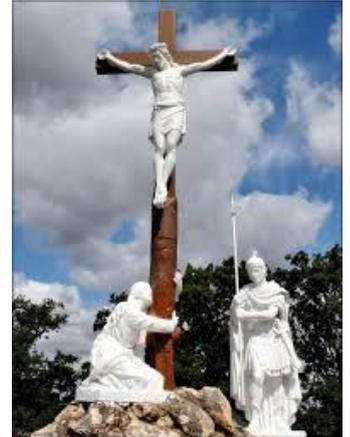
Ten years later, one night in **1793**, after the Battle of Savenay, the Calvary was looted, the Chapel of the Madeleine was burned, the crosses and statues also burned. Fortunately, the Christ of Father of Montfort, was hidden in St Laurent-sur-Sèvre since **1748**, and once again escaped destruction.



Calvary of Pontchâteau

The first restoration of the Calvary dates from **1821**. At that time, the parish priest of Pont-Château was Abbé *Gouray*, son of the Holy Queen of Brittany. Faithful to the memory and the thought of Father of Montfort, he had great works undertaken to rebuild the Calvary and the small chapel which was burnt down in **1793**. The number of days of voluntary work on this occasion was estimated at 17,035. On November 23rd, **1821**, Mgr d'Andigné, Bishop of Nantes, gathered with 10,000 pilgrims and the National Guard, came to solemnly bless these two monuments of popular piety.

However, the Calvary as we see it today was still far from complete. Seventy years after Mr. Gouray's remarkable effort, a new mass mobilization of workers shook the Nantes region between the Loire and Vilaine, and beyond. Following the idea of Father of Montfort, one of his spiritual sons, Father *Jacques Barré*, planned to move a kind of "Holy Land" to France, evoking in a 14-hectare park the mysteries of the life of Christ. He was fortunate to find in a traveler from the Holy Land, a former officer of the Pontifical Zouaves, *Mr. Gerbaud*, the adviser and architect he needed. For 25 years, but especially from December 10, **1891**, to June 24, 1899, thanks to the impetus of this extraordinary man, Father Barré, teams of volunteers followed one another in the vast work. One day in 1897, there were 1,200 volunteers in the camp, divided into 5 teams. That was **the Day of a Thousand**.



150 parishes, over 120,000 work days. A religious epic of a peaceful army whose weapons were the pickaxe, the shovel, the basket or, more rarely, the work tools, the powerful polisher that allowed the movement of statues and crosses.

Let us recall here an important date, that of June 24th **1899**. It was the solemn inauguration of the Via Crucis by Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris. More than 50,000 pilgrims crowded in front of the Holy Stairs with their banners unfurled.

Even more magnificent was the apotheosis of June **1948**. The Apostolic Nuncio to France, Monsignor Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, had agreed to preside over the Via Crucis on the feast of the canonization of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. A huge crowd of 100,000 to 200,000 people spread out between the Holy Stairs and the Calvary.

Another disciple of St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *Father Daniel*, built other monuments, including the "Temple of Jerusalem", with its murals evoking various scenes from the Gospel.

The Calvary of Pont-Château is the work of an entire Christian people, and as such, it belongs to them as their heritage and the symbol of their honour.

Paulette Leblanc " The Madman of Mary " New Evangelization

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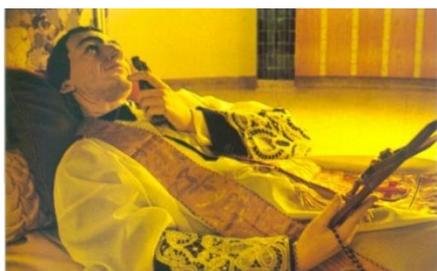
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Montfort, Apostle of the Cross

An episode in Montfort's life sums up well his ardent love for the Cross, the sign par excellence of God's love for us.

In 1709, the Saint planned to erect an immense Calvary on the moorland of the Madeleine, near Pontchâteau. It seems that some doves indicated the place by carrying earth on their beaks, and the crowd saw a shower of crosses from the sky (two elements shown at the top of the picture).

For a year, hundreds of people will lend their time and work for free: they will build a real hill, formed by three concentric circles; they will prepare enormous crosses, statues, a rosary marked by one hundred and fifty fir trees... The enthusiasm was growing.

On the eve of the blessing, while thousands of people from all over the area gathered in prayer, a brief order came from the Bishop: "There will be no blessing of Calvary". This order was followed by another from the Court: "Everything must be demolished! "

Montfort, though dismayed, remains calm, and he takes up some of his own words:

"My friends, we would all like to plant a cross on this hill. We are forbidden. Let us plant it in our hearts. God will be glorified in the same way.

Here, the painter represented Montfort at the ruins of his Calvary: statues of the Virgin and St. John on the ground. But the Saint has his arms open, in accepting the sacrifice, like a crucified man, and behind him a heavy cross falls.

In his LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS, the Saint writes: "Your name is 'Friends of the Cross'. How great is this name! It is the great name of Jesus Christ.

