

# **SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT AND BAPTISM: OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION AND OUR MISSIONARY COMMITMENT**

## **I. Montfort and Baptism:**

Since I came from Rome, I suggest we begin this talk picturing ourselves as attending the speech of the young Priest Louis-Marie addressing his speech to Pope Clement XI at the Rome on 6 June 1706 at the **Quirinal Palace**. The Pope granted him the title of "Apostolic Missionary" in France and instructed him above all to teach the Christian doctrine to people and children, to help renew the spirit of Christianity through the renewal of the promises of baptism. (Grandet, Book III, Chap 1)

1). Coming back from Rome, Louis Marie had time to reflect on the instructions from Pope Clement XI, and to probably adhere to his recommendations: renew the spirit of Christianity through the renewal of the promises of the Baptism.

### **1. His praxis baptismal**

#### **1.1. The fruit of a personal conviction**

We all know that the term "Montfort" derives from the little town of Montfort-sur-Meu, located nearby Rennes in Brittany. A little town where on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1673 was born the one who will become known as Saint-Louis Marie de Montfort.

At the heart of that little town is his "Birth Place House", and in that house, there is a magnificent ceramic representing the scene of his baptism with the Baptism Certificate dating on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1673. The artist, Alessandro LEIDI (SMM) has highlighted the baptism of Louis-Marie because he stayed very little in his native village of Montfort.

As a young priest, in renouncing his civil identity, Louis-Marie had changed his family name 'Grignon' in 1702 to a new name 'de Montfort', now identified with the place of his baptism and a sign of the deeper identity he recognised for himself: that of a baptised man. This significant gesture of signing "de Montfort" demonstrates his awareness of the importance of his baptism, but also the surpassing of a new life that tends towards holiness.

Another gesture that confirms the importance that the meaning of baptism was now taking on in his life is that, around 1703, he restored the baptistery of Saint-Jean in Poitiers, near the cathedral. During this same period in Poitiers, his recommendations to the inhabitants of Montbernage, to whom he had entrusted the mission in 1705 (on the outskirts of Poitiers), show that baptism was already occupying an important place in his preaching: "[...] so do not fail to faithfully fulfill and practice your baptismal promises [...]" (LM, 2).

Upon his return from Rome in 1707, Montfort joined the team of Jean LEUDUGER, director of the diocesan missions of Saint-Brieuc in Brittany. Over the course of a dozen missions, Louis-Marie learned the methods and collaborated in the program of this great missionary. We know that during these missions, a ceremony was held to renew the baptismal promises, which everyone was invited to sign. Montfort was certainly enriched by this experience. He dreamt of a missionary adventure where he could be fully himself, according to his apostolic aspirations and the directives he had received from Clement XI.

#### **1.2 His method: parish missions ending with the renewal of baptisms**

Montfort's Book of Sermons, in which the order of preaching for a mission is marked by several series of sermon outlines, shows that, during his missions, Saturday was usually devoted to teaching about the Blessed Virgin and to renewing the promises of holy baptism.

The book also contains a preaching outline entitled Matter for Preaching a Mission or Retreat from the Baptismal Vows. There are 24 topics that develop the formula "I renounce the devil, and I unite myself to

you, my Jesus". For Montfort, baptism and renewal are no longer just an integral part of the mission, they become its guiding idea and objective, what gives it meaning and around which the program is structured, because they give meaning to the whole of Christian existence itself.

### 1.3. A public renewal ... by the hands of Mary

The high point of the mission was the ceremony of renewal of the baptismal promises, which preceded the planting of the crosses and the final procession. Our missionary wanted to give it a festive character and an exceptional scale, to strike a chord in people's minds and engrave the memory in their hearts. A truly liturgical and popular celebration. The renovation took place in four stages (cf. Grandet, pp. 101 and 395):

I) At the end of a grand procession, all pass before the deacon who holds the Gospel open; each kneels and venerates the Book saying: "I firmly believe all the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

II) Entering the church, they pass the font where a priest receives them; kissing the font, each renews the vows with the formula: "I renew with all my heart the vows of my baptism and renounce forever the devil, the world and myself".

III) From there they go to an altar where Father de Montfort is standing, holding in his hands his little statue of the Blessed Virgin; each one venerates it, saying: "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross after him all the days of my life".

III) From there they went to an altar where Father de Montfort was standing, holding in his hands his little statue of the Blessed Virgin; each one venerated it, saying: "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross following him all the days of my life".

IV) Then everyone went back to the baptistery to sing "the great creed"; after which Montfort spoke again, commenting on the "practical commitments" to be observed by those who had taken the step of renewal, according to the "Covenant Contract". This "Contract" bore the signature "L.M. de Montfort", to which was to be added that of the faithful themselves (cf. The Covenant Contract of Pontchâteau, 4 May 1709).

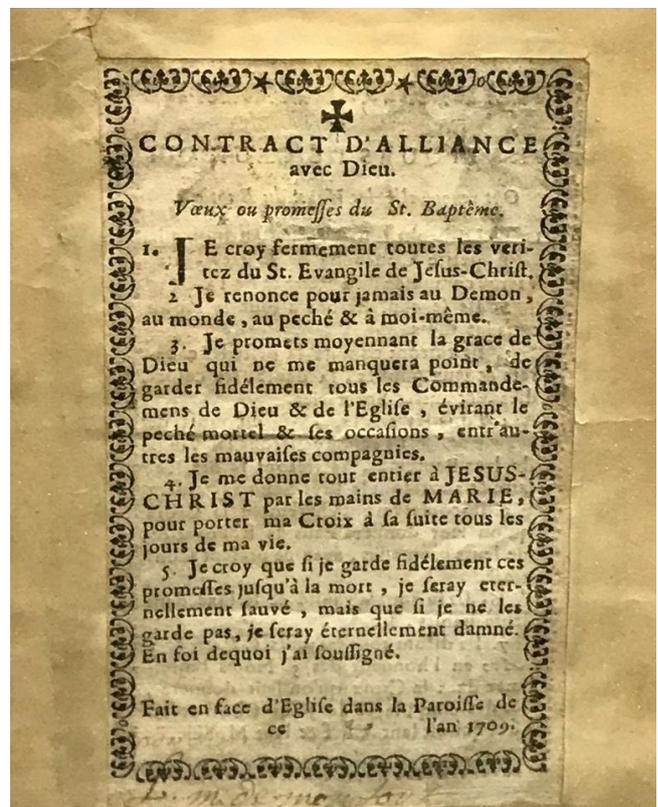
The renewal of the promises of Holy Baptism by the hands of Mary - the high point of Montfort's missions - thus expressed the solemn commitment, sealed in the CONTRACT OF ALLIANCE, to live as true Christians.

## 2. His teaching on Baptism

Through these writings, our missionary reveals at least 4 characteristic aspects of his teaching on Holy Baptism.

### 2.1. Baptism and Christo centrism

What emerges from the outset of these texts and their context is Montfort's Christo Centrism. The act of consecration, which is but a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism (VD 120.126), is addressed first of all to Jesus, eternal and incarnate Wisdom (ASE 223) and must lead to being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ (VD 120): "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ". According to the spirit of the French School of Spirituality, the baptismal life is essentially the life of Jesus in us. Jesus is not just the teacher we listen to, but rather the very life of our life. This is the full application of Saint Paul's phrase in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ



who lives in me", and this identification is achieved through the formation of Jesus in us (cf. Galatians 4:19) thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit and the collaboration of the Virgin Mary.

Unfaithfulness to one's baptismal promises is first of all unfaithfulness to Jesus Christ: "Alas, ungrateful and unfaithful as I am, I have not kept the vows and promises I so solemnly made to you in my baptism" (ASE 223).

## 2.2. **Baptism and consecration**

What seems most characteristic of Montfort's teaching on baptism (and the renewal of baptismal commitments) is his insistence on speaking of it as a "consecration to Jesus Christ": baptism "consecrates us to Jesus Christ" (VD 129). In biblical terminology, "consecrated" means set apart and reserved (person or thing) for the worship of God and his service (= the service of his work in the world). In the Christian economy of salvation, consecration to God is only possible in union with Jesus Christ and within one's own consecration.

In fact, the highest act of consecration ever made among men to the glory of God is that accomplished by Jesus Christ from the moment he entered this world (He 10:5-10). This consecration in union with Jesus Christ and his consecration to the Father is achieved sacramentally and fundamentally through baptism: by becoming a member of the Body of Christ through participation in his divine life, the newly baptised person is established in Jesus Christ's filial belonging to God the Father and enters into the movement of his life entirely consecrated to the Father and ordered to his service... up to the obedience of the cross. By consecrating us to Jesus Christ, baptism establishes us with Him in a relationship of belonging and dependence, for the accomplishment of God's will, in which our holiness consists.

## 2.3 **Baptism and Slavery of Love**

Montfort insists on the relationship of belonging and dependence that the sacrament establishes between Jesus and the baptised, using the term slave, which seems the most appropriate to define this relationship. From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says, that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves" By repeatedly drawing attention to this dependence, Montfort certainly wishes to emphasise the radical newness introduced into the being of the baptised person, but even more so the newness of the kind of life to which he has committed himself in following Christ, through obedience to his commandments.

There is a before and an after: Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, and our baptism made us the true slaves of Jesus. Christians can only be slaves of the devil or slaves of Christ, slaves who should live and work and die so that God-man may bear fruit"(Ibid). The same affirmation. The same statement is repeated several times in the writings of the missionary (cf. VD 73, 126; SM 34). In justifying the wearing of chains as a sign of this dependence (in reference to the slaves' chains), Montfort writes: These little chains are a wonderful aid in recalling the bonds of sin and the slavery of the devil from which baptism has freed him. At the same time, they remind him of the dependence on Jesus promised at baptism and ratified when by consecration he renewed these promises. (VD 238).

In using the term "slave" to express the total and devoted dependency, Louis-Marie refers to the application of the term to Christ and Mary, and to the use to which it is put by the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church, and the Councils (cf. VD 72,126-130).

But Montfort carefully explains and specifies that this form of slavery is something quite different from slavery of type or constraint and that it is neither dehumanising nor dehumanised. On the contrary, it is a state of dependence chosen out of love, in all clarity and responsibility.

It is even the summit of freedom and love, for it is in freedom that we can give ourselves entirely to the beloved, as slaves of love: "Voluntary slavery is the most perfect of all three states, for by it we give the greatest glory to God, who looks into the heart and wants it to be given to him." True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin 70 "We must belong to Jesus and serve him not just as hired servants [...] but as willing slaves who moved by generous love, commit themselves to his service after the manner of slaves for the honour of belonging to him. [...] Our baptism made us the slaves of Jesus. Christians can only be slaves of the devil or slaves of Christ. True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin 73; cf. SM 34. C 139? 32).

#### 2.4 Baptism and Fidelity

Father de Montfort knew from experience that all the baptized persons are unfaithful - to varying degrees, admittedly, but really - to the obligations contracted towards Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and therefore to the love that should inspire them. (cf. VD 127.128).

Among the causes of infidelity, the missionary's attention seems to focus on two: 1) forgetfulness and ignorance (cf. VD 127.128) in which most Christians find themselves with regard to the realities of baptism and the need to live its spirit in accordance with the promises made; 2) the difficulties inherent in our sinful nature: tendencies to evil that remain in us, weakness in the face of the demands of baptismal life, as well as in the face of the temptations of the world and the devil.

The great remedy against forgetting and ignorance can therefore only be to enlighten Christians about the meaning, the greatness, and the demands of their baptism, so that they personally renew, in all conscience and responsibility, "the promises and the vows". This is a personal, conscious, and voluntary renewal and ratification of the "covenant contract" previously concluded with God by the godparents (cf. VD 127; 129-131).

Like Father de Montfort, our ability to value Holy Baptism will be commensurate with our own conviction of the marvellous greatness and fundamental importance of this sacrament. We benefit from a theology of baptism that has been profoundly renewed by rediscovering the riches of tradition (biblical and historical research), and by welcoming the new contributions of the human sciences (pedagogy, the role of symbolic rites in all areas of social life). It would be unforgivable not to nourish our faith and our apostolate with them. Mission and the new evangelisation can only be based on a new awareness of the Christian identity engendered in baptism.

The second cause explaining the unfaithfulness of Christians to their commitments, and which particularly caught Montfort's attention, were the very difficulties arising from their tendencies to evil - even after baptism and the renewal of baptismal vows - and their weakness in the face of the good to be done as well as the temptations to be withstood against the world and the devil. In the face of these difficulties, which Montfort describes with insistence, he recalls and brings to light the particular role willed by God to Mary in our midst, and the support we should take from her maternal help and powerful intercession. The more we entrust ourselves to this spiritual Mother with complete confidence, the easier it will be for her to help us



walk in fidelity and strive for perfection. This is the whole point of the first part of the DV (cf. 117-118): Following her all the days of my life.

Holiness is our assured vocation (see SM 3) and this is the objective that Montfort proposes to those who renew their baptismal commitments. And to ensure their fidelity, despite weaknesses and difficulties, he invites them to take the incomparable means of true and perfect devotion to Mary (cf. VD 130). Indeed, "the more a soul is devoted to Mary, the more it will be devoted to Jesus Christ. This is why perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing other than a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach; or else a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of Holy Baptism" (VD 120).

## **II. Our Baptismal Vocation and Missionary Engagement**

"For Montfort, being a perfect baptized equals "being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ" V120. These three verbs reveal the "Montfortian way" of unfolding our vocation as Missionary Disciples. First of all, the verb "to conform" sums up the whole process of conversion that characterises the life of the baptised; it is a question of renouncing the slavery of Satan in order to live a new life until the age of Jesus Christ. In the verb "to unite" we recognise the call to live an authentic relationship of love with Jesus, and Holy Baptism is only the foundation of this privileged relationship. Thirdly, as we have just explained, the verb "to consecrate oneself" means to be set apart to serve fully Christ's mission in the world.

We fulfil our baptismal vocation when our identity is conformed to that of Jesus Christ; but we are conformed only if, in the first place, we are united and united because we have been consecrated to Him like a branch grafted onto the vine (cf. VD 61). The branch is separated to be grafted onto the true vine or united to it, and this corresponds to the baptismal grace that opens our awareness of God's love: we are beloved children of the Father, living members of the Body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. This conscious union enables the grafted branch to live from the same humus of the vine, have the same inner sap, and have the same form by becoming one reality with the vine. Finally, the branch becomes perfect, that is, operative, and produces fruit for the vine, that is, the baptised person acts as another Christ.

### **OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION**

#### **Walking towards the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ**

Identification with Christ begins with baptism, but it often fails to grow or is slow to reach maturity that brings lasting and abounding fruits of "life according to the Spirit". As Montfort did not want maturity to remain the privilege of a few, he recommends a sure way of revealing that he who gives himself to Mary conforms himself to Christ, because Mary Christianises everything we offer in collaboration with the Holy Spirit. In fact, just as Mary formed the Head, so she forms the Body, each member of that Body. In this way, no one like Mary realises our full conformity to Christ her Son, who lives in Mary: by consecrating ourselves to Mary, we receive the same mind of Christ (cf. 1Cor 2:15-16), his same feelings (cf. Phil 2:5ff), his heart so that we can live and love as he does.

Mary leads the disciple to the "fullness of the age of Jesus Christ" on earth (cf. Eph 4:13), that is, to holiness. Montfort uses this expression nine times in his writings. Taking up the tradition of the French school of spirituality and the Fathers of the Church, he considered that Mary's mission was to serve the generation of Christ in us until his maturity, which is manifested in the sacrifice of love on the Cross. By proposing thirty-three days of preparation for consecration, Montfort is alluding to Christ's age on earth and thus to his maturity reached by fully accomplishing the Father's work (cf. Jn 17:4). The aim of true devotion is to bring us to this maturity by putting into practice the "evangelical counsels of holiness", which Jesus never ceases to give to those who wish to grow and perfect themselves in charity. And Montfort concludes: "Whoever then wishes to advance along the road to holiness and be sure of encountering the true Christ, without fear of the illusions which afflict many devout people, should take up with valiant heart and willing spirit this

devotion to Mary which perhaps he had not previously heard about. Even if it is new to him, let him enter upon this excellent way which I am now revealing to him. "I will show you a more excellent way."

It was opened up by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom. He is our one and only Head, and we, his members, cannot go wrong in following him. It is a smooth way made easy by the fullness of grace, the unction of the Holy Spirit. In our progress along this road, we do not weaken or turn back. It is a quick way and leads us to Jesus in a short time. It is a perfect way without mud or dust or any vileness of sin. Finally, it is a reliable way, for it is direct and sure, having no turnings to right or left but leading us straight to Jesus and to life eternal.

Let us then take this road and follow it night and day until we arrive at the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ."

Montfort describes how Mary takes care of our growth as an ongoing gestation process that will lead to our maturity for heaven: " All the predestination, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just. This is indeed a mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate and little known even to the predestinate!" (VD 33). Mary's action towards us is a work of transformation, to which she commits herself, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, as if on a mission, from the moment we truly welcome her into our lives as our mother, model, and formator.

It is about a mature spirituality that brings the grace of baptism to fruition. *"For it was Mary's womb which encompassed and produced a perfect man. That same womb held the one whom the whole universe can neither encompass nor contain..."*

It's in the same womb that the youth grow and become old and wise in light, in holiness, in experience, and in wisdom, and it is in the same womb that one can reach fulness of Jesus-Christ's age" VD 156

This relationship to Mary helps to empty ourselves with our self-love or from the love of this world. If we are not emptied of the spirit of the world, we will not be able to be filled with the Spirit of Christ and therefore be conformed to him. To empty ourselves, we need first to know, in the light of the Holy Spirit, our weaknesses, our incapacity to all good worth to the salvation, our weaknesses in whatever, our daily inconsistency, our lack of dignity of grace, and our iniquity in all place (cf. VD 79).

That knowledge of ourselves in the light of the Holy Spirit, that's mean with Gaze's gaze, is given to us by Mary. "In the light that the Holy Spirit will provide you through Mary, her dearest spouse, you will you know your inner weakness, your corrupted personality, our incapacity of all good, if God is not the main author of nature or that grace" (VD 231). The true knowledge of ourselves allows us to " die in ourselves..... > (VD 81). Mary's attitude like Rebeca's prepares our soul and our body to please God as Mary knows better than anyone what is pleasant to God.

Marie facilitates union with Jesus Christ because her intercession attracts in us Jesus Christ, Divine Wisdom, like a powerful magnet that can attract Jesus wherever he is. Let's listen to this passage that describes Mary's intercession as a sacred magnet: [...] (AES 212).

Mary helps us to consecrate ourselves to Jesus. The fourth interior practice that

To do whatever for Mary aims at doing everything for Jesus, and to glorify Him. The aim of the Montfortian consecration is to do everything for the Glory of God Alone. To lose oneself in Mary, that is, to open oneself completely and lovingly to her effective influence, to become living copies of this woman who "is all relative to God [...] the relation of God, who is only in relation to God, or the echo of God, who only repeats God" (VD 225), is therefore - writes Fr. Gaffney - to be one with the personal glory of God Jesus and through Him, in the power of the Spirit, to be one with the Father, God alone, who only wants the salvation of all through his Son, Jesus. Gaffney - to be one with the personal glory of God Jesus, and through Him, in the power of the Spirit, to be one with the Father, God alone, who desires only the salvation of all through his Son, Jesus the Christ (cf. Jn 6:40).

## OUR MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

### Brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary

We conform ourselves to Christ in order to bear fruit, as Montfort said in VD 68: "Before baptism, we were like slaves to the devil, and baptism has made us the true slaves of Jesus Christ, who must live, work and die only to create strength for this God, to glorify him in our bodies and reign in our souls because we are his conquest, his acquired people and his inheritance. It is for this same reason that the Holy Spirit compares us: 1<sup>o</sup> to trees planted along the waters of grace, in the field of the Church, which must bear fruit in their time; 2<sup>o</sup> to the branches of a vine of which Jesus Christ is the vine, which must produce good grapes; 3<sup>o</sup> to a flock of which Jesus Christ is the shepherd, which must multiply and give milk 4<sup>o</sup> to good soil in which God is the tiller, and in which the seed multiplies and bears triple, 60th or 10th".

What is the fruit of our identification with Christ, if not to establish his Kingdom in all hearts? This is Montfort's mission for the Church: to remind Christians of the greatness and demands of their baptism, which configures them to Christ and commits them in turn to the service of his kingdom.

#### 1. At the service of the Reign of Christ through Mary

Montfort ardently desired a squadron of men and women who, filled with the Holy Spirit, would be instruments of the coming of the Reign of Christ (cf. VD 114). They call them the apostles of the end times who live the perfect baptismal consecration to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary.

The Montfortian approach to consecration urges those who live it to build the Kingdom of Christ at all costs. Anyone who lives consecration authentically is necessarily an apostle of the Reign of Christ. As Montfort insists, devotion to the Virgin Mary, and particularly perfect consecration, is a prerequisite for these apostles. Not only does it keep them in the Reign of God, which aims at communion between God and humanity and communion between human beings, but it is the weapon that enables them to conquer Satan's empire, that is, all division. By the example of their lives and their apostolate, they will take part in this incursion into Satan's kingdom and plant "the banner of victory of the cross of Christ the King" (cf. SD 59; EP 29): "Lord] that there may be one fold and one shepherd and that all may give glory to you in your temple" (PE 30). They must be filled with the spirit of Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit; they must be children of Mary, and therefore apostles of her Son, who fearlessly extend his Kingdom of peace, justice, and love, especially in the hearts and among the poor, the voiceless, those rejected by society (cf. VD 47-48). Service to this Reign involves the daily acceptance of the cross by those who follow Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom.

The Reign of Jesus Christ does not refer to territory, country or domain, but - Montfort tells us - consists principally in the heart or interior of man - according to these words: "The Reign of God is within you, just as the Kingdom of the Blessed Virgin is principally in the interior of man, that is to say, his soul" (VD 38; cf. VD 113). It is not that Saint Louis-Marie does not envisage the final and ultimate transformation of the universe. He speaks of a Kingdom that includes the reformation of the Church and the renewal of the face of the earth (PE 17), and also of great things that will take place "in the world" (SM 59), "on earth" (VD 272). However, this can only happen by transforming people's hearts. It is to this interior transformation of humanity - the result of the dynamic, profound, and effective domination of the love of Jesus Christ by Mary - that Montfort devotes his whole life and his writings, so that an evident reform of the Church and a visible renewal of the face of the earth may truly take place.

Montfortian spirituality, therefore, envisages a revolution of love so that the Reign of Christ becomes effective. By overturning the values recognised in the world and replacing them with the radical demands of Jesus Christ. The strength of this mission can only be felt by people of faith who, under the powerful influence of Mary, their Mother, and Queen, freely renounce themselves and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the life of a renewed and vigorous baptismal vocation.

#### 2. Like the Beloved Disciple

What is the concrete example of the disciple-missionary at the service of Christ's Kingdom if not the "Beloved Disciple"? With the invocation "make me such a perfect disciple of Christ Wisdom", each consecrated person

asks Mary to become like the "Beloved Disciple" of Jesus, the only disciple explicitly mentioned by Montfort in his writings. In two texts (cf. VD 179; 216) Montfort takes up the phrase with which the Fourth Gospel concludes the scene of Jesus on the cross with the Mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved: "And from that hour, the disciple took her into his home" (Jn 19:27).

Twice Montfort puts the phrase directly on the lips of the Beloved Disciple, emphasising that taking Mary into one's home is a personal decision that obeys Jesus' invitation. The baptised person who lives the Montfortian consecration makes this explicit choice, thus participating in the experience of the Beloved Disciple. By asking Mary to make us the Beloved Disciple, we implore the grace, but also the courage and perseverance to make this explicit choice to welcome Mary into our life and mission. What is the lived experience of the Beloved Disciple taking the Mother into his home?

Montfort says that it is above all an experience of happiness, because the disciple is rich in Mary, who is nothing other than "the very treasure of God". Montfort expresses the happiness of the one who has given everything to Mary, since being everything to Mary, Mary is everything to him: "He can say boldly with David: *Haec facta est mihi: Mary is made for me; or, with the Beloved Disciple: *Accepi eam in mea. I have taken her for all my good, or, with Jesus Christ: *Omnia mea tua sunt, et omnia tua mea sunt: All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine*" (VD 179). This is an allusion to three biblical references. The first and third do not refer to Mary, but to the Law of God and to God the Father, phrases spoken by the psalmist and by Jesus. Montfort thus associates the joy of the psalmist for the Law of God and the joy of Jesus who shares everything with his Father, with the experience of the one who gives everything to Mary, to invite us to taste the joy of the Beloved Disciple when he says: "I have taken Mary for all my possession". This Beloved Disciple is in fact every baptised person who consecrates himself to Jesus through Mary. Happy is the disciple "all of Mary" who knows that Mary is his great treasure and that nothing will be lost in her. Indeed, everything is preserved, embellished, and valued.**

Secondly, it is an experience of peace, since Mary fills the disciple with great confidence in God and in herself. Montfort says that the disciple can turn to Mary at any moment and say to her: "I have taken you, Holy Mother, for all my good". By inviting the baptized person to address Mary with these same words, Montfort underlines the great confidence that the disciple experiences as a marvellous fruit of his process of consecration (cf. VD 216). True devotion forms in us the same confidence that a child has in its mother: "She makes a soul turn to her in all its needs of body and spirit, with great simplicity, confidence and tenderness; it implores the help of her good Mother at all times, in all places and in all things: in her doubts, to be straightened out; in her temptations, to be sustained; in her weaknesses, to be strengthened; in her falls, to be lifted up; in her discouragements, to be encouraged; in her scruples, to be removed from them; in her crosses, labours and trials of life, to be consoled. Finally, in all her ailments of body and spirit, Mary is her ordinary recourse, without fear of importuning this good Mother and of displeasing Jesus Christ" (VD 107). Like the Beloved Disciple, the disciple of Christ no longer lives without Mary, who then becomes his principal and constant resource; in fact, he lives everything with her, through her, in her, and for her, in union with Jesus, the Son of Mary.

He who, like the Beloved Disciple, has truly taken Mary with him and perseveres in her, therefore experiences the joy of the hundredfold thanks to the infinite treasure he finds in Mary, and experiences at every moment the peace and confidence of always having Mary as Mother, model and fortress of his freedom. "Liberos: true children of Mary, your holy Mother, begotten and conceived by her charity, carried in her womb, attached to her breasts, nourished by her milk, brought up by her care, sustained by her arm, and enriched by her graces" (PE 11).

## **Conclusion**

In this journey around Holy Baptism, we have discovered how Montfort proposes the process of consecration as an effective way for those who wish to live fruitfully their baptismal vocation and mission. This proposal is the fruit of the heart of a missionary and master of the spiritual life, as was Saint Louis-Marie, who, faced with the mystery of God's love communicated to us in Jesus Christ, drew up a synthesis of the best theological and spiritual tradition to offer us an easy, short, perfect and sure path (cf. VD 168) which conforms us, unites us and consecrates us to Jesus Christ for the glory of God alone and the salvation of souls.

