

Every Recommendation

As we said, this devotion. has all the qualifications of perfect devotion to Our Lady. It is an act of loving, complete dedication to her. Because we love her and trust her we want to belong to her, to serve her.

It is the perfect imitation of Christ. By this devotion we try to depend on Our Lady, because God lived His life on earth in dependence on her.

It fits in with God's Plan for our salvation. Solemnly we acknowledge our God-willed dependence on Mary, and we promise to try to live as people who really depend upon her.

Finally, it is a marvellous secret of sanctity. The frequent remembrance of our dedication to Mary's service, the deliberate attempt to try to please her in all our actions, is a concrete, obvious method of advancing in holiness.

Because our consecration was

sincere and total, every act that we do should be performed in the way that is pleasing to our Heavenly Mistress, in the way she wants us to do it, in the way she would do it in our place. Obviously, except by special privilege of grace, we shall not succeed in doing *every* single action in this most perfect way. But it is equally obvious that here is a simple, definite method of sanctifying ordinary actions. However tiny and insignificant an action or a thought may be, it will be sanctified and done most perfectly if we try to do it *as Our Lady wants, as she would do it in our place.*

THIS DEVOTION, therefore, has everything to commend it. It is truly Christ-like. It is deeply theological. It is marvellously sanctifying.

But above all else, it is an act of love, an act of trust, an act of dedication to Our Lady. It involves difficulties. But it can be done if - but only if - we are in love ... in love with God's Mother and ours.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TRUE DEVOTION

by
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NOT long ago a young and very lovely girl married a blind and crippled soldier.



She knew there would be no gaiety, no pomp on her wedding day. She realised that there would be little pleasure and much trouble in their life together. His illness would require her constant presence. Calmly she foresaw that she was condemning herself to be an unpaid, full-time, under-nourished nurse to a man whose illness would fray his nerves and temper. But she was still in love with him.

Because she loved him she wanted to give herself wholly to him. Because she loved him the glory of being able to serve him and help him more than outweighed the sacrifices she would be called to make.

Thus do generous, noble souls act towards those they love. Only complete dedication of self can satisfy them.

If Our Love is Big Enough

Now we love Our Lady. We have not always been faithful. We may even have

rejected and offended her. But now, at least, we are trying to love and serve her.

Because we love God's Mother we try to honour her by our various acts of devotion, by our prayers, by celebrating her feasts, by pilgrimages, by wearing her medals. But there is still more that we *could* do to show our love. The girl you have just read about did not limit her love to paying an occasional visit to her beloved, to carrying his photo in a locket. She gave herself entirely to him.

Constantly in life we come across examples of love that leads to complete dedication of self. We remember those mothers who give up everything for an ailing child or husband; those wonderful men who work and slave in a job and in a home for those they love; those boys and girls who sacrifice a career to support their parents.

They have dedicated themselves entirely to the service of those they love. It is no exaggeration to say that they have made slaves of themselves for their sake.

But what a noble, splendid, heroic slavery! There is nothing abject, nothing degrading, nothing constrained in their spontaneous, beautiful slavery.

If our love for Our Lady is big enough, it should make us want to give ourselves entirely to her. It should make us want to belong to her without limits and without reserve. It should make us want to imitate that wonderful, noble slavery of love that we have been speaking about, that slavery which is the choicest, rarest blossoming of human love. Nay, because we want our love for Mary to surpass all other human love, we should want to dedicate ourselves to her more perfectly than human beings give themselves to the service of those they love.

Complete surrender of self, entire dedication of self, noble voluntary slavery, that is surely the most perfect way of showing our love for Our Lady.

Truly Christ-like

It is also the perfect imitation of Christ, our divine Model.

In His life He gave us a sublime example, a wonderful lesson in action, of dependence on His Mother.

He depended on her in His Conception. He was the all-powerful God. He was not obliged to save us at all. Even when He decided to become Man for our Redemption, He *could* have formed a body for Himself as He did for Adam. Yet freely, deliberately He chose to become the unborn Babe of Mary. He made Himself utterly dependent on her.

After His birth He could have been cared for by the angels whose Lord He was. But He preferred to go on living in dependence on Mary His Mother, just as all other children depend on their mothers during the years of infancy.

Then, as though to make sure that we had understood this lesson of divine dependence, the God-made-Man did a most startling thing. He proceeded to spend the next thirty years in “being subject” to Mary and (because of her) to St. Joseph. Thirty years out of a life that He knew would last only thirty-three years!

They say that actions speak louder than words. Our Divine Model by His actions during thirty years taught us a great lesson of dependence on Our Lady. We are on safe ground when we are imitating Christ. As Christians, *i.e.* followers of Christ, we surely cannot, dare not ignore the great lesson that He taught us for thirty years, the lesson of living in dependence on Mary.

Accepting God's Plan

It also fits in most perfectly with God's Plan of Redemption.

For, in a great Mystery of Divine Wisdom and Power, God decided to redeem us by following point by point the very plan used by Satan in our Fall.

There the principal cause of our ruin was the first man, Adam. He alone was our representative. He alone brought sin and death to the rest of the human race. And yet in that melancholy task he was aided and abetted by the first woman. Alone she was unable to ruin us ... and

yet, beyond all doubt, she played an important, though secondary part in the Fall.

In a similar way, God willed that Redemption should come to us through a New Man and a New Woman. The Man, the New Adam, Who is Christ Our Lord, alone was able to save us. He alone was the God-made-Man. He alone could offer satisfaction equal to the offence of sin. And yet God willed that He, like the first Adam, should have a help-mate and co-operator in His work of redeeming mankind.

The New Woman, who is Our Lady, was unable to redeem us by herself. Indeed, she herself needed, like the rest of the human race, to be redeemed by the God-made-Man. She was not and could not be, the principal cause of our Redemption. Yet God willed that she should play a secondary, a subsidiary part in the work of salvation. She was the New Eve at the side of the New Adam.

This means, therefore, that God's Plan for our Redemption includes both a New Adam and a New Eve. He could so easily have dispensed with Mary's role, if He had wished. But the point is that He did not wish to dispense with her. He wished that we should depend for all the fruits of Redemption, for grace, for holiness, for salvation, first and above all on the work of Christ Our Lord. But He also willed that we should depend in a secondary way on Our Lady too.

And so when we honour Our Lady, our devotion, if it is adequate and perfect, should recognise our God-planned dependence on her, and should lead us to

try to express this dependence in our lives.

Montfort's Method

Now St. Louis Marie de Montfort, in sermons and in books, taught a devotion to Our Lady that has all the qualities that we have been thinking about. He wants us to dedicate ourselves entirely and without reserve to the Blessed Virgin. by an act of total consecration. He wants us to give ourselves, formally and solemnly, to her as her slaves of love, something in the way that human beings make slaves of themselves for the sake of those they love ... only more perfectly and more definitely since it is for our Heavenly Mother.

That solemn act of consecration which Montfort advocates is very important. So important that he does not want people to make it until they have spent thirty days preparing for that great event. But important though it is, it is only the beginning.

Having given ourselves to Our Lady we must try to consider ourselves for the future as her slaves, her property. Because we belong to her we must try to do what she wants, what is pleasing to her, not to ourselves.

It is not easy to remember, and even less easy to carry out. But Our Lady only asks us to try to do our best. She will do the rest. When we are hers, she will take special care of her own. We should, however, try to find out more about this devotion, particularly by reading Montfort's little books on the subject.