

B. A Preparation over 4 weeks *(Anonymous Montfortian author)*

This suggestion for a preparation is spread over a period of four weeks, corresponding to the four objectives set forth by St. Louis Marie, but with a development which is somewhat different.

Each week comprises six points for reflection and meditation, one point for each day. The seventh day can be used for a revision of the whole.

a. The world in which we find ourselves

1. A fuller and better life... and without end!

- We did not ask to live. But we do live on this earth.
- So now it is only right to ask of life what it can offer us that is best.
- And our own aspirations lead us in the direction of what is more and better.
- Is it possible to fulfil a dream that is beyond me? Who will help me in this?

2. In a world of human beings

- Life has placed us in a world on which we depend.
- And in a history which carries us along in its flow.
- And in a human race which is incalculable in number and astonishing.
- But what can others do to bring about the full success of our life?

3. The world of human beings is also, and above all, the world of God.

- The world is first and foremost God's world: the God of mankind.
- It is God who guides history from start to finish, with and for human beings.
- His plan of love for them: to lead them to happiness, to fill them.
- To succeed in my life depends on my welcoming freely this plan (life wisdom).

4. Life wisdom - according to God's way

- All human creatures, being free and responsible for success in their lives, owe it to themselves to reflect and to choose a life-wisdom.

- Above and beyond all human forms of wisdom - sometimes very beautiful in themselves - there is God's wisdom revealed to us in the Bible: the wisdom of salvation and fullness, manifested above all in Jesus Christ, "Eternal Wisdom".

5. The danger of false forms of wisdom evident in the world

- Apart from genuine forms of human wisdom and the wisdom of God, there have appeared, since the very beginning, false forms of wisdom which are deceptive regarding success in life, and are inspired by the "Father of lies", the enemy of God and human beings.
- Their aim is to turn humans away from God and to turn them in on themselves (selfishness, vanity, pride) and towards earthly things (money, material possessions...).
- These false forms of wisdom ("the spirit of the world") affect us to a greater or lesser extent.

6. We must free ourselves of false forms of wisdom, "empty ourselves of the spirit of the world"

- Because they deceive and are false, leading us astray or holding up our progress towards a fuller and better life with Jesus. Because we want to undertake a way of greater fidelity, in truth...
- What are these false forms of wisdom (these forms of selfishness, vanity, pride and excessive attachment to earthly goods)?

Recommended readings: Deut 30,15-20; Ps 1; 8; 32; 118; Is 40,9-30; Mt 6; 7; 1 Jn 2,15-22; 4,1-6; LEW chapter 7; TD 78-82.

Suggested prayers: to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*); to Mary (*Rosary*).

b. At the heart of the world and of history: Jesus Christ

1. Jesus: the well-beloved Son, sent into the world of human beings

- He comes from very far away: from the depths of God's heart.
- He is sent to bring to fulfilment the plan of God for human beings.
- Having become man in Mary, he conceives a passionate love for his Father.
- He takes the stance towards him of a fully loving and obedient Son.

2. Jesus, the elder brother and Saviour of the human race

- The deepest desire of his heart: to reveal his father to men and women.

- He consecrates himself, body and soul, to this mission, so as to save them all.
- He bears witness by the whole of his life to the tenderness of God.
- On the Cross he gives the supreme witness to this. His life-wisdom? To love!

3. Jesus: always at work in the world and in history

- Risen and living, Jesus continues to be present among human beings and with them.
- The work that he carries out: the most marvellous undertaking ever known...
- And the most important and most decisive for success in human lives...
- The only one which will last into the new world: the old will disappear.

4. The work of Jesus in the world: to be realised through the Church

- Through his Spirit, Jesus is at work in all men and women of good will.
- But he acts more specially in the visible sign which is the Church.
- The Church is first and foremost HIMSELF, and then all those who welcome him into their lives.
- Everything else in the Church (ministries, sacraments, etc.) is a sign of his presence and of his action.

5. The work of Jesus in us and through us

- Through his Church, Jesus enters into the depths of our hearts.
- By the means he has left us, he heals us and gives us his Life.
- By the gift of his Spirit, he draws us into his own love for the Father and for all men and women.
- Jesus: our best Friend who is most brotherly, and most powerful.

6. Taking our stand beside Jesus in the world and in history

- The supreme wisdom for life: to be as close as possible to Jesus...
- And to take our stand beside him in the context of our lives, throughout all our days.
- The most important thing for us to achieve each day: HIS WORK.

- Everything in us should become a means of service to his work in us and in our brothers and sisters.

Recommended readings: Lk 1,26-38; Jn 3,11-21; 10,22-39; 17; Mt 25,31-46; Rom 8; Eph 1; 2; 4; Phil 2,5-11; LEW 42-47; 64-71; TD 61-73.

Suggested prayers: each day, the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, and the *Ave Maris Stella*.

c. “I” in the world and in history

To take **my** stand with **Jesus** in the world and in history, I have to know **myself** well: what **I** am, what **I** am called to become, **my** potential, **my** leanings.

1. What I am as a human being, through my body and my soul

- By my whole being, **I** am a gift from God to myself, entrusted to **me**.
- My origins lie in eternity, in creation and in my conception.
- My life is lived out according to the rhythm of my years, and my various activities.

2. Called to live... to the point of sharing in the divine Life of Jesus

- “I don’t want to die!”: the desire for a deeper and better life.
- Called to live at the level of my body, my mind, and my heart...
- Called to live with another life: the **life of Jesus** received in Baptism.

3. Called to an ever deeper and better love: with Jesus

- To live, at its best, is to love. This is the highest human achievement.
- We are worth what our heart is worth, depending on the quality of our loving.
- Jesus, through his Spirit, enables us to love as **he** does: “You must love...”

4. Called to fight against the tendencies in myself to “love badly”

- To love... and to love like Jesus is not always easy.
- There is a tendency in myself to love myself in a wrong sort of way, to the detriment of God and of others (selfishness, pride, ...)
- “The sinner, the one who loves evil” (Bernadette). Sin is first of all in the heart. To love is to fight to open oneself up, to give oneself.

5. Called to love in freedom, as a responsible person

- Freedom: a marvellous prerogative of the human person, but one which makes him or her responsible for his or her own behaviour and way of loving.
- Freedom: the power to choose, with full consciousness, and with a preferential love, whom I will love and how.
- Freedom, in the final analysis, is the power to take one's stand in the world and in history with Jesus, in relationship to God and to his loving will.

6. For ME, the greatest love, the greatest freedom...

- Is to give myself completely to Jesus, to let myself be led in docility to his Spirit to love ever more deeply the Father and my brothers and sisters.
- My baptism has already set me on this road of love... on the way to **eternal life**.
- **I** am called to ratify this starting point everyday, and carry it to its conclusion.
- "It is in freedom that you learn how to become a slave": through the love of the Lord... like Mary of Nazareth.

Recommended readings: Mt 5; Mk 12,28-34; Jn 8,31-36; 1 Cor 13; TD 68-75; 126-130.

Suggested prayers: to the Holy Spirit (*Litany*); to Mary (*Ave Maris Stella*).

d. With Mary, towards the fullness of Jesus Christ

Who is Mary in the world and in history? Who is she for me? What place ought I to give her in my life?

1. Within the development of mankind: at a particular moment a woman blessed among all

- Mary lived two thousand years ago. All generations have venerated her.
- The most human woman of all... and the one most filled with grace.
- She is only the "Servant of the Lord", but she brings into being the fullness of the messianic times.

2. A woman who became truly the Mother of Jesus, the only Son of God

- The service asked of her by God: to conceive and give birth to the Saviour.
- In freedom she reflected, then said “yes” to God, so much did she desire the salvation of men and women, indeed of all peoples.
- Henceforth, for her, to serve will mean to be the Mother of Jesus, fully!

3. A woman who became, at the same time, the true spiritual Mother of the brothers and sisters, and disciples of Jesus

- All real motherhood is first and foremost of a spiritual nature, by its origin and its end (to form a man or woman to fullness).
- The spiritual maternity of Mary is the highest. Announced on Calvary, it was a reality from the moment of the Incarnation: the Mother of both Head and members.
- Mary becomes effectively our spiritual Mother at our baptism.

4. A Mother to be found in our lives as brothers and sisters, disciples of Jesus

- We do not need to look for Mary in our lives: she is present to us in a maternal way, concerned with helping us to live through and for Jesus: “Do whatever he tells you.”
- She educates us in the wisdom of love in Jesus’ way, and the wisdom of all the virtues.
- She intercedes for us, as “the one who found grace” for us.

5. A Mother with whom we owe it to ourselves to live in a filial relationship

- The most important thing in our lives is to allow Jesus to achieve his work in us and through us, using the means he has given us in his Church...
- And with the motherly help of Mary: we need to recognise her maternal role and conform ourselves to it: “Behold your Mother!”
- Some “practices” for finding Mary in our lives and relying on her example in the Gospel, and on her intercession...

6. A Mother whose task with regard to Jesus and ourselves we ought to make as real as possible by consecrating ourselves totally to her for him

- This is a practice based on the example of Jesus, and then on that of the disciple John.
- According to Montfort, it consists in a full gift of ourselves and all our goods.
- It commits us to nothing else than to live out our baptism, but more faithfully and more easily: with the help of Mary.
- Only one thing is demanded: the will to be converted to a full Christian life, and to advance along the path of Jesus.

Recommended readings: Lk 1,26-30; 2,39-52; Jn 19,25-27; TD 22-55; 116-121.

Suggested prayers: to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*); to Mary (*Litany, Rosary*).