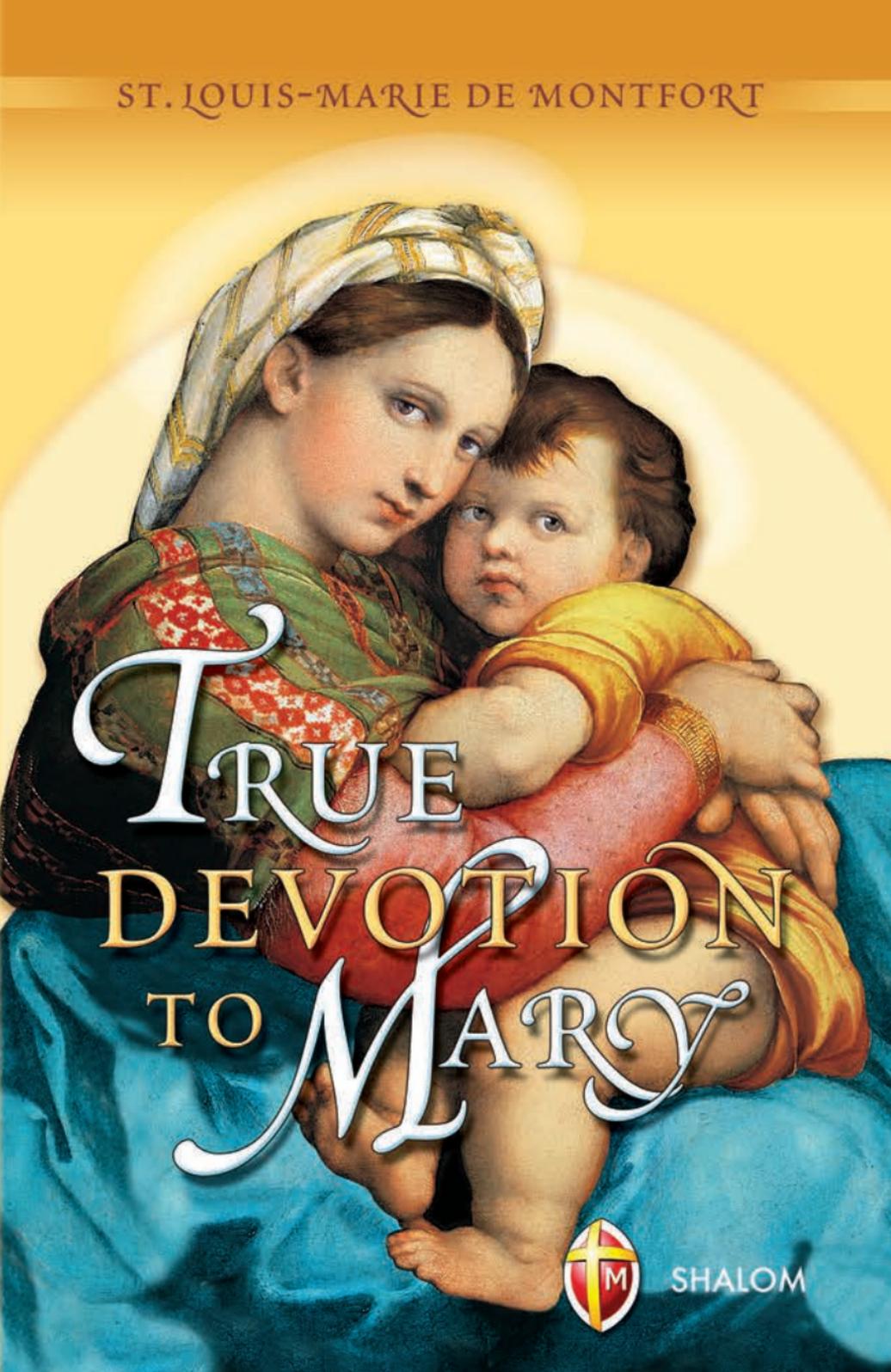


ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT



TRUE  
DEVOTION  
TO MARY



SHALOM



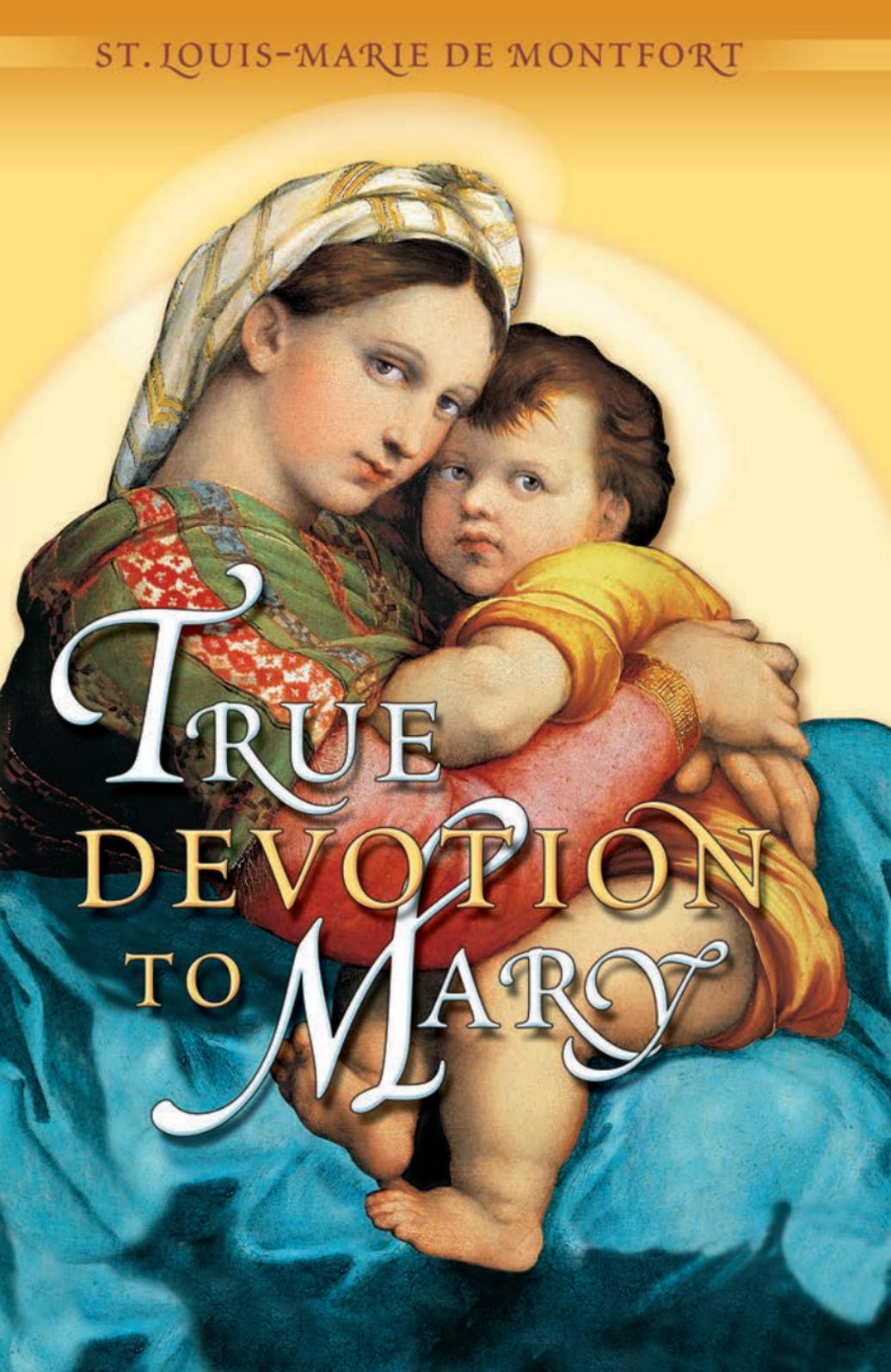
*Collection:* **OUR LADY ONCE AGAIN**



*Jesus Christ is not known as He ought  
to be because Mary, up to this time,  
has been unknown.*

*St. Louis De Montfort*

ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT



TRUE  
DEVOTION  
TO MARY

Texts translated from the original French: **“Traité de la vraie dévotion à la très Sainte Vierge”**

© Editrice Shalom - 28.04.2002 Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort

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## INTRODUCTION

*This is the best known although not the most important work of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort. In No. 110, we are given the nature of the work, the people it was written for and some ideas of the date of the manuscript: “I have taken up my pen to write down what for many years I have been teaching with success both publicly and in private in my missions”.*

*Monfort’s aim was to show the role of Mary in the plan of God, in one’s life as a baptized person and in one’s apostolic life. He addressed himself therefore to all baptized Catholics and especially to the “poor and simple” among them (No. 26).*

*Nothing in the text would indicate the exact date of the work. All we know is that he had preached its message for “many years” and therefore must have written the book towards the end of his missionary career. He mentions, in No. 159, that Fr. Boudon had died “a short time ago” and it is known that this good priest died in 1702.*

*Three dates have been suggested for its composition:*

- 1. The winter of 1710-1711 when Monfort was obliged to rest for a few months at Nantes.*
- 2. The autumn of 1712 when he stayed at the hermitage of Saint Eloi, near La Rochelle.*
- 3. During the second half of 1715 when he spent several months in the forest of Mervent.*

*Tradition has favored the year 1712.*

*No one has ever questioned the authenticity of the manuscript. During the French Revolution it was buried for safety with other books and documents, “in the darkness and silence of a chest” (No. 114) and hidden in a field at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. After the revolution it remained forgotten until it was found on April 29th, 1842. The handwriting was immediately recognized as that of Saint Louis-Marie, but there are some misgivings about a number of corrections made to the text although some of*

*them have evidently been made by the Saint himself.*

*The manuscript, as found, comprised a number of detached leaves with evidently many missing at the beginning and at the end. The author speaks in Nos. 227, 228 and 256, of a first part which contains a method of spending at least 12 days in emptying oneself of the spirit of the world which is opposed to that of Jesus Christ, the Litany of the Holy Spirit with an accompanying prayer and practices implying rejection of the world. These are missing. Then, in No. 230, he speaks of a second part containing the prayer of Saint Augustine (which in fact he gives in No. 67). Again, he mentions in Nos. 231 and 236 the formula of Consecration and blessing of little chains which we will find "further on". These also are missing. We cannot know for sure what else is contained in the missing pages but we know that what we actually possess is an adequate presentation of the Marian theme.*

*Almost immediately after the finding, i.e., 127 years after the death of its author, the manuscript was printed and published. Since then, the "True Devotion" has run into hundreds of editions in about 20 languages.*

*As the first pages of the manuscript were missing, the first publishers had to choose a title for the work. They decided upon "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin", and this title has been maintained in all the subsequent editions. In recent time, however, it has been thought fitting to add as sub-title the definition Monfort gives of his work in No. 227: "Preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ".*

*Where did Montfort find the inspiration for this work? He himself gives us some indications. In No. 118 he writes: "Having read nearly every book on devotion to the Blessed Virgin and talked to the most saintly and learned people of the day, I can now state with conviction that I have never known or heard of any devotion to our Lady which is comparable to the one I am about to speak of". It is certain that one of the per-*

sons he consulted was Fr. Tronson, the superior of the seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris, a priest renowned for exceptional prudence and holiness.

Reading the “True Devotion”, we cannot help being impressed by the author’s familiarity with the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. The work is a tissue of scriptural texts and allusions. He had a remarkable knowledge of the spiritual authors, due no doubt to his work in the library of the seminary of Saint Sulpice when he was a student there. Although he owes many of his ideas to the Jesuits, Poiré and Crasset, he was really a spiritual son of the French School of spirituality of the eighteenth century. Authors such as Bérulle, Olier, John Eudes, Boudon and de Renty, who belonged to that school, certainly influenced him, as did the classical Marian writers. He intended his doctrine to be rooted in the tradition of Church teaching and he goes as far as to state in No. 163, that this devotion “could not be condemned without overthrowing the foundations of Christianity”. He had found no devotion like the one he is teaching and stresses that it makes for a deep interior life. “No other devotion”, he declares, “keeps us more firmly in the grace of God in us (No. 118). It was a devotion that already existed but he gave it a new shape and clothed it with helpful practices, both interior and exterior, and, strengthened by his own experience in living it, he declares it to be a “secret that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will reveal (No. 119).

Today this shape may appear outmoded. The “True Devotion” is a work that was conceived and written in an age and milieu far different from those of the twentyfirst century. Many of its expressions, illustrations and biblical interpretations would not be acceptable to the modern mentality and erudition. But the enlightened reader, understanding the main thrust and substance of the work, will have the joy of encountering a solid doctrine which continues to engage the attention of theologians and the interest of truly spiritual people.



# Pratiques particulières de cette Deuotion

## Pratiques extérieures.

Quoique le fond de cette deuotion consiste dans  
l'intérieur elle ne lui se pas d'auoir plusieurs pratiques  
extérieures qu'il ne faut pas négliger bon oportunité faire  
euilla non omittreus soit parce que les pratiques extérieures  
bien faites aident les intérieurs, soit parce qu'ils se forment  
refranchir l'homme qui se conduit toujours par les sens  
de ce qu'il a fait ou doit faire soit parce qu'elles sont propres  
à édifier le prochain qui les voit, ce que ne font pas celles  
qui sont purement intérieures, qu'aucun mondain donc ni  
critique ne mette en l'onneur pour dire que la vraie deuotion  
est dans le cœur, qu'il faut louer ce qui est exterieur, qui  
peut y auoir de la vanité, qui fait eulher la deuotion de  
Je leur reponds avec mon meistre, que les hommes uoient  
vos bonnes deueus a fin qu'ils glorifient uostre pere qui est  
dans les cieus, non pas <sup>de plus faire</sup> ~~ce~~ d'est <sup>de plus faire</sup> ~~de~~ gloire que son peuple  
certaines deuotions extérieures font plaisir aux hommes  
ou en lier quelques louanges, ce seroit uanité, mais on les fait  
quelques fois de uant les hommes dans la uie de plusieurs  
sieurs de la faire glorifier par la sens se Jouer de mepris  
ou des louanges des hommes.

Je ne rapporterai quasi abrégé quelques pratiques extérieures  
queies n'appellent pas extérieures par ce qu'on les fait sans  
intérior, mais parce qu'elles ont quelque chose d'extérieure.  
pour les distinguer de celles qui sont purement intérieures.



# *The necessity of devotion to the most Blessed Virgin*

**1.** It was through the most holy Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that He has to reign in the world.

*Comment: “It is by means of Mary...” this is the central idea that runs through the whole Treatise. God Chose Mary in order to realise his great work. We too must choose to go to God. Montfort will repeat this idea various times: this is the secret that he has discovered and that he wishes to confide in us.*

**2.** Mary was singularly hidden throughout her life. It is on this account that the Holy Ghost and the Church call her *Alma Mater* – “Mother secret and hidden”<sup>1</sup>. Her humility was so profound that she had no inclination on earth more powerful or more constant than that of hiding herself, from herself as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God only.

*Comment: In these initial pages, Montfort lets God and the whole world intervene in order to exalt the beauty and the greatness of Mary, God’s masterpiece, praised by angels and*

*saints. The earth is full of her glory... but it is never sufficient! Mary was humble and wished to remain in the shadows, now God wants her to be recognised, so that we can come to know Jesus Christ better too.*

**3.** He heard her prayers when she begged to be hidden, to be humbled and to be treated as in all respects poor and of no account. He took pleasure in hiding her from all human creatures, in her conception, in her birth, in her life, in her mysteries, and in her resurrection and Assumption. Even her parents did not know her, and the angels often asked one another: “Who is that?”<sup>2</sup> (*Cant.* 3:6; 8:5) because the Most High either had hidden her from them, or if He did reveal anything, it was nothing compared to what He kept undisclosed.

**4.** God the Father consented that she should work no miracle, at least no public one, during her life, although He had given her the power to do so<sup>3</sup>. God the Son consented that she should hardly ever speak, though He had communicated His wisdom to her. God the Holy Ghost, though she was His faithful spouse, consented that His Apostles and Evangelists should speak very little of her, and no more than was necessary to make Jesus Christ known<sup>4</sup>.

***Comment:** The three persons who are in God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, act in love in order to save humanity. Montfort often underlines this trinitary dimension of the histo-*

*ry of salvation. Even as regards Mary, the action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is specified.*

**5.** Mary is the sublime masterpiece of the Most High, the, knowledge and possession of which He has reserved to Himself. Mary is the admirable Mother of the Son, who took pleasure in humbling and concealing her during her life in order to favor her humility, calling her by the name of “woman”<sup>5</sup>, as if she were a stranger, although in His heart He esteemed and loved her above all angels and all men. Mary is the “sealed fountain”, the faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, to whom He alone has access. Mary is the sanctuary and the resting place of the Holy Trinity, where God dwells more magnificently and more divinely than in any other place in the universe, including His dwelling between the Cherubs and Seraphins. Nor is any creature, no matter how pure, allowed to enter into that sanctuary except by means of a great and special privilege.

***Comment:** In primis, the persons of the Trinity had a special relationship with Mary; in her “God is present in a great and divine way”. It is also our vocation to become a sanctuary and resting place for the Trinity. Montfort will tell us that this union with God is indeed possible, by living in Mary, “full of grace”, in a place that is saturated with the divine presence.*

**6.** I say with the saints, divine Mary is the terrestrial paradise of the New Adam<sup>6</sup>, where He was

made flesh by the power of the Holy Ghost, in order to work there incomprehensible marvels. She is the grand and divine world of God, where there are unspeakable beauties and treasures. She is the magnificence of the Most High, where He hid, as in her bosom, His only Son, and in Him all that is most excellent and most precious. Oh, what grand and hidden things that mighty God has wrought in this admirable creature, as she herself had to acknowledge, in spite of her profound humility: “He that is mighty hath done great things to me”<sup>7</sup>. The world knows them not, because it is both incapable and unworthy of such knowledge.

7. The saints have said admirable things of this holy city of God; and, as they themselves avow, they were never more eloquent and more content than when they spoke of her<sup>8</sup>. Yet, after all they have said, they cry out that the degree of her merits, which she has raised up to the throne of the Divinity, cannot be fully seen<sup>9</sup>; that the breadth of her charity, which is broader than the earth, is in truth immeasurable; that the length of her power, which she exercises even over God Himself, is incomprehensible; and finally, that the depth of her humility, and of all her virtues and graces, is an abyss which can never be sounded. O incomprehensible height! O unspeakable breadth! O immeasurable length! O impenetrable abyss !