

Saint Benedict Center

The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

To Our Readers:

Having entered the last decade of the 20th Century, we begin to anticipate the Golden Jubilee of our little journal, *From The Housetops*. During the nearly fifty years of our journalistic endeavors, we have been engaged in a veritable spiritual crusade, a kind of war of attrition, against powerful forces trying to prevail against our traditional Catholic religion. Similar forces in the past, from the Arians in the 4th Century to the Lutherans in the 16th, withdrew themselves from the body of the Church and warred against it from without. But this new hellish phenomenon, still stalking through the world in the guise of the "Spirit of Vatican II," has managed to stay within the Church and do its work from the inside. All the popes of this half-century have had something to say about this fact, but perhaps the most graphic was Pope Paul VI's reference to it as the process of "autodemolition of the Church."

In this issue — our 32nd — we continue our war against the sinister forces of autodemolition: Liberalism, Modernism, Gallicanism (called Americanism in this country), Socialism, and all other forces that work to change the religion given us by God to be our unique way of salvation.

Thinking naturally, we should despair, the forces in this war being so unequal. But thinking supernaturally, we fight not only with hope, but with the certainty of victory. We know that Our Lady's message at Fatima, especially the undisclosed part of the famous secret, is entirely on our side. Also on our side now, we know, are many forces throughout the world. The Church will return to its tradition, to the fulfilling of the one assignment given to it by its divine Founder — preaching and baptizing throughout the world.

We will be doing our part, which is the conversion of America. Yet that objective will be attained not by our Order's religious members alone, but through the aid of an army of lay apostles who constitute our Third Order.

Due to hardships caused by the necessity of constructing our new headquarters in New Hampshire, this issue was unavoidably delayed and did not appear at the time we had intended. Despite those hardships, nevertheless, we have, with the help of God and the protection of our Patroness, the Immaculate Mother of God, succeeded recently in achieving an impressive rebuilding and renewing of our Third Order community.

Commemorating that vital development, many of the articles in this issue represent milestones in the history of our Crusade. The reader can discover this by reviewing the table of contents. But we wish to direct your attention in a special way to the Introduction to True Devotion, by Father Dennis Smith, which marked the official commencement to the renewal of our Third Order.



In the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Brother Francis, M. I. C. M.

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St. Louis Marie de Montfort

by Brother John Neumann, MICM, Tertiary

IN ALL THE ANNALS OF HUMAN ENDEAVOR there are no examples more inspiring, more worthy of remembrance and esteem in every age, than those of saints like Louis Marie de Montfort. This in itself, we think, would be sufficient reason for presenting the life of one of these glorious figures in each issue of our HOUSETOPS magazine. But our purpose in offering such a series runs to greater considerations. By way of introduction, we would like to take a moment to explain some of them before beginning the story of the holy priest from Montfort.

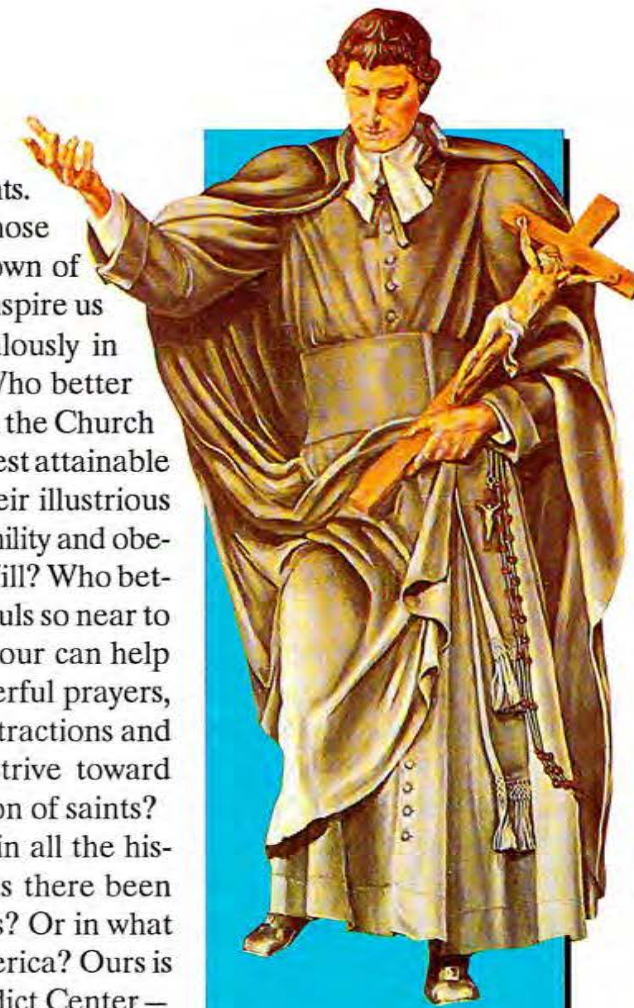
So many souls are lost because they simply do not believe, or do not live by, the primary and in many ways most important lesson the old catechism gave us. That is, that God made each one of us to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him in this world, so as to share with Him the unending, unimaginable bliss of heaven. Regardless of whatever else we sometimes may prefer to believe, we have no other purpose for existing. Our Lord gave this same lesson as His greatest commandment when He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."

So it is more than a mere lesson; it is an obligation that every one of us must strive to meet. In other words, we are all born with

a calling to become saints.

Who better than those who now wear the crown of sainthood, then, can inspire us to fulfill this duty zealously in our own daily lives? Who better than those upon whom the Church has conferred the highest attainable recognition can, by their illustrious examples, teach us humility and obedience to the Divine Will? Who better than those pious souls so near to the Heart of Our Saviour can help us, through their powerful prayers, to conquer worldly distractions and temptations, and to strive toward the Christian perfection of saints?

And at what time in all the history of the Church has there been greater need for saints? Or in what land more than in America? Ours is a Crusade at St. Benedict Center — a Crusade to convert America to the Catholic Faith and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to whom this country has been consecrated under the title of the Immaculate Conception. Realistically, such a challenge in a time and place where all manner of error is flourishing will have to be met with the unflinching determination, courage, and confidence of saints. Such is the challenge of sanctity we present to all American Catholics.



*If you ask
what was his life,
there was none
more holy.*

At Fatima, Our Lady promised the world: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph." Two centuries earlier, a holy Marian apostle prophesied the coming of great saints in the latter times — the Age of Mary — who would be "valiant soldiers" in the army of the Immaculate Heart. We are pleased, therefore, to offer the lives of the saints in the hope of inspiring our fellow Catholics of twentieth-century America to be the fulfillment of these prophecies.

With that purpose, it is only fitting that we begin with the Marian prophet of the latter times just mentioned — the magnificent saint who taught that the surest and easiest way to sainthood is through Mary, and who is the holy patron of our Crusade.

* * *

Between the years 1399 and 1419, a holy Dominican missionary from Brittany traveled throughout western Europe on foot, converting souls to the Faith and teaching the necessity of penance. This was the great "Apostle of the Last Judgment," Saint Vincent Ferrer. Once, while preaching at La Chèze in France, he came upon the old chapel of Our Lady of Pity which had long since fallen into ruin through total disuse and neglect. Saddened by the pitiful sight and the thought of the heartless disregard that had caused it, Saint Vincent foretold that the chapel "will be restored by a man whom the Almighty will bring into the world at a distant date. He will appear as a stranger, will be insulted and balked, but he will achieve his purpose."

That man did come to La Chèze, almost exactly three hundred years later. He too was a Breton who, like his early herald, tirelessly traveled on foot. Like another saint, Alexis, he lived as a beggar sleeping under staircases or in open fields. Like Saint Bernardine of Siena, he was a powerfully compelling preacher; like Saint Bonaventure, a brilliant theologian; like Vincent de Paul, he loved God's poor; and like Saint Francis of Assisi, he nursed the diseased. He was, in fact, so much like many of the great

saints in their special virtues that he indeed was a very special saint himself. He was Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort.

Early Years

The name Jean Baptiste Grignion was well respected in his community. He was Crown lawyer of Montfort and the Parliament, as well as treasurer to the factory of St. Jean. Typical of a country gentleman of the time, Monsieur Grignion was a man of recognized position but no money. Yet he and his wife Jeanne were rich in other treasures, for as many as eleven of their eighteen children became saints. Ten were taken into heaven in infancy. The other, the greatest of the Grignion saints, was born on January 31, 1673. On the following day he was baptized and given the name Louis Marie.

Monsieur Grignion was known for his fiery temper which, with the hardships of raising a large family in near poverty, found frequent occasions to be vented. Young Louis, we are told, not only was often the victim of his father's explosiveness, but also inherited the same trait. In fact, he confessed in later years that his most difficult struggle against passions of the flesh was in subduing his violent temper.

Nevertheless, those who knew him in life witnessed only remarkable docility in his nature. Rather than human weaknesses, Louis Marie displayed extraordinary qualities of virtue even from the early age of four. "This angelic boy," Père de Clorivière recalled, would console his mother "by words so full of unction and so beyond all material knowledge he would have, that it seemed as if the Spirit of God Himself gave them to him." Apostolic zeal also was fully evident in his childhood, by his teaching catechism to other children and encouraging their devotion to the Blessed Virgin. For he himself had such strong devotion to his "good Mother" that he would spend hours at a time in the chapel praying

to her. In childlike simplicity, he would lay before her all his spiritual and temporal needs, confident that he then had done everything necessary to obtain them.

The boy's maternal uncle was the Abbé Robert, who said of him, "He showed such a horror of vice, and such an inclination to virtue, that you would have thought him immune from Adam's sin." Indeed, a close friend of Louis Marie Grignon, Jean Baptiste Blain, relates this example: "His whole childhood was spent in the most wonderful innocence. He knew so little of what may tarnish purity that when I was speaking to him one day of temptations against that virtue, he told me that he did not know what they were."

But he did know what would violate purity. He once found in his father's library a book containing what he considered to be indecent illustrations. Monsieur Grignon himself saw nothing wrong with the pictures, for he did not have the boy's sensitive conscience. Louis threw the book into the fire, knowing full well that his father would be outraged.

An exceptionally brilliant student, Louis was twelve when he entered the college of St. Thomas, in Rennes, where schooling was given free to an enrollment of some 3,000 students. The devout Jesuits at the college exercised an edifying influence on their pious student. After their example, and out of his own unbounded charity, he eagerly devoted himself to the care of the poor and the infirm. It was here also that he began his lifelong practice of rigorous penance and mortification with scourges, chains, hair-shirts, and fastings. And it was here too that he discovered his vocation to the priesthood.

But to Louis Marie Grignon the priesthood meant much more than a vocation. It was to be total servitude and self-sacrifice to God. So in his priestly calling, he gave himself entirely to Jesus through Mary, vowing ever to deny himself of personal posses-

sions. Upon setting out for the Seminary of Saint Sulpice at Paris, for example, he promptly gave to some needy soul the ten crowns provided him for the trip, and traded his new suit for a beggar's rags. Moreover, he chose to make the 700-mile journey on foot, begging for his food along the way. So complete was his abandonment of worldly attachments that he even gave up his family name, to be known simply as Louis Marie of Montfort.

Since he was never one to voice even the slightest complaint, we learn only from classmates that Louis Marie's attendance at Saint Sulpice was a punishing experience. For, while he performed brilliantly in his studies, the young saint continually found his pious exercises under suspicion and criticism. Such practices as his visits to the chapel before and after class, his spontaneous conversations with the Blessed Virgin wherever he came upon one of her statues, his acts of grueling mortification, and his forming an "absurd" association called "Slaves of Jesus and Mary" — all were jeered at and treated with scorn. Even his confessor and the superior suspected Louis of spiritual pride, and tried by every conceivable kind of humiliation to break him down, but with no success.

His Works

In the year 1700, when Père de Montfort was ordained, the Church in France never seemed healthier, by physical appearances. There were over 100,000 ecclesiastics in the country, 130 bishops, more than 1,000 abbeys, and "a veritable galaxy" of lesser monasteries. All the great orders, as well as 42 new religious congregations founded in the previous century, were flourishing there. Paris alone, whose population was just a half-million, boasted 46 parishes, 10 seminaries, 11 abbeys, 100 religious communities, and 26 Catholic hospitals. All of which apparent prosperity certainly would indicate that the Faith in France was vigorously alive and well. However, it is occasionally found in Christian history that