

Today we remember the life and ministry of a 17th century priest from Europe named Louis Grignion from Montfort, France. He was fascinated with the role Mary accepted in salvation history and the priest is best known for helping others to appreciate the gift the Mother of God is to the church and to all of humanity.

As a child Louis held a strong devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He prayed the Rosary daily and at the time of his Confirmation, showed his devotion to Mary by taking Marie as a confirmation name. In the Gospel of John, Jesus questions Peter: “Do you love me?” then, “Feed my sheep” (21:17). Even as a child, love of God compelled Louis to love of the poor. “While he was at school [he] joined a society of young men who ministered to the poor and the sick on school holidays. When he was 19, he walked 130 miles to Paris to study theology, gave all he had to the poor that he met along the way and made a vow to live only on alms.”ⁱ

5 years after his ordination as a priest, “he began preaching parish missions throughout western France. His years of ministering to the poor prompted him to travel and live very simply.”ⁱⁱ Mary was a constant role model for him. She was humble and hidden, deeply devoted to Jesus and lived the simplest of lives, fasting and praying and offering alms to the poor. Given his own devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Mother, it is not surprising that Father Louis preached about frequent Holy Communion and following the loving example of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus contended with the Pharisees; Fr Louis was plagued by Jansenists. “The Jansenists [were] a heretical movement within the Church that believed in absolute Predestination, in which only a chosen few are saved, and the rest damned. Much of France was influenced by Jansenism, including many bishops, who banished St. Louis-Marie from preaching in their dioceses.”ⁱⁱⁱ In La Rochelle, Jansenists attempted to kill him by poison.

During an extended period of recovery from this assassination attempt, “he wrote the masterpiece of Marian piety, True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which he correctly prophesied would be hidden by the devil for a time. His seminal work was discovered 200 years after his death.”^{iv}

In the Acts of the Apostles we hear, “The word of God continued to spread and grow” (12:24). Fr. Louis felt that Jesus Christ was not known as he should be, but if the world better understood his Mother Mary, they would better understand the Son. “Finally, we must say in the words of the apostle Paul, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man understood’ (1 Cor 2:9) the beauty, the grandeur, the excellence of Mary, who is indeed a miracle of miracles of grace, nature and glory. ‘If you wish to understand the Mother,’ says a saint, ‘then understand the Son. She is a worthy Mother of God’.”^v

Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort lived by a simple motto: “I am all yours.” When the late Pope John Paul II was named a bishop in Poland, he followed the example of de Montfort and took *Totus Tuus* for his episcopal motto. Of course, both take their example from Mary who devoted her entire life to her son Jesus. We recall her response to the Archangel Gabriel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-louis-marie-grignion-de-montfort-450

ⁱⁱ franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-louis-mary-grignion-de-montfort

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid (Catholic News Agency).

^{iv} Ibid.

^v de Montfort, Louis; Hermenegild, Brother. True Devotion to Mary (p. 10).