



33 Days
to
Morning
Glory

Retreat
Companion

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MARIAN STOCKBRIDGE PRESS
MA 01263



2015

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Available from:
Marian Helpers Center
Stockbridge, MA 01263

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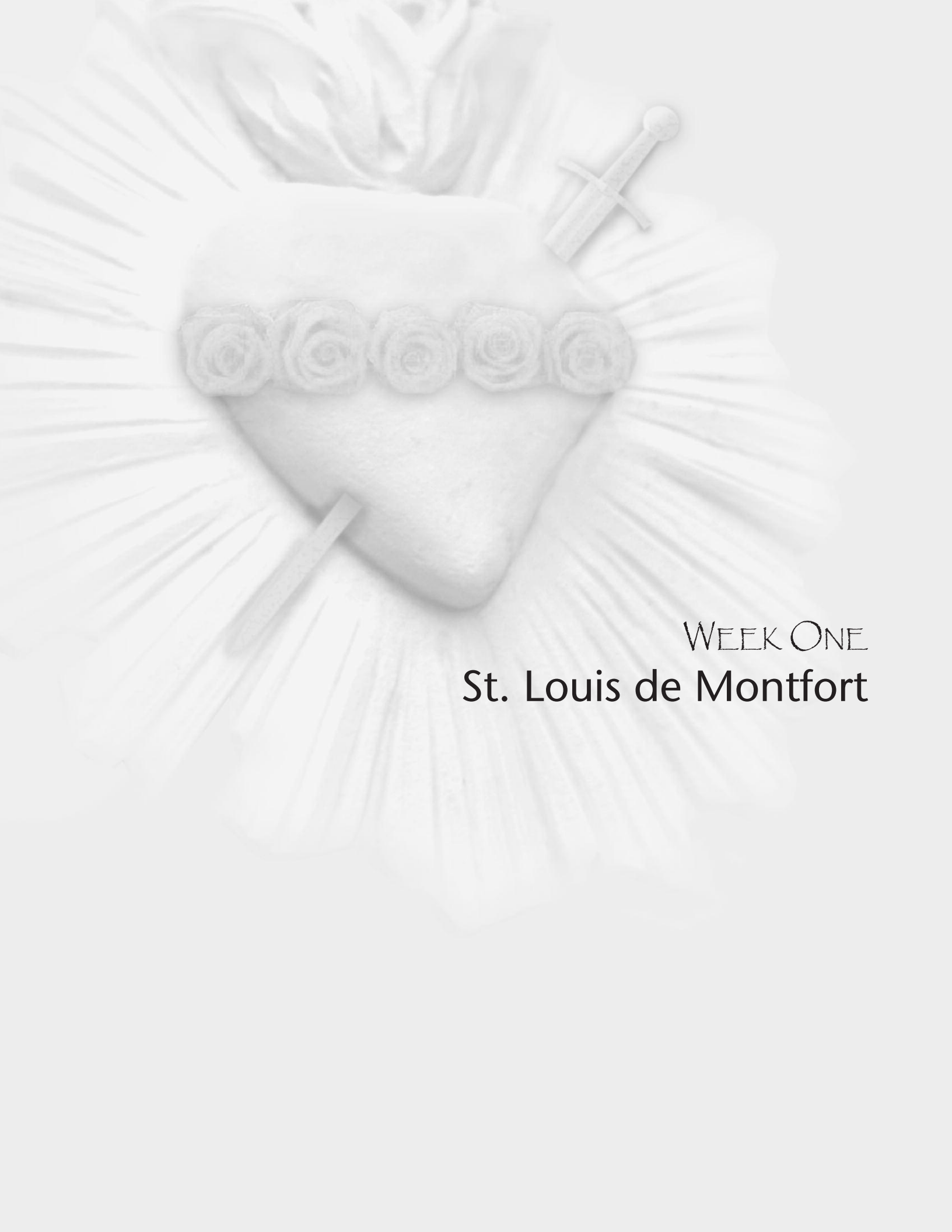
Imprimi Potest:
Very Rev. Kazimierz Chwalek, MIC
Provincial Superior
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy Province
October 7, 2011

ISBN: 978-1-59614-252-7

Editing and Proofreading:
David Came, Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, and Sarah Chichester

Cover Art: "Immakulata" image © Rektoratskirche
St. Peter, Kunst und Kultur Referat

Printed in the United States of America



WEEK ONE
St. Louis de Montfort

Prayer for Week One — The *Angelus*

The word “*Angelus*” comes from the first word of the prayer in Latin. This age-old prayer honors the mystery of the Incarnation and is traditionally prayed at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. A famous painting by Jean-Francois Millet entitled “*Angelus*” recalls for us the deep Marian piety that has permeated the lives of so many of our Catholic brothers and sisters from the past. It depicts two farmers, a man and a woman, standing in a field. The man reverently holds his hat and the woman devoutly folds her hands as they both bow their heads in prayer. It’s the end of the workday, and they’re reminded to pray the *Angelus* by the tolling bells from the church tower in the distant background: three tolls for each invocation and Hail Mary and nine tolls for the prayer at the end.²

The *Angelus* can be traced to the 13th century and has been recommended to the faithful by numerous Popes. In our own day, Pope Paul VI praised and explained it at length in his 1974 apostolic exhortation on devotion to Mary, *Marialis Cultus*. For the next eight days (the Introduction and Week One — St. Louis de Montfort), we’ll begin our time with this *Retreat Companion* with the *Angelus*. It would be wonderful to pray it at noon and at the end of the workday as well. Do whatever is most convenient for you, and don’t lose the focus on our prayer priority: reading the daily text from the retreat book and the subsequent prayerful pondering.

The *Angelus*

(Usually recited while standing.)

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord,

R. Be it done to me according to Thy word.

Hail, Mary, etc. ...

[With the following words, bow your head out of reverence for the mystery of the Incarnation.]

V. And the Word was made flesh,

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail, Mary, etc. ...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

Regina Caeli

(Said during the Easter season in place of the Angelus.)

O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia,
The Son whom it was your privilege to bear; alleluia,
Has risen as He said; alleluia
Pray to God for us; alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary; alleluia.
R. Because the Lord has truly risen; alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, You were pleased to give joy to the world through the resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; grant, we beseech Thee, that through His mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

V. Glory be to the Father, etc. ...

Day 1

The Passionate Saint of Brittany

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Angelus*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

1. Consider the place where you grew up and your birth family. The birthplace and the parents of St. Louis de Montfort had an impact on his intense personality and development. Saint Louis then directed all his fiery zeal to the Blessed Virgin Mary, because he understood the importance of laboring to bring souls to Jesus through Mary. What is it about your birth family and birthplace that might contribute to or provide obstacles to your own growth in holiness and desire to belong more completely to the Blessed Mother?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. Saint Louis died at age 43, only 16 years after being ordained a priest. In today's world, that may seem like a long time. What circumstances, employments, or relationships have lasted that long, or longer, in your life? (For example: marriage, parenthood, job, parish membership, a ministry.) What benefits do you count because of those years? Were there any difficulties in continuing for that period of time? What would you say to those who might want to imitate you in being faithful to any of those commitments for that number of years?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Saint Louis makes a pilgrimage to Rome, walking the entire 1,000 miles, to ask the Pope for advice. He receives from the Pope the title “Apostolic Missionary” and is commissioned to return to France to preach and teach. What is the longest distance you have ever walked (physically or metaphorically) in order to win something, to accomplish something, or for any reason whatsoever? Were you seeking to help others or was this a private quest? Were you successful?

4. The real question is this: “Do we have a fire in our hearts as we begin our retreat?” Well, do we? Reconsider what may have been your motive to begin this retreat and contemplate total consecration to Jesus through Mary. Have you asked Mary to start a divine fire in your heart for Jesus? What obstacles might she find there that would interfere with beginning that burning desire to love Jesus? How will you overcome them?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to make this retreat with generosity and zeal.*

Day 2

St. Louis’s Influence on the Church

1. Saint Louis was a priest with great trust in God. When he found out that a huge monument he had helped to build for more than a year was suddenly to be destroyed, he said to the thousands who had gathered for the blessing, “Let us build it in our hearts. Blessed be God.” What was your reaction to that story? Have you ever experienced a similar, severe disappointment with something that you thought seemed to be pleasing to God? Were you able to bless God in spite of the disappointment?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. Part of Marian consecration involves entrusting ourselves totally to Mary so she can bring us to Jesus. And she does so in union with her spouse, the Holy Spirit, in the best way possible. For her to bring us to Jesus, though, we need to let go of always trying to do everything ourselves and from thinking that everything depends on us. Take your best guess at the following questions: What is the first thing that I need to become detached from? Will it be difficult to become detached from it? Will it take time?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Pope John Paul II called reading de Montfort’s book *True Devotion to Mary* “a decisive turning point” in his life. What one or two books have you read (besides the Bible) that have had “decisive” influence on your life, either pointing you in a new direction or toward a new career, introducing you to a new relationship, or deepening your spiritual life? Did you recommend those books to anyone or give them as gifts?

4. No less than six Popes were influenced by the teachings of St. Louis de Montfort. If you had your choice of someone to influence with your life, your friendship, or your thoughts, whom might that be? Why would you want to influence that person? (Choose someone living or someone past or even someone in the future.)

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Prepare me to give myself fully to living out this true and solid devotion.*

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Day 3

De Montfort’s Consecration (Part One)

1. Mary is fully human. She gave her whole self, her whole life, and her whole being to doing God’s will, and she continues to do so from heaven. [See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2622 on Mary’s “*Fiat.*”] The ending prayer from yesterday (“give myself fully”) raises a question: To what, if anything, have I given myself fully in the past? My vocation? Marriage? Friendship? Parenthood? A career? Baptism? Confirmation? Do I know what fully giving myself means?

Horizontal lines for writing.

2. If we were baptized as infants, our baptismal vows were made by others on our behalf. However, we renew our baptismal vows whenever the Easter season comes around. During such times, we’re asked if we reject the devil and all his works and whether we believe in each of the statements of the Creed. How serious is a vow in today’s world anyway? Reflect on the vow you made to God at your Baptism, and on the vows you made on your wedding day (if you are married). Do you know the date of your Baptism? Do you celebrate it?

Horizontal lines for writing.

3. Saint Louis says with the Church that the day of our Baptism is the most significant day of our lives! Can you name some other significant days in your life? (Wedding day, graduation day, awards or recognition received on a special day.) What relationships are reflected in each of these days? Why does our relationship with God make our baptismal day so important? (see CCC, nn. 1265-1270). List some ways we can celebrate baptismal days to keep them as significant occasions in our lives.

4. Mary’s humility humbles Satan even more than the divine power. Are you ready to strive to imitate Mary’s humility? What’s the difference between humility and humiliation? When we don’t seek the former, we sometimes encounter the latter. With which of your family and friends do you find it the easiest to be humble?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Give me the grace to reject Satan and follow Christ more closely.*

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Day 4

De Montfort's Consecration (Part Two)

1. We are asked, "Why should we give ourselves to Mary?" What was your first and immediate answer? Was it, "Because she's sinless, totally without sin"? Or was it "Because she belongs totally to God, her whole life is God's"? Or was it "Because she's human like us and has compassion for her own"? Which answer is most important to you in your relationship to Mary? (Of course, they're all important, but which one especially touches you at this moment?)

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 1.

2. One of the reasons we give ourselves to Mary is in imitation of Jesus, who gave himself to her! When we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary, when we give everything to her, we deepen our relationship with her, a relationship of child to mother. In order to make us safe, secure, forgiven, blessed, and graced by Jesus, her Son, what might she decide for us? Are you anxious about letting her make decisions in certain areas of your life? How might you pray (talk to her) about those decisions?

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 2.

3. The retreat mentions four intimate aspects of our lives that we give to Mary: first, our body; second, our soul; third, our exterior goods present and future; fourth, our interior and spiritual goods past, present, and future. That’s quite a gift! In fact, it’s the same kind of gift that Mary gave to God when she said, “*Fiat mihi*” (“Let it be done to me”). We can truly say that Mary consecrated herself, in a particularly intimate way, to God alone. Reflect on the idea that our total consecration to Jesus through Mary is in some sense an imitation of her consecration to God. Record your thoughts here:

4. Though after consecration you cannot insist that the graces given to you (in offering your sufferings and prayers) be given to the person you want them applied to, what might you say to Mary as you give her all the merits of your life and works? What freedom is implied in letting her have all the value of your good actions? (By the way, when we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we can and *should* still pray for our loved ones, and Mary really does take care of them — even better than we can. She is not outdone in generosity! Consider endnote n. 17 on page 184 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.)

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to give myself entirely to Jesus through Mary.*

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Day 5

Should We Really Give Mary Everything? (Part One)

1. As we begin to contemplate the reality of giving Mary everything, let's remember the generosity of life practiced by priests, brothers, nuns, consecrated single persons, and the faithfully married, all of whom offer themselves to God according to their state in life. The generous giving of oneself is not just for us who are on this retreat — everyone is called in some way to give everything to God. Marian consecration makes it easier, quicker, surer, more perfect ... how?

Horizontal lines for writing response to question 1.

2. One of the benefits of giving everything to Mary is that she augments our gifts and makes them more perfect. (Recall St. Louis's analogy of the peasant and the king on page 41 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.) Which of your gifts would you especially like to become more perfect before God gets it? What would you ask of Mary to perfect it?

Horizontal lines for writing response to question 2.

3. Mary is not outdone in generosity. How can this be so? What gifts does she have that allow her to be the most generous of human beings? She sends the most generous graces on the people we love as we continue to pray for them before, during, and after the consecration, and she adds her intercession as Queen of Heaven. How generous are you? How many generous people do you know, and what are they generous with? Their time? Their money? Their willingness to be compassionate? Are these qualities of generosity ones you practice?

4. Mary loves to give the gifts of Jesus to others. Read the story of the wedding feast of Cana in John’s Gospel, chapter 2. List all the merciful gifts of Mary recorded in that story (there are many, not the least of which is the wine). Pretend you are the bridegroom or the bride. What would you say to Mary after the miracle is made known to you?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me be generous in giving all I am and have to Mary.

Day 6

Should We Really Give Mary Everything? (Part Two)

1. As we closed yesterday, we asked Mary’s spouse, the Holy Spirit, to help us be generous in giving all to Mary. When in the past have we needed help in being generous or in giving gifts? One way to help someone to be generous is to teach them *how* to be generous. As children, our parents and teachers taught us how to give gifts to others. How has God been teaching you to be generous? How have you taught others to be generous?

Handwriting lines for response to question 1.

2. When the Angel Gabriel comes to announce the Incarnation to Mary, he says “Hail, Full of Grace.” Mary’s graces are a plentitude of God’s love in which we participate by giving all our merits to her! The issue really is one of trust: Do we trust her? The first way we learn to trust another is by getting to know the person. What have you done to get to know Mary?³

Handwriting lines for response to question 2.

3. Frequently, we are asked to “give what we can afford” to charities, even from the pulpit. Yet Christ says to the rich, young man, “If you will be perfect, sell what you have and come follow me” (Mk 10:21). How serious are we about spiritual perfection? What spiritual, physical, interior, or exterior goods do we still fear to let go of? Why?

4. What concerns or apprehensions do you still have as this first week nears its close? Fear of the loss of control of your spiritual life by giving all to Mary? Do you fear purgatory? At what level is your self-concern interfering with your desire to draw close to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to give great glory to God by giving all I am and have to Mary.

Day 7

A Quick, Easy, and Secure Way to Holiness

1. An essential part of growing in holiness involves dying to self. This is *not* an easy task. After all, self-preservation is deeply ingrained in all of us. To help us die to self, we are called to bear our daily crosses. Although we often complain about them, St. Louis says that crosses are “the greatest graces and favors of Heaven.” And while Jesus says, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:27), he also says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). We must depend on supernatural help for bearing our crosses in life. Do you have a short list of crosses or a long one? Write out a list of crosses and blessings. (Yes, as the saints remind us, crosses are also blessings.) How have you asked for supernatural help up to now (as you prepare for consecration)?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. Have you ever heard the phrase to “offer up” something, either for another person or some special intention? What was your internal response? Did you ask for the grace you need to do this? How will Marian consecration help with this aspect of your spiritual efforts?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Saint Louis describes making a statue from a mold as being much quicker than actually carving it. Imagine being poured into the mold of Mary. Think of being enveloped by her love of God, her happiness in doing God’s will, her prayers before the throne of God, her close relationship to Jesus. Describe your longing to be part of Mary’s virginal and maternal holiness.

4. Security — we all look for it in daily life. We use house alarms and car alarms, change our online passwords, and monitor our credit card statements for fraudulent charges. Some carry licensed weapons. Others hire bodyguards. Some buy expensive security software. All this to protect physical life and possessions. What about Marian consecration gives you the most comfort and security? Talk to Mary about this. Record your conversation here:

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to praise you for such a quick, easy, and secure path to holiness!*

WEEK ONE: Summary

Having just completed seven days of preparation for total consecration to Jesus through Mary, an entire week of the 33 days is now part of your spiritual journey with Mary to God. Give God thanks for this past week in a short prayer of gratitude for the thoughts, events, and personal support of your friends in the small group who accompany you on this pilgrimage. If you are making this retreat alone, mention those among your family and friends whom you know pray for you. You may write the prayer here:

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ St. Louis de Montfort ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Angelus*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives, as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 1. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. Recall a special need in your life that you entrusted to the intercession of Mary or a favorite saint. (This is often known as a “special intention.”) Maybe you prayed a novena for it. Maybe the intention moved you to ask for help, for a blessing, or for an answer. What prayer or novena did you pray? What did you hope for? Was it for an answer? Were you answered in a way that surprised you? Consoled you? Was there a new insight from that prayer?
2. Saint Louis died at age 43, only 16 years after being ordained a priest. In today’s world, that may seem like a long time. What circumstances, employments, or relationships have lasted that long, or longer, in your life? (For example: marriage, parenthood, job, parish membership, a ministry.) What benefits do you count because of those years? Were there any difficulties in continuing for that period of time? What would you say to those who might want to imitate you in being faithful to any of those commitments for that number of years?
3. Part of Marian consecration involves entrusting ourselves totally to Mary so she can bring us to Jesus. And she does so in union with her spouse, the Holy Spirit, in the best way possible. For her to bring us to Jesus, though, we need to let go of always trying to do everything ourselves and from thinking that everything depends on us. Take your best guess at the following questions: What is the first thing that I need to become detached from? Will it be difficult to become detached from it? Will it take time?
4. Mary’s humility humbles Satan even more than the divine power. Are you ready to strive to imitate Mary’s humility? What’s the difference between humility and humiliation? When we don’t seek the former, we sometimes encounter the latter. With which of your family and friends do you find it the easiest to be humble?
5. Though after consecration you cannot insist that the graces given to you (in offering your sufferings and prayers) be given to the person you want them applied to, what might you say to Mary as you give her all the merits of your life and works? What freedom is implied

in letting her have all the value of your good actions? (By the way, when we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we can and *should* still pray for our loved ones, and Mary really does take care of them — even better than we can. She is not outdone in generosity! Consider endnote n. 17 on page 184 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.)

6. Mary loves to give the gifts of Jesus to others. Read the story of the wedding feast of Cana in John's Gospel, chapter 2. List all the merciful gifts of Mary recorded in that story (there are many, not the least of which is the wine). Pretend you are the bridegroom or the bride. What would you say to Mary after the miracle is made known to you?
7. What concerns or apprehensions do you still have as this first week nears its close? Fear of the loss of control of your spiritual life by giving all to Mary? Do you fear purgatory? At what level is your self-concern interfering with your desire to draw close to Mary?
8. Have you ever heard the phrase to “offer up” something, either for another person or some special intention? What was your internal response? Did you ask for the grace you need to do this? How will Marian consecration help with this aspect of your spiritual efforts?

Generous Additional Response (if there's time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Help me to make this retreat with generosity and zeal.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Prepare me to give myself fully to living out this true and solid devotion.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Give me the grace to reject Satan and follow Christ more closely.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to give myself entirely to Jesus through Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me be generous in giving all I have to Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to praise you for such a quick, easy, and secure path to holiness!

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 2 — DVD NOTES

St. Louis de Montfort

Two Key Points

1. Effects of Marian Consecration

a) Mary's generosity _____

b) Mary augments our giving _____

Mary takes better care _____

d) Mary wants us to continue to pray for our loved ones _____

2. Crosses Made Sweet

Notes

