

DAY 33: Putting It All Together

For the last four days, we've been reviewing the last four weeks of our retreat. During these days, we've not only been reviewing the material, we've also begun to put together all that we've learned. I say we've *begun* to put it together. We're probably not yet at a point where we can grasp the manifold truth of Marian consecration "in a single gaze," as John Paul put it. To get to this point, a unifying statement may be helpful, something like the "First Principle and Foundation" that St. Ignatius of Loyola came up with to summarize and give clarity and focus to his spirituality.

Actually, I think we need more than just a statement. We need a prayer, something we can frequently repeat, even everyday, that not only reminds us of the meaning of our consecration but actually expresses the gift of ourselves to Jesus through Mary.

While several of the saints we've learned from during these past weeks have written excellent prayers or "formulas" of consecration, I'm not going to present their formulas here. Instead, I'm going to present an updated prayer of consecration that combines the main insights we've covered during the retreat. Even though I'm no saint, I feel confident to do this because I'm making use of the actual words and ideas of all four of the Marian saints of our retreat. Moreover, I feel emboldened to compose this new prayer because of the words of Pope Pius XII on the occasion of St. Louis de Montfort's canonization:

True devotion ... aims essentially at union with Jesus under the guidance of Mary. *The form and practice of this devotion may vary according to time, place, and personal inclination.* Within the bounds of sound and safe doctrine, of orthodoxy and dignity of worship, *the Church leaves her children a just margin of liberty.* She is conscious that true and perfect devotion to Our Lady *is not bound up in any particular modes* in such a way that one of them can claim a monopoly over the others.

Inspired by these words and taking the liberty the Pope gives us, I offer the following updated prayer of consecration that aims to capture the essentials of what we've learned during our retreat. Now, if it doesn't fit with your personal inclination, don't worry. You can always take the liberty to write your own prayer or use one written by the saints. Anyway, here's a summary statement of what we've learned, a statement that's also a prayer from the heart:

I, _____, a repentant sinner, renew and ratify today in your hands, O Immaculate Mother, the vows of my Baptism. I renounce Satan and resolve to follow Jesus Christ even more closely than before.

Mary, I give you my heart. Please set it on fire with love for Jesus. Make it always attentive to his burning thirst for love and for souls. Keep my heart in your most pure Heart that I may love Jesus and the members of his Body with your own perfect love.

Mary, I entrust myself totally to you: my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions. Please make of me, of all that I am and have, whatever most pleases you. Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for bringing the greatest possible glory to God. If I fall, please lead me back to Jesus. Wash me in the blood and water that flow from his pierced side, and help me never to lose my trust in this fountain of love and mercy.

With you, O Immaculate Mother — you who always do the will of God — I unite myself to the perfect consecration of Jesus as he offers himself in the Spirit to the Father for the life of the world. Amen.

Tomorrow, you'll consecrate yourself (or re-consecrate yourself) totally to Jesus through Mary. And that's great! To do this, though, you'll need a prayer of consecration. Whether you use the one I just presented, one from the saints, or one of your own making, I encourage you to meditate on its meaning today. Such meditation on the prayer of consecration is a perfect preparation for Consecration Day.