

DAY 5 - Should We Really Give Mary *Everything*? (Part One)

The second part of de Montfort's formula of consecration says that we should give Mary everything, including "our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future." Isn't this a bit too much? No. It's perfect. It's beautiful. Let's see why by learning how the offering affects others and ourselves.

In regard to others, when we fully consecrate ourselves to Mary, we lose the unconditional right to distribute the value of our prayers and good actions to others. In other words, we give the rights to the grace (merit) of our prayers to Mary. We're telling her, "Mary, I give you the right to distribute the grace of my prayers as you see fit."

Making such a gift to Mary has a big benefit. It ensures that the grace of our prayers will be used in the best way possible. It works like this: Because of her unique vantage point from heaven, and on account of her most intimate communion with her Divine Son, Mary can best determine which people are most in need of our prayers. For instance, seeing some forgotten person in China about to die in despair, Mary can take the grace of our prayers (and "offered up" sufferings) and use it to help that dying person to trust in God and accept his mercy.

Now, perhaps this idea has got some of us thinking:

Well, that's great. I'm happy to help the dying person in China, whom I don't know, but I'd be disappointed if I therefore couldn't use the grace of my prayers and good works to help the people I do know, like my family and friends. I'm worried that if I give Mary the right to distribute the grace of my prayers and good works, then I thereby lose the right to pray for those whom I especially love, even if they're less in need than other people in the world.

This is a legitimate concern, but there's no need to worry. Why? For two reasons: First, Mary makes the good things we give her more perfect. In other words, she augments, increases, and purifies the spiritual gifts and merits we give her. When we give them to her, because she makes them more perfect, there's more grace and merit to go around. St. Louis uses an unforgettable analogy to explain this:

It is as if a peasant, wishing to gain the friendship and benevolence of the king, went to the queen and presented her with a fruit which was his whole revenue, in order that she might present it to the king. The queen, having accepted the poor little offering from the peasant, would place the fruit on a large and beautiful dish of gold, and so, on the peasant's behalf, would present it to the king. Then the fruit, however unworthy in itself to be a king's present, would become worthy of his majesty because of the dish of gold on which it rested and the person who presented it.

Here's the second reason we shouldn't worry: Mary is never outdone in generosity. So, if we're so generous as to give her the right to distribute the grace of our prayers and good works, she'll surely be especially generous to our loved ones. In fact, she'll take even better care of our loved ones than we ourselves can. For instance, let's say one of our family members or friends is in need of prayer, and we don't know it. Well, Mary knows it, and she'll make sure that that person doesn't go without. Giving Mary the right to distribute the grace of our prayers and good works doesn't mean we can't still pray for our loved ones. We can and should pray for them. It's just that we give Mary the final say in deciding to whom and for what purpose the grace of our prayers and good works should be applied.

Remember, Mary is not outdone in generosity. She especially hears the prayers of those of us who have given her everything - including the value of all our good works - and she wants us to tell her of the people and intentions we hold in our hearts. If we've given her everything, is there any doubt that she'll be generous in giving whatever good we ask for to those who are dear to us?

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary. Help me be generous in giving all I am and have to Mary.