

Homily for Saturday, 28 April 2018

(Jn14:7-14) Among saints, Louis de Montfort, whose feast we celebrate today, is altogether unique. He is the best known proponent of a priceless theological singularity, namely: a genuine Christian Gnosticism. Every other Gnostic doctrine that preceded his proved to be a heresy. True, in the Gnostic universe, matter is evil, not sin! Prescinding, however, from this pathetic dualism, let's instead consider Gnosticism's other main feature. Accordingly, Gnosticism, understood here in a positive light, would be secret insider knowledge that takes a privy elite to a whole new level of piety. This is exactly what Philip sought in today's gospel when he said to our Lord, "Show us the Father, and that will be enough for us!"

In the Old Testament, God only manifested Himself sublimely to a few intimate friends in particular, namely: Jacob, Moses and Elijah. In the New Testament, however, everyone is called to be a mystic. "Have I been with you so long a time," replied Jesus, "and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Our Lord is the visible image of the invisible God, (Col1:15) our window into the Divine Nature. To see Him with the eyes of faith is to see the Father. This vision in turn makes us Catholics the only true Gnostics. We share in the biggest secret ever: the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Many find this dogma too abstract. Baptism, however, makes it supremely relevant. Through this sacrament, Jesus' Father actually becomes ours as well. St. Louis de Montfort in turn initiates us into yet another well-kept secret, namely: that Jesus' mother is also ours through baptism.

"Just as... there are secrets enabling us to do certain natural things quickly, easily and at little cost," explains St. Louis, "so in the spiritual life there are secrets... The devotion that I propose to explain is one of these secrets of grace, for it is unknown to most Christians." (True Devotion, 82) "This devotion is a smooth... path which Jesus Christ opened up in coming to us and in which there is no obstruction to prevent us from reaching him. It is quite true that we can attain to divine union by other roads, but these involve many more crosses and exceptional setbacks and many difficulties that we cannot easily overcome. We would have to pass through spiritual darkness, engage in struggles for which we are not prepared, endure bitter agonies, scale steep mountains, tread upon painful thorns, and cross frightful deserts. But when we take the path of Mary, we walk smoothly and calmly." (TD, 152)

Later, our saint explains True Devotion with the aid of another analogy: "There is a vast difference," he writes, "between carving a statue by blows of hammer and chisel and making a statue by using a mold. Sculptors and statue-makers work hard and need plenty of time to make statues by the first method. But the second method does not involve much work and takes very little time. St. Augustine speaking to our Blessed Lady says, "You are worthy to be called the mold of God." Mary is a mold capable of forming people into the image of the God-man. Anyone who is cast into this divine mold is quickly shaped and molded into Jesus and Jesus into him. At little cost and in a short time he will become Christ-like since he is cast into the very same mold that fashioned the God-man." (TD, 219) Such as these "do not rely on their own skill but on the perfection of the mold." (TD,220) "But remember that only molten and liquefied substances may be poured into a mold. That means that you must crush and melt down the old Adam in you if you wish to acquire the likeness of the new Adam in Mary." (TD,221)

So far, our saint has compared Mary to an easy footpath and a perfect mold. But the best analogy by far for True Devotion is found within the very pages of Sacred Scripture. It was developed by St. Paul himself courtesy of the Holy Spirit. I'm speaking here about the doctrine of Christ's Mystical Body. Through baptism, Christians become members of one mystical body of which Christ is the Head. (1Cor12:13) Relying on this doctrine, St. Louis de Montfort draws the obvious conclusion: "If Jesus Christ, the head of mankind, is born of [Mary,] the... members of this head, must also as a necessary consequence be born of her. One and the same mother does not give birth to the head without the members nor to the members without the head... In the order of grace likewise the head and the members are born of the same mother." (TD,32)

Through baptism, Jesus' parents become ours as well; God becomes our Father and Mary becomes our mother. St. Therese of Lisieux's Little Way is based on the first of these truths, namely: that we are children of God our Father. St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion is based on the second: that we are also children of Mary our mother. God's Fatherhood of the Church is an overtly Christian doctrine. Mary's motherhood of the Church is covertly Christian since there are many today – even among Catholics – who still aren't aware of this profound truth. St. Louis de Montfort's spiritual genius was to inform us of it, thereby ushering in a new age of Marian awareness and devotion.

The two approved shortcuts in the spiritual life – St. Therese’s Little Way and St. Louis’ True Devotion – involve God the Father’s paternity over Christians and Mother Mary’s maternity respectively. Both types of spiritual parenthood arise from one and the same baptism. Both are explained by one and the same doctrine concerning Christ’s Mystical Body. What’s more, both shortcuts boil down to hyper-piety, which is simply a superabundant degree of the respect and gratitude that any child owes his parents. St. Louis Marie de Montfort, true devotee of Mary! Pray for us! Amen!