

Here is a homily for today, Tuesday of the First Week of Lent. Unfortunately, there is no Hungarian translation! Also, please find attached to this email the 4 page homily that I gave to the Legion of Mary this past Saturday. Today's homily came from the first page of this talk. Likewise, no Hungarian translation! / Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!

(Mt6:7-15) For most of us, baptism was a lifetime ago. The road leading to the present day was filled with many doubts and anxieties, faults and failings, but the way to journey's end, to the summit of perfection, may seem immeasurably more difficult. Time and again we seem to confess the same sins. Sometimes it seems like we're getting nowhere fast – or even going backwards. Thomas a Kempis put it this way: "If each year should see one fault rooted out from us, we would go quickly on to perfection. But on the contrary, we often feel that we were better and holier in the beginning of our conversion than after many years of profession. Zeal and progress ought to increase day by day; yet now it seems a great thing if one is able to retain some portion of his first ardor." (Imitation of Christ, 1.11.5) Faced with this discouraging state of affairs, you might have wondered if there isn't, after all, an easier way, some shortcut to perfection. If so, rest assured, you are in good company! The saints themselves have been preoccupied with this same question.

Two saints in particular have indeed discovered shortcuts to holiness. They are St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Louis de Montfort. Here's what St. Therese wrote: "I have always wanted to be a saint. Alas! I have always noticed that when I compared myself to the saints, there is between them and me the same difference that exists between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and the obscure grain of sand trampled underfoot by passers-by. Instead of becoming discouraged, I said to myself: God cannot inspire unrealizable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am, with all my imperfections. But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new. We are living now in an age of inventions, and we no longer have to take the trouble of climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, an elevator has replaced these very successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway to perfection... The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather had to remain little and become this more and more." (Story of a Soul, 10)

Listen now to what St. Louis de Montfort wrote: "Just as in nature there are secrets enabling us to do certain natural things quickly, easily and at little cost, so in the spiritual life there are secrets which enable us to perform works rapidly, smoothly and with facility. Such works are, for example, emptying ourselves of self-love, filling ourselves with God, and attaining perfection. The devotion that I propose to explain is one of these secrets of grace, for it is unknown to most Christians. Only a few devout people know of it and it is practiced and appreciated by fewer still." (True Devotion, 82)

These two shortcuts amount to one and the same thing, namely: becoming a child in spirit, with this subtle difference: St. Therese would have us strive to become a better child of God our Father, while St. Louis de Montfort would have us strive to become a better child of Mary, our Mother. No one has God as Father who does not also have Mary as mother. We were adopted by both of them at our Baptism. Therefore, we're talking about one and the same child here, so St. Therese's Little Way and St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion are really two sides of the same coin. Moreover, this secret to holiness was revealed for the first time by our Lord Himself in today's gospel, wherein He taught us to address God in prayer as our Father. We've all said the Our Father countless times. It's by far the most explicated text of Scripture. Do we realize, however, that this most perfect of prayers contains within it the key to holiness? If God is our Father, then we are His children. Elsewhere, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt18:3)

The pagans made long prayers because they were afraid to omit the name of some god or the mention of

some petition. They asked for an egg half expecting a scorpion. (Lk11:12) It was as if they were defendants in a courtroom appealing before some strict judge. Their mindset was in stark contradiction to the trust that exists between a child and its father. What's more, the pagans thought the length or eloquence of their prayers could earn God's attention. I know what you're thinking. Don't we multiply words when we recite the Holy Rosary? – Yes, but our intention is the exact opposite. In the Rosary, repetition isn't supposed to draw God's attention down upon us. Rather, it helps us keep our attention fixed on Him. What counts is not so much how our prayer is made, but who makes it, namely: a beloved child who petitions his loving Father – and immaculate mother. So be it! Amen!