

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY
By St. Louis de Montfort

Hello! My name is Anne Collins and I am happy that you have decided to read and study St. Louis de Montfort's life-changing book, "True Devotion to Mary." I hope that you will find the DVD presentation of this book helpful in your journey of growing closer to Jesus through the hands and heart of His Mother. I first read this book in 1995 when I heard that Pope John Paul II had memorized it. It changed my life and I have read it and made the consecration every year since. I was invited by a group of friends to begin leading a study on the book in 2005. It was an incredible blessing and honor for me to lead others through this wonderful book for 10 years.

Before you begin the program, here is some "housekeeping" information that I always sent to my groups each year.

1. Everyone has very busy schedules, so if you ever need to come late or leave early or miss a meeting, that is perfectly fine.
2. If you miss a meeting and would like to make it up (don't feel that you have to), you can try to come to one of the other locations that week, if they are available in your area. If that is not possible, check with your group leader about the possibility of borrowing or purchasing one of the DVDs. Another option is to watch the meeting on www.youtube.com under "Montfort True Devotion." These meetings were recorded in 2012-2013. Note that, being several years old, the prayers and study questions may be slightly different. Those videos can also be accessed on the True Devotion webpage at www.stgertrude.org/tdm. Be sure to check the paragraph numbers (listed at the bottom of each video) to make sure you watch the correct one.
3. **Important note** - please do not worry if you not are able to catch up! I can't stress this enough. The sections do not really build upon each other and you certainly will have no problem following along if you miss a meeting (even if you miss several in a row). So please don't feel pressured or overwhelmed if you fall behind and please don't stop coming for that reason. The Holy Spirit will always have something for you at each meeting. People join the group at different times all year long and it's never been a problem to have missed sections. The important thing is to make your total consecration at the end!
4. Be sure that everyone has a copy of the prayers for the start of the meetings. They can be found on the True Devotion website (www.stgertrude.org/tdm). The first prayer is taken from the back of the book and was written (primarily) by St. Louis de Montfort. The phrase, "unto the fullness of His Perfect Age," is used in Scripture (Eph 4:13) and refers to growing in maturity in faith. The second prayer is the *Queen of Angels* prayer. It is no secret that there is a spiritual battle going on and Genesis 3:15 tells us that it is Mary who will crush the serpent's head, so we need to invoke her, especially during the evil times in which we live. This course has been entrusted to Mary under the title of "Our Lady of Good Counsel" and until recently, that was the image on the cover of this book. We ask for Our Lady of Fatima's intercession and will be discussing the importance of Fatima throughout the year. We invoke the intercession of Mary's family and the great Marian Saints of our time. Finally, we call upon Montfort Father, Patrick Gaffney, SMM, who passed away in July of 2012 and who lovingly shared his notes with me on this book back in 2005.

5. I read the entire book out loud on the DVDs, line by line, and pause to go over the study questions, which are located on the True Devotion website.
6. If you are able to print an extra copy of the study questions for someone who doesn't have a computer or printer, that would be very helpful.
7. About the book: To my knowledge, there are three versions of the book available. St. John Paul II refers to the original French version, "Treatise on True Devotion to Mary." Fr. Frederick Faber translated it to English in the mid-1800's and titled it, "True Devotion to Mary." That is the one we will be using, published by TAN. There is another version that was published by Montfort Publications in the mid-1900's titled, "True Devotion to the *Blessed Virgin*." It is the same book, only it uses more modern language. I prefer the original English translation because to me, the wording is more beautiful and inspiring.
8. There are definitely some challenging parts in this book. The Old English can be awkward to read, the harsh wording (often directed at the Jansenists) can be difficult to take and some of the content, since many of us didn't receive a lot of catechesis on Mary growing up, will sound new and even strange. If there is something that you don't understand or even disagree with, do what Mary did and prayerfully "ponder it" and then come to the meetings so it can be discussed! Remember the statement in Fr. Faber's Preface at the beginning of this book, "The decree was pronounced at Rome declaring (St. Louis de Montfort's) writing (of True Devotion to Mary) to be *exempt from all error*."
9. I want to comment on the name of Mary. When the Montfort Fathers updated the book, they changed "Mary" to "The Blessed Virgin" in the title. This sounds more reverent, but I was troubled by this for a while, because I often refer to her as "Mary," just as St. Louis de Montfort does so often in the book. Then, God revealed to me that her name is so important and so holy that the Church has given us a feast day to honor it on Sept 12th. Also, during Benediction, one of the lines of the *Divine Praises* is, "Blessed be the *Name of Mary*, Virgin and Mother." Fr. Thomas Kempis says about the Holy Name of Mary, "If the malignant one attacks you and hinders your prayer, pay him no heed, increase your praying and praising, but even more, invoke with greater intensity, the Name of Mary," (*Magnificat*, 2008).
10. A very important thing to keep in mind while reading this book is that it was written for Catholics. Please do NOT apply everything that St. Louis de Montfort says to Protestants (especially the negative parts). He is speaking to *well-catechized Catholics*. This book was written only 50 years after the end of the Protestant Reformation (1500 – 1650), so the overwhelming majority of Christians at that time were still Catholics. Most of the Protestants in those days still held many Catholic beliefs, including devotion to the Blessed Mother. Many Protestants today don't realize that Martin Luther and John Calvin honored the Blessed Mother and even believed in the True Presence! The DVD's contain some apologetics so that we can gently help all of our non-Catholic Christian friends and family members to understand that Mary is their Mother, too!
11. Most people don't realize that Vatican II called for a greater, wider devotion to Mary (no surprise, since St. John Paul II was involved). Unfortunately, that message didn't necessarily trickle down to the pews in the 1970's and '80's because, as I understand it, during the Council, there was a dispute as to where to put Mary (Marian Doctrine). Some wanted it in the main document of the Church and others wanted it in a document all by itself. The goal was to put her in the most prominent place possible. Some "theologians" at the time, in conjunction with the deceiver-of-souls (Satan), who never misses an opportunity to destroy Marian devotion, took advantage of this situation and presented it to the world that the

Church didn't know where to "stick" Mary, as if she were of little importance or even some sort of an embarrassment. Of course, nothing could be further the truth! She is SO important that they finally decided, by a very slim margin, to put her in the main document of the Church, *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (Lumen Gentium). Take the time to read it. It is inspiring and beautiful. So, this is one of the reasons why Marian devotion fell by the wayside in the years following Vatican II and sadly, the people of God have suffered much from having devotion to their Heavenly Mother withheld from them. Fortunately, God never abandons His people and thanks to Pope John Paul II and EWTN, Our Lord's Mother is making a comeback! Where there is unprecedented evil, there is unprecedented GRACE. She is Our Lady of Grace!

12. Along with the notes of Fr. Patrick Gaffney, SMM, I also include some comments of another Montfort Father, Fr. Hugh Gillespie, SMM. I also include quotes from many Marian Saints, text from several Marian Popes' encyclicals, Marian Dogmas and finally, my own personal experiences and God-incidences.
13. In June of 2012, all of my notes and study questions were reviewed by Fr. Basil Cole, OP, who, at the time, was Prior of the Dominicans at St. Gertrude parish in Cincinnati. He is now the Professor (Ordinarius) of Moral and Spiritual Theology of the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington DC. You can read his introduction to this study in the document section of the True Devotion webpage.
14. This book is divided into two parts. In the first part, St. Louis de Montfort discusses Marian devotion in general. He discusses why we honor her, her relationship to the Blessed Trinity, her role in salvation history, her role as Mother and Queen, the necessity of praying to her and how we honor her interiorly and exteriorly. The second part concentrates primarily on what St. Louis de Montfort calls the "perfect" devotion to Mary - total consecration.
15. The main goal of this study is to consecrate ourselves totally to Jesus through the heart of Mary. Through the consecration, we formally invite Mary into our hearts in a special way and give her permission to form us into Marian saints. St. Louis de Montfort prepares us for this by teaching us what total consecration means and the benefits we receive from making this consecration, not only for ourselves, but for our families, our neighbors and the whole world. This book is centered on Christ and the best possible means of union with Him is through His Mother. Toward the end of the book, you will begin the 33-day preparation (done at home) before making your consecration to Jesus through Mary (on the Marian Feast of your choice). If this study is done during the school year, there is a beautiful Marian Feast on May 31st, the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For that feast, the 33 days of prayer would conveniently begin on April 28th, the Feast of St. Louis de Montfort.
16. You have been called to read this book for a reason! Mary is building up her army to combat the evil in the world and to bring truth, healing and freedom to souls. Jesus gave us His Mother from the Cross for a reason. He knew we needed a MOTHER! The next sentence in Scripture is important, also. St. John (the beloved disciple, who represents all baptized Christians) took Mary "into his home." We, too, need to take her into our interior, our hearts, that silent place in our souls where the Trinity dwells. True Devotion to Mary/Total Consecration is life-changing! Many people repeat this course because it is "spiritual" in nature and the Holy Spirit reveals more and more each time you read and study it. If you persevere in reading it over and over, a transformation will begin to take place in your life. However, change does not happen overnight. We need patience, time and perseverance. St. Louis de Montfort's promises often sound too good to be true, but they are TRUE.

17. Remember that by honoring Mary, we are not doing *any* disservice to Jesus. Many people have concerns about this. Even Pope John Paul II had this concern. In his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, he writes, “At first, it had seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Marian devotion of my childhood in order to focus more on Christ. Thanks to St. Louis de Montfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually Christocentric; indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.” There is never any need to worry about honoring Mary too much because everything that we give her, she gives *directly* to Jesus. She is the last person who would want to keep anything for herself. Her only focus, her only goal, her only love is Her Son. There is no jealousy or competition between Jesus and His Mother. He loves her infinitely and desires that we should love her as our Mother. He wants us to go to her and seek her intercession because He knows that she is the shortest path to union with Him. The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary beat as one heart.