

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY
St. Louis De Montfort

Comments and Questions for Part II, Chapter IV, “Particular Practices of This Devotion,”
Article 1: **Exterior Practices** (#226 – #256).

We have come to the final chapter (two sections) in the book where St. Louis de Montfort describes the important exterior and interior practices of this devotion. This section on the Exterior Practices needs to be read before you start your 33 days of preparation for consecration, so you may need to jump ahead in the book to cover it. In this section, St. Louis de Montfort alludes to the “first part” of the book as he describes the 33 days of prayer, but unfortunately, those pages of the book are missing. However, the information that he does provide in this section about the four different “phases” of the preparation process is very helpful.

Recall that in the first part of the book, St. Louis de Montfort briefly described what he considers to be fitting interior and exterior practices for anyone who has a devotion to Mary (see #115 - #117). In this chapter, he explains in greater detail those practices which the Holy Spirit may inspire for those souls who choose the path of *perfect* devotion to Mary through total consecration.

Again, St. Louis de Montfort begins his explanation of the exterior practices by describing the 33 days of preparation for consecration. Try to go to Confession during this time, if you can, as you prepare to embark upon this new way of life. According to Fr. Gaffney, St. Louis de Montfort recommended that Catholics make a good confession at least once a month. St. Louis de Montfort urged people not to neglect this gift of Jesus. He said that not only does it bring abundant blessings to the penitent, but it also allows Jesus to be Who He is – Our Redeemer Who yearns to embrace us in His forgiving love. Our Lady helps us to love the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

An important exterior practice that St. Louis de Montfort recommends is devotion to the Holy Rosary. If only Catholics knew how much happier their lives would be and how many graces they would draw down upon their families by praying the family Rosary each day! Outside of the Mass and Sacraments, the Rosary is the most powerful weapon that we have against the devil. St. Padre Pio used to say about the Rosary, “Bring me my weapon.” Look up the 15 promises of the Blessed Virgin to Christians who faithfully pray the Rosary. Read them to your children. Although St. Louis de Montfort’s explanation of the Rosary is beautiful in this section, there is no comparison to his profound insights found in his short book, *The Secret of the Rosary*. His meditations are such that you will never think of the “Hail Mary” and the “Our Father” the same way again.

Questions for paragraphs #226 - #256.

1. In #226, St. Louis de Montfort states that although this devotion is essentially interior, it also must manifest itself exteriorly. Fr. Gaffney says, “Total Consecration is about love. How would it even be possible to hide such love? The Trinity’s Infinite Love for us was manifested (made external) in the Incarnation of the Word; our love, in return, must be manifested by our words and deeds.”

St. Louis de Montfort says that it is important to unite the internal and external practices “because the outward practices, well performed, aid the inward ones; and because they remind man, who is always guided by his senses, of what he has done or ought to do.” He also says in #238 that “man, who shapes his course more often by the senses than by pure faith, easily forgets his obligations towards God unless he has some outward thing to remind him of them.” What external signs does God give us to remind us to be holy? How has the devil attacked these external signs?

2. St. Louis de Montfort describes the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin in #234 - #235. What are Mary’s twelve privileges and grandeurs (see prayer in the back of the book)?

3. The Incarnation is the central mystery of our Faith. Fr. Gaffney says, “All the mysteries of redemption are contained in this compendium of salvation history.” The more we ponder this great mystery, the more we come to understand how important Mary’s role is in the salvation of the world. St. Thomas Aquinas says, “Mary consents to the Incarnation in the place of the entire human nature so that there would be a certain spiritual matrimony between the Son of God and human nature.” The Incarnation is the marriage of God and mankind!

The Feast of the Annunciation on March 25th should become a very special day for you. Not only do we focus on Mary’s humility, her submissiveness to God’s Will and her unique role in the salvation of souls, but through this devotion we also come to understand the great dependence that Jesus had on His Blessed Mother throughout his entire Life beginning at the moment of His Conception. Furthermore, when we contemplate the “excellences and grandeurs” of the mystery of “Jesus Living in Mary,” we gain an insight into the indissoluble union of Christ and His Mother. What does St. Louis de Montfort mean when he states in #248, “This mystery (of the Incarnation) is an abridgement of all mysteries and contains the will and the grace of all?”

4. Do we really understand the beauty and the power of the Holy Rosary? In his book, *The Secret of the Rosary*, St. Louis de Montfort says, “How could there be any prayers (The Our Father and the Hail Mary) more pleasant to God and to the Blessed Virgin or any that are easier, more precious, or more helpful than these two prayers? We should always have them in our hearts and on our lips to honor the Most Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ our Savior, and His most Holy Mother.” He states that sometimes when we pray the Rosary, we should simply meditate on the words and the meaning of the Our Father and the Hail Mary. In #249, St. Louis de Montfort says, “Few Christians, however enlightened, know the real value, merit, excellence and *necessity* of the Hail Mary.” He quotes other Marian Saints as saying that since our salvation began with the Hail Mary, then “the salvation of each one of us in particular is attached to that prayer.” No wonder it is necessary to have at least some amount of devotion to the Blessed Mother (review #39 - #46)!

According to St. Louis de Montfort, what is the proper way to pray the Hail Mary in order to reap all of the blessings that God desires to give us through this beautiful prayer?