

CLAUDE SIGOVIN & MARIO BELOTTI

TOTUS TUUS



A MARIAN WAY TO
CHRIST-WISDOM

To John Paul II
“Mary’s Pope”

I have often invoked her as
the “Star of the New Evangelization”.
Now I point to Mary once again
as the radiant dawn
and sure guide
for our steps...
Once more I say to her:
“Woman, behold your children”
(John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58)

PREFACE

This manual finds its origin in a spiritual intuition of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673-1716) that came to reality in the course of our missionary experience in the Philippines.

Throughout his ministry, Montfort was haunted by the question, “Where does the main problem in the world come from?” as well as by the realization that “the universal failure comes from the Christians’ habitual forgetfulness of the promises and responsibilities of Baptism” (TD 127). Thus he suggested a process that fostered deep Christian awareness in communion with Mary.

Our pastoral experience dates back in 1986 when we were asked by some lay people of Manila to direct the Montfortian Month. We accepted the challenge very enthusiastically and we were rewarded by an atmosphere of unique creativity, inspiring insights and deep sharing. The guidelines were subsequently collected into a book, *The Tutus Tuus Journey*, published in 1988.

This second and extensively revised edition answers the earnest request from many a people throughout the world to be assisted by the Montfortian spirituality on their journey to Christ. Indeed, the encounter with Christ is a “pilgrimage of faith”, John Paul II says in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*.

In the context of such pilgrimage, the Pope continues, Mary “precedes” the people of God (cf. RM 3). In fact, “Marian spirituality... finds a very rich source in the historical experience of individuals and of various Christian communities present among the different peoples and nations of the world. In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments...” (RM 48).

John Paul II spoke from his personal experience: “The reading of this book (*True Devotion to Mary*) was a decisive turning-point in my life. I say ‘turning point’, but in fact it was a long journey... This ‘perfect devotion’ is indispensable to anyone who means to give himself or herself without reserve to Christ and to the work of redemption...” “Remember,...it is from Montfort that I have taken my motto: ‘Totus Tuus’ (I am all yours)...”

The relevance of this process is also testified by the desire of many women and men of today’s society to realize true wholeness in their life. With this in mind, the reader is invited to enter this journey of faith in a spirit of prayer and love, confidently looking forward to the attainment of its reward, the “maturity of Christ in us”.

The Authors
June 03, 2001
Solemnity of Pentecost

ABBREVIATIONS

- The Scripture references are taken from *Jerusalem Bible*

- The Montfortian texts are quoted from *God Alone: The Collected Writings of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort*, Bay Shore, New York: Montfort Publications, 1987. The abbreviations more frequently used in this manual are:
 - **LEW** = *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*
 - **SM** = *The Secret of Mary*
 - **TD** = *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*
 - **MR** = *Methods for Saying the Rosary*

- The documents of the Church most frequently quoted are:
 - **MC** = *Marialis Cultus* (Paul VI)
 - **RM** = *Redemptoris Mater* (John Paul II)

Our Lady of Wisdom

Wooden statue carved by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort

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A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF SAINT LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT

1. His Life

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort was born on January 31, 1673, in Montfort-la-Cane, a small town in Brittany, France. He was the first of eighteen children, of whom seven or eight died very young. His father, Jean-Baptiste, was an ambitious but not very successful lawyer. He was a staunch Christian though, and made sure that he transmitted his faith to his children, providing them with a solid human and religious education. He was helped in this by his wife, Jeanne Robert, who had three brothers in the priesthood.

Louis-Marie did his secondary studies at Rennes, in the College of St. Thomas Becket, run by the Jesuits. In 1692 he left for Paris, in order to undertake his seminary training, placing himself under the guidance of the Sulpicians. The seminary of Saint-Sulpice, in the words of its founder, Jean-Jacques Olier, was described as “a school of spiritual formation... and zeal”.

Ordained to the priesthood in June 5, 1700, in the brief 16 years of his ministry he fulfilled a career of founder, missionary, and writer. In 1703 he organized the nursing and teaching congregation of women, the Daughters of Wisdom, and in 1705 initiated the foundation process of his missionary congregation of men, the Company of Mary or popularly known as Montfort Fathers. Having been named a “missionary apostolic” by pope Clement XI in 1706, he spent the greater part of his priestly years preaching home-missions and retreats throughout Western France.

He died at the age of 43, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, on April 28, 1716. He was beatified in 1888, and canonized on July 20, 1947. His feast is celebrated on April 28.

2. His Teaching

“It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world” (TD 1).

Jesus is “the ultimate end of all our devotions”, but the “way to him, incarnate Wisdom, is Mary” (TD 61).

In other words, “the perfect way to reach our Lord and to be united to him is to choose the great and wonderful journey that he chose for himself, Mary...” (TD 157).

3. His Charism

“My mind’s made up. I am for the road!
With my vagabond humor, I need no abode!
Jesus, dear Master, ready I stand
To preach your Word throughout the land
And through your power at work in me
Make of me your missionary!” (Canticle 22)

Abandoned to Divine Providence, in the steps of the poor Apostles, docile to the Spirit, under the guidance of Mary, Louis-Marie de Montfort preaches Christ, the Wisdom of God, especially to the poor.

4. His Secret

Louis-Marie shares with the Christians of all times a “secret” of holiness, a Marian mystical experience that leads into a deeper union with Christ-Wisdom (cf. SM 1-2).

Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673-1716)
Statue in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome

INTRODUCTION

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Premise

The method and approach used in this manual suggest that the sessions will be experienced in a most profitable way if held in a group or community context. However, the manual can be used for individual journeys as well, such as directed retreats.

1. Method and Approach

a) Throughout the sessions that follow our method will favor a “process” oriented approach. Hence:

- The method’s backbone is the experience of each participant.
- Its input or reflections will be drawn from the Scriptures and the experience of Louis-Marie de Montfort.
- It leads into contextualized prayer.
- It aims at helping the participants to build up an attitude of constant spiritual discernment.
- It favors an atmosphere of family spirit.

b) The process is not a course; rather, it is a “Call” or a “Secret”. Thus writes Montfort: “Here is a secret, chosen soul, which the most High God taught me and which I have not found in any book, ancient or modern. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, I am confiding it to you... Use this secret to become holy and worthy of heaven, and the more you make use of it the more benefit you will derive from it...” (SM 1)

A “Secret”, because:

- It is a “special revelation”
- It is “confidential”
- It is a “spiritual way of life”.

2. Vision, Mission and Goal of this Process

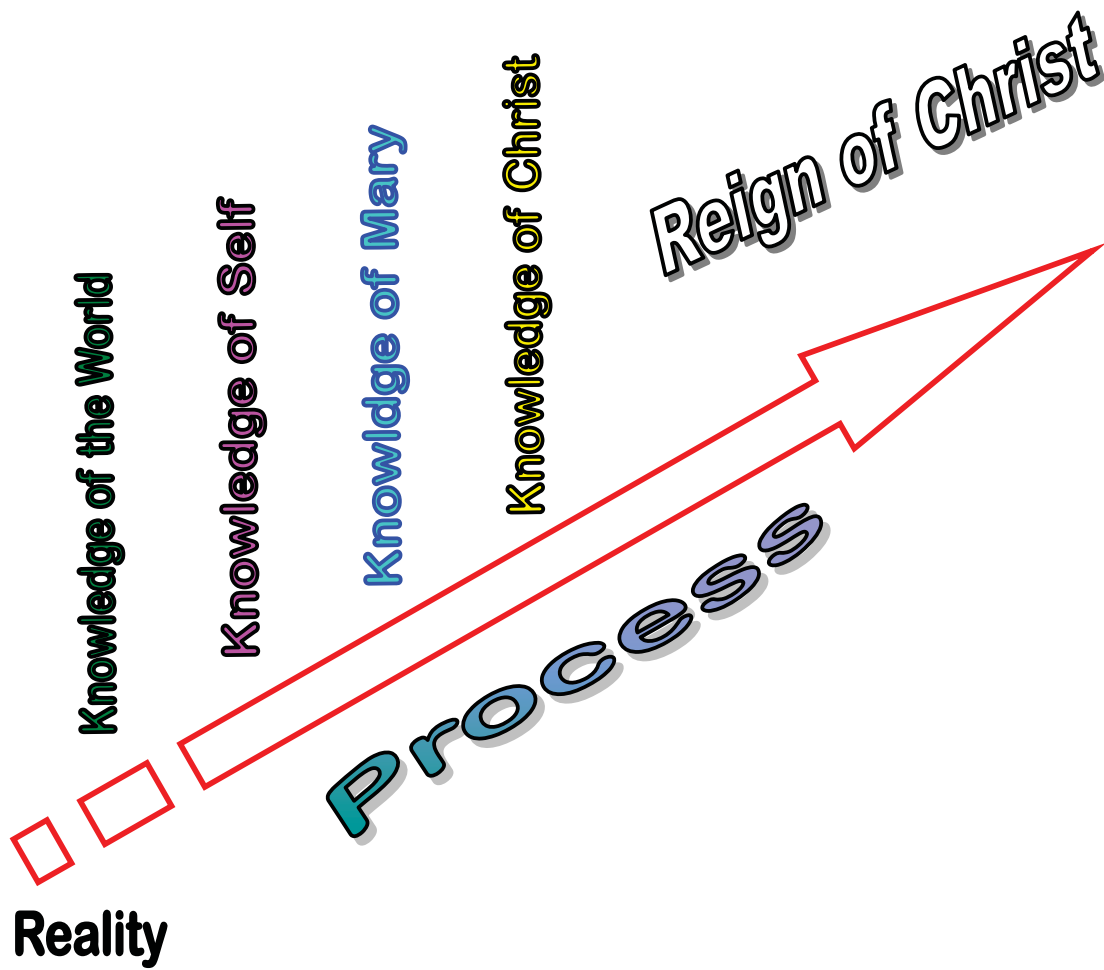
a) **Vision.** This spiritual experience aims at realizing

***The Reign of Jesus
Wisdom of God
in the World
through Mary***

b) **Mission.** The Reign of God will be realized in the life of the participants if:

- They understand the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church.
- They feel called to renew their Baptismal Promises by consecrating themselves to Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, through the hands of Mary.
- They realize their vocation to become effective apostles in our world of today.

c) **Goal.** In order to facilitate the implementation of the above the participants are invited into a process indicated in the following diagram.



- **Darkness in the world**
- **Darkness in ourselves**
- **Unfaithfulness to our Baptism**

3. Methodology

1) We shall follow the **general guidelines** given by Montfort:

- “Twelve days in emptying ourselves of the spirit of the world.” (TD 227)
- “One week ... to acquire knowledge of self.” (TD 228)
- “One week ... to acquire an understanding of the Blessed Virgin.” (TD 229)
- “One week ... to understand Jesus Christ better.” (TD 230)
- This spiritual journey leads to the Act of Consecration. (TD 231)

2) For each session we propose the following **methodology**:

Part I : Reflection and Sharing

1. Introductory Prayer: suggested by Montfort (see *Appendix*).
2. Brainstorming.
3. Reflection. It has a two-fold approach:
 - a) Scriptural sharing
 - b) Montfortian sharing

The texts are not only to be read, but also shared in the group and by the group. Sharing results as the outcome of the typically Marian activity of “pondering in one’s heart”. It implies:

- An attentive attitude
- Reflection
- Response.

4. Awareness Exercises
5. Decision for Life

Part II : Integration through Prayer

1. Proclamation of the Word: a passage taken from the Scriptures.
2. Integration through the prayer of the Rosary. At times adapted forms will be proposed.
3. Concluding Prayer: suggested by Montfort (see *Appendix*).

As regards the **Rosary** we would like to make the following remarks.

- Louis-Marie de Montfort says: “I know of no better way of establishing the kingdom of God, Eternal Wisdom, then unite vocal and mental prayer by saying the holy Rosary and meditating on its fifteen mysteries.” (LEW 193)
- The Rosary, according to the teaching of the Church, is a powerful means of integration.
 - The popes have “recognized its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer – prayer of both praise and petition – and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment.” (MC 42)
 - “As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mysteries of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation.” (MC 46)
 - “By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord’s life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord.” (MC 47)

FIRST PERIOD

KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

“Those who desire to take up this special devotion ...
should spend at least twelve days
in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world,
which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus...”
(TD 227)

First Session

MY VOCATION IN THE WORLD

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is the loving plan of God for you?
- What is your vocation in the world before being called to any state of life?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy and faultless before him in love, marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. Such was his purpose and good pleasure to the praise of the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved...” (Ep 1:4-6)

In each vocation, there is a call, a response, and a mission.

- a) **The call:** the first call is to holiness or perfection of love.
- b) **The response:** living to the fullness our baptism, which means:
 - incorporation in Christ and through Him
 - immersion in the Trinitarian Love.
- c) **Our mission:** to bring to perfection in us the Image of the Divine, to the praise of God’s Glory.

Montfortian sharing

- a) **The call:** “It is certain that growth in holiness of God is your vocation. All your thoughts, words, actions, everything you suffer or undertake must lead you towards that end.” (SM 3)
- b) **The response:** “A marvelous transformation.” Through our baptism:

Dust	into	Light
Uncleanness		Purity
Sinfulness		Holiness
Creature		Creator
Man		God (SM 3)

- c) **The mission:** “My contention is that you must first discover Mary if you would obtain this grace from God.” (SM 6)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience in my own life this “marvelous transformation”?
- Is my first vocation getting priority in my daily life?
- How do I live the difference between “having a vocation” (a state of life, a profession, etc.) and “being in vocation” (a growth process)?



5. Decision for Life

As from now, I take all the means to fulfill my first vocation, specially through the “secret of Mary” as proposed by Louis-Marie de Montfort.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favor! The Lord is with you.” (Lk 1:28)

“Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, you must name him Jesus...”

“You see before you the Lord’s servant: let it happen to me as you have said.” (Lk 1:28,31-32,38)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us meditate on the mystery of the vocation of Mary by repeating for each decade slowly at low voice, deep down in the heart, 10 times the proposed words, taking a moment of pause between each repetition, and concluding each decade by singing the *Glory be to the Father*.

First decade: The call: “Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favor.”

Second decade: The call: “ The Lord is with you.”

Third decade: The mission: “ You are to conceive in your womb.”

Fourth decade: The mission: “ You must name him Jesus.”

Fifth decade: The response: “Let it happen to me as you have said.”



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Second Session

CREATION OF THE WORLD

Contemplation and Experience

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- How do you experience the beauty of Creation? At the level of the mind only (studies, etc) or at the level of the senses (admiration, awe)?
- How is the ecological approach influencing your attitude towards Creation?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Bless the Lord, all the Lord’s creation:
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, angels of the Lord
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, heavens,
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, all the waters above the heavens,
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, powers of the Lord,
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, sun and moon,
Praise and glorify God for ever!
Bless the Lord, stars of heaven,
Praise and glorify God for ever!” (Dn 3:57-63)

Montfortian sharing

- a) Montfort considers Eternal Wisdom as the mother and maker of all things, disposing everything “like playing a game.”

“This mysterious game of divine Wisdom is clearly seen in the great variety of all she created. Apart from considering the different species of angels whose number is well-nigh infinite, and the varied brightness of the stars and the different temperaments of men and women, we are filled with wonderment at the changes we see in the seasons and the weather, at the variety of instincts in animals, at the different species of plants, at the diversified beauty of the flowers and the different tastes of the fruits.” (LEW 33)

- b) Montfort realizes “that the Blessed Virgin is the true earthly paradise of the new Adam... In this divine place there are trees planted by the hand of God and watered by divine unction... There are flowerbeds studded with a variety of beautiful flowers of virtue... Here, there are meadow verdant with hope...” (TD 261)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How does a tree speak to me about Mary, “the real Tree of Life”? (TD 261)
- How does the air speak to me about Mary? “When will souls breathe Mary...”? (TD 217)
- How does the moon speak to me about Mary? “She is fair and gentle as the moon.” (TD 85)



5. Decision for Life

I pray the Holy Spirit to enlighten me about all the symbols related to Mary as found in the Creation of God.

“Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the truths that these material objects symbolize.” (TD 261)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Yahweh created me, when God’s purpose first unfolded,
before the oldest of God’s works.
From everlasting, I was firmly set,
from the beginning, before the earth came into being.
The deep was not, when I was born,
there were no springs to gush with waters.
Before the mountains were settled,
before the hills, I came to birth.” (Pr 8:22-25)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

“Mary is the vast and divine world of God where unutterable marvels and beauties are to be found.” (TD 6)

With Montfort let us contemplate Mary in praise of the loving Trinity for the creation of Mary. At the end of each decade, we sing: *Glory be to the Father.*

First Decade: “There is not and there never will be, either in creation or in God’s mind, a creature in whom God is so honored as in the most Blessed Virgin Mary...” (SM 19)

Second decade: “Mary is God’s garden of Paradise, his own unspeakable world...” (SM 19)

Third decade: “Happy the person to whom the Holy Spirit opens this enclosed garden for him or her to enter and to whom the Holy Spirit gives access to this sealed fountain where the person can draw water and drink deep draughts of the living waters of grace.” (SM 20)

Fourth decade: “Mary was created only for God, and it is unthinkable that she should reserve even one soul for her.” (SM 21)

Fifth decade: “God created a world for the wayfarer, that is the one we are living in. God created a second world – Paradise – for the Blessed. God created a third world for God-self, which was named Mary.” (SM 19)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Third Session

CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN Their Beauty

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

Think of men and women in positive terms.

- What amazes you most about them?
- What aspects of the human being should be more affirmed in today's society?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and the reptiles that crawl upon the earth’. God created human beings in the likeness of self, man and female God created them... God saw all that God had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Gn 1:26-27,31)

“I look up at your heavens, made by your fingers, at the moon and stars you set in place – ah, what are man and woman that you should spare a thought for them, the human beings that you should care for them? You have made them little less than gods, you have crowned them with glory and splendor...” (Ps 8:3-5)

Montfortian sharing

a) *The beauty of man and woman*

This is how Montfort describes the beauty of man and woman. “They are God’s supreme masterpieces, the living images of God’s beauty and perfection, the great vessels of God’s grace, the wonderful treasury of God’s wealth and in a unique way God’s representatives on earth... We might say that Eternal Wisdom made copies, that is, shining likenesses of her own intelligence, memory, and will, and infused them into the soul of man and woman... In their heart she enkindled the fire of the pure love of God. She gave them a radiant body and virtually enshrined within them a compendium of all the various perfections of angels, animals, and other created things.” (LEW 35,37)

b) *The gentleness of Jesus*

The beauty of man and woman reaches perfection in the “gentleness” of Jesus. “Gentle is Jesus in his looks, and in his words and actions. The face of our loving Savior is so serene and gentle that it charmed the eyes and hearts of those who beheld it... When he dwelt on earth he won everyone over by his gentle speech... Finally, Jesus is gentle in the whole conduct of his life. ‘He did everything well’ (Mk 7:37), which means that everything he did was done with such uprightness, wisdom, holiness and gentleness that nothing faulty or distorted could be found in him...” (LEW 121-123)

c) *The beauty of Mary*

The beauty of Jesus finds its explanation in the beauty of Mary: “He was born of the sweetest, tenderest and the most beautiful of all mothers, Mary, the divinely favored Virgin...” (LEW 118)

4. Awareness Exercises

I think of the man-Jesus, and of the woman-Mary of the Gospels.

- What aspects of their beauty resonate with my own understanding of beauty?
- What characteristics do I find in them that mirror my expectations as well as those today's men and women?

5. Decision for Life

I identify and give a name to one positive aspect of my person. I thank God for it and I decide to let it come alive in my relationship with the others, through my words and actions.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“In the sixth month
the angel Gabriel was sent by God
to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the House of David;
and the virgin’s name was Mary.
He went in and said to her,
‘Rejoice, so highly favored!
The Lord is with you’...” (Lk 1:26-28)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

With the Church let us contemplate Mary as the mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time.

First Decade: Modern women and men, “anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent ... to an event of world importance, as the Incarnation of the Word...” (MC 37)

Second decade: Modern women and men “will appreciate that Mary’s choice of the state of virginity ... was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state, but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God...” (MC 37)

Third decade: Modern women and men “will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth ... was far from being a timidly submissive woman; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions (cf. Lk 1:51-53).” (MC 37)

Fourth decade: Modern women and men “will recognize in Mary, who stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, a woman of strength,

who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt 2:13-23).” (MC 37)

Fifth decade: Modern women and men will find that Mary is “not a mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son but rather a woman whose action helped to strengthen the Apostolic community’s faith in Christ (cf. Jn 2:1-12) and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary.” (MC 37)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Fourth Session

THE FALL OF MAN AND WOMAN

Original Sin

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What different kinds of sins did you read in today's newspaper?
- How do you explain that, as human beings, we are inclined to evil?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Well then, sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. Sin existed in the world long before the Law was given. There was no law and so no one could be accused of the sin of ‘law-breaking’, yet death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law. Adam prefigured the One who was to come, but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man’s fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift.” (Rm 5:12-15)

- Scripture continually recalls the presence and universality of sin in the history of mankind. What Revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience.
- What is called “original sin” is not something added to the person but something missing, “holiness”, i.e. full communion of life with God.
- Created in a state of justice or holiness, we were made to be fully “divinised” by God in glory.

- “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” (Rm 5:20)

Montfortian sharing

“Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us... It is therefore of the utmost importance that, in seeking the perfection that can be attained only by union with Jesus, we rid ourselves of what is evil in us.” (TD 78)

“We must first become thoroughly aware by the light of the Holy Spirit of our tainted nature... Secondly, we must die daily to ourselves... Thirdly, we must choose among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin the one which will lead us to this dying of self... In the spiritual life there are secrets which enable us to perform supernatural 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...” (TD 79-82)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I react to the situation of sin in the world?
- When do I prefer myself to God?
- How does my relationship with Mary, the “All Holy”, influence my attitude?



5. Decision for Life

Montfort teaches us that to persevere in holiness it is something of a miracle. (cf. TD 89)

I decide to deepen more and more my relationship with Mary, “the singularly faithful Virgin over whom Satan has never any power, who works this miracle for those who love her.” (TD 89)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“He then left to make his way as usual to the Mount of Olives, with the disciples following. When he reached the place he said to them: ‘Pray not to be put to the test’. Then he withdrew from them, about a stone’s throw away, and knelt down and prayed. ‘Father’, he said, ‘if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine’... When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for sheer grief. And he said to them: ‘Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be put to the test’...” (Lk 22:39-46)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us pray the Sorrowful Mysteries as proposed by Montfort.

First decade: The Agony. We ask for sorrow for our sins.

Second decade: The Scourging. We ask for the grace to mortify our senses.

Third decade: The Crowning with thorns. We ask for contempt of the world.

Fourth decade: The Carrying of the Cross. We ask for patience in all our crosses.

Fifth decade: The Crucifixion. We ask for the conversion of sinners, perseverance for the just, and relief for the souls in Purgatory.



3. Concluding Prayer: “Ave Maris Stella” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Fifth Session

EVIL IN THE WORLD The Reality of Suffering

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- Evil is at work and brings about sufferings in and around us, such as natural catastrophes, physical and psychological hurts, etc... What strikes you most of the reality of suffering in the world?
- How do you see all this at work in you and in your relationship with the others?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let us go out’; and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him. Yahweh asked Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I do not know’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s guardian?’...” (Gn 4:8-9)

“The flood lasted forty days on the earth... The waters rose more and more on the earth so that all the highest mountains under the whole of heaven were submerged... And so all things of flesh perished that moved on the earth, birds, cattle, wild beasts, everything that swarms on the earth, and every human being.” (Gn 6:17-22)

“There came upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire. These towns and the whole plain were overthrown, with all their inhabitants, and everything that grew there...” (Gn 19:23-25)

“The Egyptians forced the children of Israel into slavery, and made their lives unbearable with hard labor, work with clay and with bricks, all kinds of work in the fields; they forced on them every kind of labor...” (Ex 1:14)

Montfortian sharing

- a) Montfort sees suffering in the world as a consequence of sin. Because of Adam’s sin “the whole world is under curse...” (LEW 39). It “lies in the power of evil now more than ever before...” (LEW 199).

“It is something of a miracle for anyone to stand firm in the midst of this raging torrent and not be swept away; to weather this stormy sea and not be drowned...; to breathe this pestilential air and not be contaminated by it.” (TD 89)

- b) Evil can be conquered only by the suffering love of Incarnate Wisdom. “The eternal Father proposed to his Son the saving of the world either by joyful means or by suffering, by acquiring honors or by suffering contempt, by richness or by poverty, by living or by dying. He... could have redeemed us and taken us with him along a way paced with joys, delights, honors and riches, had he wished to do so. But he chose rather to endure the cross and sufferings in order to give to God his Father greater glory and to us a proof of greater love.” (LEW 164)



4. Awareness Exercises

“At the basis of the whole world of sufferings, there inevitably arises the question, ‘Why’?...” (John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 9).

- How do I normally react whenever I witness signs of evil in the world?
- What answers do I get from my faith?



5. Decision for Life

The next time someone wrongs me I make it a point to challenge him or her with Jesus’ spirit of truth and love: “If there is something wrong in what I said, point it out; but if there is no offence in it, why do you strike me?” (Jn 18:23)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“My God, my God, why have you deserted me?
How far from saving me, the words I groan!
I call all day, my God, but you never answer,
all night long I call and cannot rest.
Yet, Holy One, you who make your home
in the praises of Israel,
in you our fathers and mothers put their trust,
they trusted and you rescued them;
they called to you for help and they were saved,
they never trusted you in vain.” (Ps 22:1-5)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate the sorrows of Mary.

First Decade: The birth of Jesus. “While they were in Bethlehem the time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to a son... She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.” (Lk 2:6-7)

Second decade: The flight into Egypt. “The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him’...” (Mt 2:13).

Third decade: The massacre of the Innocents. “Herod was furious when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or under...” (Mt 2:16)

Fourth decade: The presentation in the Temple. “Simeon said to Mary mother, ‘You see this child: he is destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too’...” (Lk 2:34)

Fifth decade: The death of Jesus. “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother... Then Jesus said, ‘It is accomplished’; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.” (Jn 19:25,30)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Sixth Session

SIN IN THE HEART OF MAN AND WOMAN

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

Sin is a broken relationship with God, the others and self.

- What are the most significant relationships in your life?
- How do you lie responsibly (response-able) with those relationships?
- What is a selfish behavior in a relationship?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“This is why you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies and make you obey their desires; or give any part of your bodies over to sin to be used as instruments of evil. Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness; and then sin will no longer have any power over you – you are living not under law, but under grace.” (Rm 6:12-14)

- a) Sin is a failure in genuine love for God, our neighbor and self.
- b) Sin is “love of oneself even to the contempt of God” (St. Augustine).
- c) Social situations contrary to the goodness of God are “structures of sin.”

Sin calls for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Montfortian sharing

“Our soul, being united to our body, has become so carnal that it has been called flesh. ‘All flesh had corrupted its way’. Pride and blindness of spirit, hardness of heart, weakness and inconstancy of soul, evil inclinations, rebellious passions, ailments of the body – these are all we can call our own.” (TD 79)

“You must not allow this Tree (of Mary) to be damaged by destructive animals, that is, by sins, for they may cause its death simply by their contact. They must not be allowed even to breathe upon the Tree, because their mere breath, that is, venial sins, which are most dangerous when we do not trouble ourselves about them.” (SM 75)



4. Awareness Exercises

- What is my awareness of a destroyed relationship with God through my sinfulness (fear, alienation, hiding, etc.)?
- What is my awareness of a destroyed relationships with others through sins against them (reputation, woundedness, etc.)?
- What is my awareness of a destroyed relationship with my self through my sins (guilt, shame, etc.)?



5. Decision for Life

“O my God, I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.”

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“ Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test.” (Lk 11:2-4)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us ask the Virgin Mary, in whom was effected the reconciliation of God with our humanity, to “pray for us sinners now...and at the hour of our death.” Let us contemplate her in her forgiveness to the others. Let us slowly pray the second part only of the “Hail Mary” stressing on the “now” and repeating the word three times at the deepest of the heart.

First decade: Mary in her forgiveness of Herod during the flight into Egypt.

Second decade: Mary in her forgiveness of Judas, and Peter.

Third decade: Mary in her forgiveness of her neighbors rejecting Jesus.

Fourth decade: Mary in her forgiveness of the priests condemning Jesus.

Fifth decade: Mary in her forgiveness of the Roman soldiers crucifying Jesus.



3. Concluding Prayer: “Ave Maris Stella” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Seventh Session

WISDOM OF THE WORLD

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- From your experience, what are the values that count most in the life of people of today's society?
- How are these values consciously or unconsciously affecting your life?
- Can you pinpoint some serious consequences?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves’. But he replied, ‘Scripture says: *People do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*’. The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. ‘If you are the Son of God’ he said ‘throw yourself down; for scripture says: *He will put you in his angels’ charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone*’. Jesus said to him, ‘Scripture also says: *You must not put the Lord your God to the test*’. Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘I will give you all these’ he said ‘if you fall at my feet and worship me’. Then Jesus replied, ‘Be off, Satan! For scripture says: *You must worship the Lord your God, and serve God alone*’. Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.”
(Mt 4:1-11)

The devil urges Jesus to adopt for his ministry the wisdom of the world:

- In the area of body: “Tell these stones to turn into loaves.”
- In the area of performance: “Throw yourself down; for scripture says: *He will put you in his angels’ charge...*”
- In the area of possession: “I will give you all this if you fall at my feet and worship me”.

Montfortian sharing

“The worldly persons base their conduct on personal honor, on ‘What will people say?’, on convention, on high living, on self-interest, on ceremonious manners, and on witty conversation. These seven principles are irreproachable supports on which, they believe, they can safely depend to enjoy a peaceful life.” (LEW 77)

“We must not believe or follow the false maxims of the world or think, speak or act like people of the world. Their doctrine is as opposed to that of Incarnate Wisdom as darkness is to light, and death to life. Look closely at their opinions and their words: they think and speak disparagingly of all the great truths of our religion. True, they do not tell brazen lies, but they cover their falsehood with an appearance of truth; they do not think they are being untruthful, but they lie nonetheless. In general, they do not teach sin openly, but they speak of it as if it were virtuous, or blameless, or a matter of indifference and of little consequence...” (LEW 199)



4. Awareness Exercises

I pray for humility and courage, and when I am ready I name the various kinds of wisdom that tend to affect my life today:

- At the level of my body (my “image”)?
- At the level of my heart (my “sentimental life”)?
- At the level of my mind (my way of “thinking”)?
- At the level of my work (my “professional life”)?



5. Decision for Life

I think of some specific “means” that will enable me to counteract the wisdom of the world as it affects my life. I pray over them and decide when and how to implement them.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Happy the persons
who never follow the advice of the wicked,
or loiter on the way that sinners take,
or sit about with scoffers,
but find pleasure in the Law of the Yahweh,
and murmur God’s law day and night.
These persons are like a tree that is planted
by water streams,
yielding its fruit in season,
its leaves never fading;
success attends all they do.
It is nothing like this with the wicked, nothing like this!” (Ps 1:1-4)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

With Mary let us contemplate the mystery of the Magnificat. In this canticle Mary challenges the wisdom of the world.

The following is an inclusive version of the Magnificat.

First decade: Mary said, “I acclaim the greatness of the Lord, I delight in God my savior, who regarded my humble state. Truly from this day on all ages will call me blessed...” (cf. Lk 1:46-48)

Second decade: Mary said, “God, wonderful in power, has used that strength for me. Holy is the name of the Lord, whose mercy embraces the faithful, one generation to the next...” (cf. Lk 1:49-50)

Third decade: Mary said, “The mighty arm of God scatters the proud in their conceit...” (cf. Lk 1:51)

Fourth decade: Mary said, “The mighty arm of God pulls tyrants from their thrones, and raises up the humble. The Lord fills the starving and lets the rich go hungry...” (cf. Lk 1:52-53).

Fifth decade: Mary said, “God rescues lowly Israel, recalling the promise of mercy, the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham’s heirs for ever.” (Lk 1:54-56)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (Hail, bright Star of ocean).

Eighth Session

WISDOM OF GOD

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What do you mean when you say: “God is wise”?
- How does it change your day-to-day behavior?
- How do you experience the “gift of wisdom”?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Wisdom is a breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; so nothing impure can find its way into her. For she is a reflection of the eternal light, untarnished mirror of God’s active power, image of God’s goodness. Although alone, she can do all; herself unchanging, she makes all things new. In each generation she passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and prophets; for God loves only those who live with Wisdom.” (Ws 7:25-28)

“While the Jews demand miracles and the Greek look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God.” (1 Co 1: 22-25)

Evolution of the concept of wisdom

- Initially: it is an art of living well, a “know-how”, a reflection on life and death.

- Later on: it is personified, a well beloved, a protecting mother, a nursing wife, an hospitable hostess.
- In the New Testament: it is personified in Christ: “Yet Wisdom has been proved right by all her actions.” (Lk 7:35)

Montfortian sharing

“How beautiful, meek and charitable is Jesus, the Incarnate Wisdom. Beautiful from all eternity, he is the splendor of his Father, the unspotted mirror and image of God’s goodness. He is more beautiful than the sun, and brighter than light itself. He is beautiful in time, being form by the Holy Spirit pure and faultless, fair and immaculate, and during his life he charmed the eyes and hearts of men and women and is now the glory of the angels. How loving and gentle he is with humankind, and specially with poor sinners whom he came upon earth to seek out in a visible manner, and whom he still seeks in an invisible manner everyday.” (LEW 126)



4. Awareness Exercises

How am I growing in wisdom ? (“which sits by your throne”)

- at the level of the will (“to strengthen our weaknesses”)
- at the level of the mind (“to enlighten our minds”)
- at the level of the heart (“to inflame our hearts”). (MR 11)



5. Decision for Life

“To know Jesus Christ Incarnate Wisdom, it to know all I need. To presume to know everything and not know him is to know nothing at all.” (LEW 11)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Going from that district, he went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, ‘Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him. This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset, and Jude and Simon?’ ...” (Mk 6:1-3)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Montfort teaches us: “To appreciate the gentleness of Jesus we must first consider the gentleness of Mary” (LEW 118). In like manner, to appreciate the wisdom of Jesus, let us consider the wisdom of Mary. “She became the mother, mistress and throne of divine Wisdom.” (LEW 203)

First decade: The Annunciation. “At last, when the time appointed for the redemption of mankind had come, Eternal Wisdom built himself a house worthy to be his dwelling place. He created the most holy Virgin... even with greater delight than he had derived from creating the universe.” (LEW 105)

Second decade: The Visitation. “Moreover, Mary is the royal throne of Eternal Wisdom. It is in her that he shows his perfection, displays his treasures and takes his delight.” (LEW 208)

Third decade: The Nativity. “Mary is his most worthy Mother because she conceived him, and brought him forth as the fruit of her womb: ‘Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus’ ...” (LEW 204)

Fourth decade: The Presentation in the Temple. “Mary is also mistress of divine Wisdom... because the Son of God, Eternal Wisdom, by making himself entirely subject to her as his Mother, gave her a maternal and natural authority over himself which surpasses our understanding.” (LEW 205)

Fifth decade: The Finding in the Temple. “Mary is like a holy magnet attracting Eternal Wisdom to herself with such power that he cannot resist... Once we possess Mary, we shall, through her intercession, easily and in a short time possess divine Wisdom.” (LEW 212)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Ninth Session

BAPTISM AS OUR BASIC DECISION

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

Depending on the values that sustain them, our decisions in life are meant to bring about either wholeness or alienation, self-realization or self-destruction, fulfillment or emptiness.

- What are the most important decisions in life that engage the people of today's society?
- In your perception, what are the most common values that influence those decisions?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God’s right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God...” (Col 3:1-4)

a) *Earthly life*

“That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life: fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed..., getting angry, being ill-tempered, spitefulness, abusive language and dirty talk, ... telling each other lies...” (Col 3:5-8)

b) *Heavenly life*

“You have now put on a new self... You are God’s chosen race... and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts... Always be thankful... Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom... and never say or do anything except in the of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3:12-17)

Montfortian sharing

According to Montfort, in order to realize our “new self”, Christ is to be our aim in life, Baptism is to be our basic decision, and Mary is to be our means to Jesus.

a) *Christ is to be our aim*

“He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of everything. ‘We labor’, says St. Paul, ‘only to make all people perfect in Jesus Christ.’ For in him alone... we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; he is the only teacher from whom we must learn; the only Lord on whom we should depend; the only Head to whom we should be united the only model that we should imitate... He alone is everything to us and he alone can satisfy all our desires.” (TD 61)

b) *Baptism is to be our decision*

“Before baptism every Christian was a slave of the devil because he or she belonged to him. At baptism we have either personally or through our sponsors solemnly renounced Satan, his seductions and his works. We have chosen Jesus as our Master and sovereign Lord and undertaken to depend upon him as slaves of love... We even do something more than at baptism, when ordinarily our godparents speak for us and we are given to Jesus only by proxy. In this devotion we give ourselves personally and freely and we are fully aware of what we are doing.” (TD 126)

c) *Mary is to be our means*

“This devotion is necessary simply and solely because it is a way of reaching Jesus perfectly, loving him tenderly, and serving him faithfully.” (TD 62)



4. Awareness Exercises

“The vow we make at baptism is the most important of all vows. But does anyone keep this great vow?” (TD 127)

- How does this statement apply to my life of today?
- In what areas of my life am I experiencing an “habitual forgetfulness of the promises and responsibilities of baptism”?



5. Decision for Life

In prayer I make a “decision” to depart from one of my old ways of living and I “choose” to foster a virtue that will enable me to progress on the way to Christ.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“You have been taught that when we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death; in other words, when we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, we too might live a new life.” (Rm 6:3-4)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

With Mary let us contemplate Jesus, our fundamental decision, with the words of Montfort (cf. TD 61). At the end of each decade, after the *Glory be to the Father*, we shall say all together:

*Jesus Christ alone is everything to us
and he alone can satisfy our desires.*

First decade: “Jesus Christ is the only Physician that can heal us.”

Second decade: “Jesus Christ is the only Shepherd that can feed us.”

Third decade: “Jesus Christ is the only Way that can lead us.”

Fourth decade: “Jesus Christ is the only Truth that we can believe.”

Fifth decade: “Jesus Christ is the only Life that can animate us.”



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Tenth Session

DESIRE OF DIVINE WISDOM

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is your strongest desire today?
- How do you respond to that desire?
- What are some of the desires of people around you?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *The desire of God for us:*

“But look, I am going to lure her and lead her out into the desert and speak to her heart.” (Ho 2:16)

“I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Lk 22:15)

b) *Our desire for God:*

“God, you are my God, I am seeking you,
my soul is thirsting for you,
my flesh is longing for you,
a land parched, weary and waterless;
I long to gaze on you in the sanctuary,
and to see your power and glory.” (Ps 63:1-2)

c) *The desire of God for Mary:*

“Rejoice, you enjoy God’s favor. The Lord is with you.” (Lk 1:29)

Montfortian sharing

a) *The desire of God for us:*

“This eternal beauty, ever supremely loving, is so intent on winning man and woman’s friendship that for this very purpose she has written a book in which she describes her own excellence and her desire for man’s and woman’s friendship. This book reads like a letter written by a lover to win the affection of his loved one, for in it she expresses such ardent desires for our heart, such tender longings for our friendship, such loving invitations and promises, that you would say she could not possibly be the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and at the same time need our friendship to be happy.” (LEW 65)

b) *Our desire for God:*

“Whoever wishes to find the precious treasure of Wisdom should, like Solomon, search for her, early and if possible, while still young; purely and spiritually as a chaste spouse seeks her bride; unceasingly to the very end, until he has found her. It is certain that Eternal Wisdom loves souls so much that she even espouses them, contracting with them a true, spiritual marriage which the world cannot understand. History furnishes us with examples of this.” (LEW 54)

c) *The desire of God for Mary:*

“...even God was filled with rapturous admiration for her. Her humility, deep as an abyss, delighted God. Her purity so other-worldly drew God down to her. God found her lively faith and her ceaseless entreaties of love so irresistible that he/she was lovingly conquered by her appeals of love.” (LEW 107)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience the great desire of God for me?
- What are the qualities of my desire for God?
- How to experience in me the ardent desire of Mary for God?



5. Decision for Life

Divine Wisdom is supremely desirable. “How long will I go on loving vain things and seeking what is false?” (LEW 181)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“From my youth I have loved and sought Wisdom and desired to take her for my inseparable companion... If in this life wealth is a desirable possession, what is more wealthy than Wisdom whose work is everywhere? Or if it be the intellect that is at work, where is there a greater than Wisdom, designer of all? Or if it be virtue you love, why, virtues are the fruit of her labors, since it is she who teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude; nothing in life is more useful than these... I therefore resolved to take her as my companion in life.” (Ws 8:2,5-7,9)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Mary is the Mother, the Mistress and Throne of divine Wisdom (LEW 203). Through her intercession let us pray to experience the “marvelous effects of Wisdom” (LEW, chapter 8)

First decade: “Eternal Wisdom communicates her Spirit of enlightenment to the soul that possesses her.” (LEW 92)

Second decade: “Eternal Wisdom communicates to us the great science of holiness.” (LEW 93)

Third decade: “Wisdom gives us not only light to know the truth but also a remarkable power to impart it to others.” (LEW 95)

Fourth decade: “Wisdom is the source of purest joys and consolations.” (LEW 98)

Fifth decade: “Wisdom sets on fire those who enjoy her friendship, inspiring them to undertake great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.” (LEW 100)



3. Concluding Prayer: “Ave Maris Stella” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Eleventh Session

PRAYER LIFE

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- Usually, what do people pray for?
- How do you pray?
- What interior attitudes do you normally experience in prayer?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *We pray for God's will*

“It is not those who say to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Mt 7:21)

b) *We pray for Wisdom*

“God of our ancestors, Lord of mercy,...
dispatch your Wisdom from the holy heavens,
send her forth from your throne of glory
to help us and to toil with us
and teach us what is pleasing to you,
since she knows and understands everything.
She will guide us prudently in our undertakings
And protect us by her glory.” (Ws 9:1,10-11)

c) *We pray with perseverance*

“Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him or her. Is there anyone among you who would hand his or her child a stone when asked for bread? Or would hand a snake when asked for a fish? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:7-11)

Montfortian sharing

a) *What to seek in prayer*

“Note that in the prayer of Solomon the Holy Spirit does not say, ‘If anyone lacks charity, humility, patience, etc.’ although these are most excellent virtues. Rather the Holy Spirit says, ‘If anyone lacks Wisdom’. For, by asking for Wisdom we ask for all the virtues possessed by Incarnate Wisdom.” (LEW 184)

b) *How should we pray*

- “First, we should pray for this gift (Wisdom) with a strong and lively faith, not wavering, because the person who wavers in faith must not expect to receive any gift from the Lord.” (LEW 185)
- “Secondly, we must pray for Wisdom with a pure faith, not counting on consolations, visions or special revelations...” (LEW 186)
- “Thirdly, we must pray perseveringly to obtain this Wisdom. The acquisition of this precious pearl and infinite treasure requires from us a holy importunity in praying to God, without which we shall not obtain it.” (LEW 188)

c) *Vocal and Mental prayer*

- “To vocal prayer we must add mental prayer, which enlightens the mind, inflames the heart and disposes the soul to listen to the voice of Wisdom, to savor her delights and possess her treasures.” (LEW 193)
- “For myself, I know of no better way of establishing in ourselves the kingdom of God, Eternal Wisdom, than to unite vocal and mental prayer by saying the holy Rosary and meditating on its fifteen mysteries.” (LEW 193)



4. Awareness Exercises

- Am I determined to seek Wisdom, first and foremost, in my prayer? If yes, what does this mean to me concretely?
- In order to interiorize the gift of Wisdom have I ever practiced the “prayer of the heart”?



5. Decision for Life

I practice the “prayer of the heart.” This is a slow and endless repetition of a short prayer (a sort of mantra) done not only with the mouth but also with the soundless voice of the heart. It can be practiced anywhere and anytime while attending one’s daily chores. Here we suggest the following prayer: *“Lord, grant me the gift of your Wisdom!”*

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard... So you should pray like this:

‘Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test,
but save us from the evil one’...” (Mt 6:7-13)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate Mary at prayer in some important circumstances of her life.

First decade: The Magnificat. “And Mary said: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my savior’...” (Lk 1:46-47)

Second decade: The birth of Jesus. “When the shepherds saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Lk 2:17-19).

Third decade: The wedding at Cana. “When they ran out of wine... the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’. Jesus said, ‘Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet’. His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’...” (Jn 2:3-5)

Fourth decade: The death of Jesus. “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother... Seeing her and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman, this is your son’. Then to the disciple he said, ‘This is your mother’. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.” (Jn 19:25)

Fifth decade: At Pentecost. “From the Mount of Olives the disciples went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away...; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus...” (Ac 1:12-14)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Twelfth Session

UNIVERSAL MORTIFICATION

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- Why do you practice mortification?
- How do you practice mortification?
- Do you know other words meaning the same reality?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“Because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages. Not only that, but I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead.” (Ph 3:7-12)

- Mortification is linked with the process of the conversion of the heart.
- The purpose is “to be clothed in Christ.” (Ga 3:27)
- It is to resolutely follow Jesus: “Renounce yourself and take up your cross everyday and follow me.” (Lk 9:23)
- It is a mystical death in view of a new mystical birth.

Montfortian sharing

a) *Necessity of mortification:*

“..if we are to possess incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, we must practice self-denial and renounce the world and self.” (LEW 194)

b) *Qualities required for mortification:*

“Wisdom is not satisfied with half-hearted mortification or mortification of a few days, but requires one that is total, continuous, courageous and prudent.” (LEW 196)

c) *Our devotion to Mary and mortification:*

“No other devotion calls for more sacrifices for God, none empties us more completely of self and self-love.” (TD 118)

“She purifies our good works of every taint of self-love and of that unconscious attachment to creatures which slips unnoticed in our best actions.” (TD 146)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience my “true self” in Christ-Wisdom?
- Am I aware of so many things that can be offered in penance, such as bad weather, inconveniences of all kinds, difficulties from other people’s actions, etc.?
- How does Mary help me in my daily conversion?



5. Decision for Life

I follow the advice of Montfort: “Leave all things and you will find all things by finding Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom.” (LEW 202)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“You must give up your old ways of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the New Self that has been created in God’s way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.” (Ep 4:22-24)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

“Among all the motives impelling us to love Jesus Christ, the Wisdom Incarnate, the strongest, in my opinion, is the suffering he chose to endure to prove his love for us.” (LEW 154)

Let us meditate on the mystery of some of the many sufferings of Christ.

First decade: “He suffered in honor and reputation, for he was overwhelmed with insults and called a blasphemer, a revolutionary, a drunkard, a glutton, and a possessed person.” (LEW 159)

Second decade: “He suffered in his wisdom when they classed him as an ignorant man and imposter, and treated him as a fool and madman.” (LEW 159)

Third decade: “He suffered in his power, for his enemies considered him as a sorcerer and a magician who worked false miracles through a compact with the devil.” (LEW 159)

Fourth decade: “He suffered in his disciples, one of whom bartered him for money and betrayed him; another, their leader, denied him, and the rest abandoned him.” (LEW 159)

Fifth decade: “Even his Blessed Mother presence added painfully to his sufferings for, as he was dying, he saw her standing at the foot of the cross engulfed in a sea of sorrows.” (LEW 160)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

SECOND PERIOD

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

“During this week they should offer up all their prayers and acts of devotion to acquire knowledge of themselves and sorrow for their sins...

They will ask our Lord and the Holy Spirit to enlighten them saying:

‘Lord, that I may see’ or ‘Lord, let me know myself’,
or the *‘Come Holy Spirit’.*

Every day they should say the *Litany of the Holy Spirit...*

They will turn to the Blessed Lady and beg her to obtain for them that great grace which is the foundation of all others, the grace of self-knowledge.

For this intention they will say each day the *Ave Maris Stella*
and the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin.*”

(TD 228)

First Session

WHO AM I

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

- How do you see yourself? What are the assets and limits that make up your personality?
- What do people who know you well say of you? Is it true or false?
- Imagine to be in God’s presence and to listen to what he/she says about you. What do you hear?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We ask Mary to share with us how she sees herself, what God and people say of her.

a) *How Mary sees herself*

- “I am a virgin.” (Lk 1:34)
- “I am the handmaid of the Lord.” (Lk 1:38)
- “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” (Lk 1:46)
- “The Almighty has done great things for me.” (Lk 1:49)

b) *What people say of Mary*

- Jesus: “My mother does the will of God.” (cf. Mk 3:35; Mt 12:50)
- Matthew: “Wife of Joseph, ... a man of honor.” (Mt 1:19)
- Elizabeth: “Of all women, you are the most blessed.” (Lk 1:42)
- Luke: “She treasured ... and pondered everything in her heart.” (Lk 2:19,51.)
- John: through her “Jesus did the first of his signs.” (cf. Jn 2:11)
- John: “She stood near the cross of Jesus.” (Jn 19:25)
- Early believers: “They joined in continuous prayer... together with Mary, the mother of Jesus.” (Ac 1:14)

c) *What God says of Mary*

- “Rejoice, you highly favored!” (Lk 1:28)
- “The Lord is with you!” (ibid.)
- “You have won God’s favor.” (Lk 1:30)
- “You are to conceive and bear a son, ... Jesus” (Lk 1:31)
- “The Holy Spirit will come upon you.” (Lk 1:35)
- “The power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow.” (ibid.)

Montfortian sharing

a) *Greatness and weakness of man/woman*

- The “supreme masterpiece of Eternal Wisdom ... shining likeness of her intelligence ... radiant body ... compendium of all the various perfections ... godlike.” (LEW 35-38)
- “By nature we are prouder than peacocks, we cling to the earth more than toads, we are baser than goats, more envious than serpents, greedier than pigs, fiercer than tigers, lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more changeable than weather-cocks.” (TD 79)

b) *Beauty and Greatness of Mary*

- “I declare with the saints: Mary is the earthly paradise of Jesus Christ the new Adam... She is the vast and divine world of God where unutterable marvels and beauties are to be found. She is the magnificence of the Almighty...” (TD 6). “Finally, we must say in the words of the apostle Paul, ‘Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has the heart of human beings understood’ the beauty, the grandeur, the excellence of Mary, who is indeed a miracle of miracles of grace, nature and glory.” (TD 12)

- “God who exalts the humble... has made her queen of heaven and earth, leader of God’s armies, keeper of God’s treasures, dispenser of God’s graces, worker of God’s wonders, restorer of the human race, mediatrix on behalf of us, destroyer of God’s enemies, and faithful associate in God’s works and triumphs.” (TD 28)



4. Awareness Exercises

After listening to myself, to what God thinks of me and how the others perceive me, I place myself under Mary’s guidance as I continue to ask:

- How do I see myself today?
- Do I have a “negative” image of myself, i.e. I tend to notice only the negative aspects of myself?
- Do I have an “inflated” image of myself, i.e. I presume that I don’t have anything to change in my life?
- Do I have a “realistic” image of myself, i.e. I objectively acknowledge my good qualities but also my limitations as well as my need to outgrow them?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge. Then:

- I praise God for the wonder of my being.
- I identify two negative aspects of my person and I think of concrete ways to outgrow them.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. Now, as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed in the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled’...”
(Lk 1:39-45)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and let us meditate on the mystery of Mary.

First decade: Mary, the Ark of the Covenant. “Mary set out ... and went as quickly as she could ... to Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth.”

Second decade: Mary, source of Joy. “As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb.”

Third decade: Mary, mold of God. “Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?”

Fourth decade: Mary, mold of saints. “The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.”

Fifth decade: Mary, woman of faith. “Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

Second Session

WHO AM I WITH OTHERS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

- While relating with the others you can get in touch with your positiveness. Think of some people who attract you most.
 - What positive aspects of them attract you most?
 - What positive aspects do they awaken in you?
- Often, however, the relationship with the others can cause in you negative reactions. Think of some people with whom you do not relate well.
 - What provokes your reactions to them: their personality, character, ideas, gestures, voice, etc.?
 - What negative aspects or imperfections do they remind you of your personality?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We ask Mary to share with us her experience of some people who affected her life.

- **Joseph.** Mary knows him as “a man of honor” (Mt 1:19), attentive to the family needs (cf. Mt 2:20), and sharing her “worries” in moments of pain (cf. Lk 2:48). He awakens in her a unique sensitivity toward the needs of others. (cf. Jn 2:3)

- **Jesus.** Mary is struck by his determination to be in God's service: "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" (Lk 2:49). He awakens in her a deep sense of discipleship (cf. Mk 3:33-34) and the call to be associated with him in the work of salvation. (cf. Jn 2:4)
- **Elizabeth.** Mary is impressed by her joy and openness to the Spirit (cf. Lk 1:41). Through her she discovered in herself a deep sense of praise. (cf. the Magnificat, Lk 1:46-55)
- **Shepherds.** Mary admires their childlike heart, enthusiasm and openness to the Good News (cf. Lk 2:8-20). They awaken in her the attitude of "treasuring" the strange way of God and "pondering them in her heart." (Lk 2:19,51)
- **Simeon.** Mary admires in him his ability to recognize the signs of the time, his ability to graciously let go of the old and enthusiastically welcome the new (cf. Lk 2:27-32). He awakens in Mary her capacity to stand by the cross of Jesus and to let go of him. (cf. Jn 19:25)
- **John.** Mary is impressed by his deep love toward her and Jesus (cf. Jn 19:26-27). He awakens in her the mission to form the true disciples of Jesus. (cf. Ac 1:14)

Montfortian sharing

a) ***God in relationship with Mary***

According to Montfort, the relationship with Mary made "God the Son... to take his delight and produce hidden wonders of grace." In fact, "God-made-man found freedom in imprisoning himself in her womb. He displayed power in allowing himself to be borne by this young maiden. He found his glory and that of his Father in hiding his splendors from all creatures here below and revealing them only to Mary. He glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this loveable virgin ..."
(TD 18)

b) ***The souls in relationship with Mary***

Montfort states that our relationship with Mary awakens in us our call to put on the likeness of Jesus. In fact, "Mary is the great mold of God... All those who cast themselves into it and allow themselves to be molded will acquire every feature of Jesus Christ, true God, with little pain and effort,

as befits their weak human condition. They will take on a faithful likeness to Jesus with no possibility of distortion...” (SM 17)



4. Awareness Exercises

After reflecting on my relationships and confronting myself with the experience of Mary:

- What are my assets that need to be strengthened in my relationship with the others?
- What are my distorted aspects that need attention and conversion?
- How is Montfort’s suggestion resonating in me?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge. Then:

- I praise God for the gift of others and for what I learned about myself through them.
- I choose one of Mary’s attitudes that came alive in her through the others and I think of concrete ways to integrate it in my own life.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“A perfect wife – who can find her?
She is far beyond the price of pearls...
She is clothed in strength and dignity,
she can laugh at the days to come.
When she opens her mouth, she does so wisely;
on her tongue is kindly instruction.
She keeps good watch on the conduct of her household,
no bread of idleness for her.
Her children stand up and proclaim her blessed,
her husband, too, sings her praises:
‘Many women have done admirable things,
but you surpass them all!’
Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who is wise is the one to praise.
Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.” (Pr 31:10,25-31)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and let us meditate on the mystery of Mary in relationship with God and Christians.

First decade: Incarnation: “Mary alone found grace before God...” (TD 16)

Second decade: Visitation: “God chose to begin his miracles through Mary...” (TD 19)

Third decade: Birth at Bethlehem: “It was with her, in her and for her that God produced the masterpiece Jesus.” (TD 20)

Fourth decade: Presentation: “It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him, and sacrificed him for us.” (TD 18)

Fifth decade: The Kingdom of Jesus and Mary: “As the Kingdom of Jesus Christ exists primarily in the our heart or interior life... so the kingdom of Mary is principally in our interior.” (TD 37-38)



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

Third Session

WHO AM I IN MY ACTIONS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

What you are is translated into what you do. Consider your work and the various activities that accompany your day-to-day life, and ask yourself:

- Which positive aspects of yourself are being actualized through what you do?
- Which limitations hamper the good intention and hinder the progress of your actions?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We ask Mary to share with us what she discovers about herself through some of her significant actions.

- “She has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20). Through her conception Mary discovered to be “highly favored” and fruitful in her virginity. (Lk 1:27-28)
- “Mary set out ... and went as quickly as she could to a town in hill country of Judah” (Lk 1:39). Through her visitation she discovered to be a source of joy and an instrument of sanctification.

- “She laid him in a manger...” (Lk 2:7). The way she participated in the event of Jesus’ birth made her appreciate the beatitude of the poor in spirit.
- “She treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2:19). Through the activity of “pondering” Mary discovered to be a woman of wisdom and prayer.
- “They took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (Lk 2:22). In her act of offering Mary discovered in herself an attitude of generous obedience to the will of God.
- “There was a wedding at Cana and the mother of Jesus was there” (Jn 2:1). Her intervention showed deep concern for the others’ needs and her call to discipleship.

Montfortian sharing

a) *The imperfection of our actions*

According to Montfort, “Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us. When pure, clear water is poured into a foul-smelling jug, or wine into an unwashed cask that previously contained another wine, the clear water and the good wine are tainted and readily acquire an unpleasant odor. In the same way when God pours into our soul, infected by original and actual sin, the heavenly waters of grace or the delicious wines of love, these gifts are usually spoiled and tainted by the evil sediment left in us by sin. Our actions, even those of the highest virtue, show the effects of it.” (TD 78)

b) *How to perfect our actions*

“Consecrating ourselves to Jesus through Mary implies placing our good deeds in Mary’s hands... Let us pray, then, to our dear Mother and Queen that having accepted our poor present, she may purify it, sanctify it, beautify it, and so make it worthy of God.” (SM 37)

“Our Blessed Lady, in her immense love for us, is eager to receive into her virginal hands the gift of our actions, imparting to them a marvelous beauty and splendor, and presenting them herself to Jesus most willingly. More glory is given to our Lord in this way than when we make our offering with our own guilty hands.” (TD 224)



4. Awareness Exercises

After reflecting on my actions and confronting myself with the experience of Mary:

- What are the positive aspects of myself that need to be strengthened in my actions?
- What are my distorted aspects that need attention and conversion?
- How is Montfort's suggestion resonating in me?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge. Then:

- I praise God for the experience of growth-promoting activities in my life.
- I choose one of Mary's attitudes that came alive in the course of her actions, and I think of concrete ways to integrate it in my own life.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Three days later there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. When they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the wedding was all finished, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’. Jesus said, ‘Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet’. His mother said to the servants, ‘*Do whatever he tells you*’. (Jn 2:1-5)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and, with Montfort, let us meditate on the influence or activity of Mary in the souls.

First decade: Mother of Grace. “It was Mary who gave existence and life to the author of all grace, and because of this she is called the ‘Mother of Grace’.” (SM 8)

Second decade: Treasurer of all graces. “God chose her to be the treasurer, the administrator and the dispenser of all graces, so that all God’s graces and gifts pass through her hands.” (SM 10)

Third decade: Mother of God’s children. “As in the natural life a child must have a father and a mother, so in the supernatural life of grace the true children of the Church must have God for their Father and Mary for their mother.” (SM 11)

Fourth decade: Mary forms the members of Jesus. “Since Mary produced the head of the elect, Jesus Christ, she must also produce the members of that head, that is, all true Christians.” (SM 12)

Fifth decade: Mary gives the grace to bear crosses. “The crosses of those who trust themselves to her are rather like sweetmeats, i.e., ‘sweetened’ crosses rather than ‘bitter’ ones.” (SM 22)



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady*.

Fourth Session

WHO AM I IN MY TRIALS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

In the course of your life, you may have suffered severe trials that shocked you and perhaps unnerved you.

- What inner resources helped you to get back on your feet?
- What inner deficiencies were awakened in you on those occasions?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We ask Mary and Joseph to share with us the inner resources they experienced in the midst of trials.

- “Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child...” On this occasion Joseph discovered to be a man of inner righteousness: “Being a man of honor, he decided to spare her publicly...” (Mt 1:18-19)
- “The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him’...” (Mt 2:13). Throughout this trial Joseph learned to search for God’s will that was made manifest through the inner voice of his “dreams.”

- “She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn” (Lk 2:7). In Bethlehem Mary and Joseph faced the reality of poverty with a deep sense of faith and trust in God’s providence.
- “Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, ‘You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too’...” (Lk 2:34-35). Through this prophecy Mary discovered to be deeply associated with the mystery of her Son.
- “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother...” (Jn 19:25). Mary’s “standing” by the cross expresses the attitude of the true believer, who knows that the promises of God would be fulfilled. (cf. Lk 1:45)

Montfortian sharing

a) *Trials and spiritual resources*

“If ... you suffer in the right way, the cross will become a yoke that is easy and light, since Christ himself will carry it with you. It will give you wings, as it were, to lift you to heaven; it will become your ship’s mast, bringing you smoothly and easily to the harbor of salvation. Carry your cross *patiently* and it will be a light in your spiritual darkness, for the one who has never suffered trials is ignorant (cf. Si 34:10). Carry your cross *cheerfully* and you will be filled with divine love; for only in suffering can we dwell in the pure love of Christ.” (*Friends of the Cross*, 34; cf. LEW 176)

b) *Mary and our trials*

“It is true that on our way we have hard battles to fight and serious obstacles to overcome, but Mary, our Mother and Queen, stays close to her faithful servants. She is always at hand to brighten their darkness, clear away their doubts, strengthen them in their fears, sustain them in their combats and trials” (TD 152) ... “for this good Mother, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, dips all the crosses of her faithful ones in the honey of her maternal sweetness and the unction of pure love.” (TD 154)



4. Awareness Exercises

After reflecting on my moments of trial and after confronting myself with the experience of Mary and Joseph:

- What are my inner resources that need to be strengthened whenever I face trials?
- What are my distorted reactions that need attention and conversion?
- How is Montfort's teaching resonating in me?



5. Decision for Life

“Someone who has never had trials knows little” (Si 34:10). I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge through trials. Then:

- I praise God for the signs of growth in wisdom that I have acquired through trials.
- I choose one of Mary and Joseph's inner attitudes that came alive in them through the experience of trials, and I think of concrete ways to integrate it in my own life.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“To stop me from getting too proud I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to beat me...! About this thing, I have pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me, but he has said, ‘My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness’. So I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ’s sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.” (2 Co 12:7-10)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and, in communion with Mary, let us meditate on the trials experienced by Jesus.

First decade: Jesus is tempted. “Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry.” (Lk 4:1-2)

Second decade: Jesus is rejected. “When they heard his words everyone in the synagogue of Nazareth was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him down the cliff, but he slipped through the crowd and walked away.” (Lk 4:28-30)

Third decade: Jesus is betrayed. “Here with me on the table is the hand of the man who betrays me. The Son of Humanity does indeed go to his fate even as it has been decreed, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed!” (Lk 22:21-22)

Fourth decade: Jesus is mocked. “They seized him and led him away... and the men who guarded him were mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and questioned him. ‘Play the prophet’ they said. ‘Who hit you then?’ And they continued heaping insults on him.” (Lk 22:54,63-65)

Fifth decade: Jesus is crucified. “When they reached the place called ‘The Skull’, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing’...” (Lk 23:33-34)



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

Fifth Session

WHO AM I IN MY EMOTIONS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

In the course of your life, you may have experienced intense emotions, like excitement, pleasure, contentment, anger, depression, distress, etc.

- Think of the times you experienced emotions in a positive way.
 - What aspects of yourself were actualized then?
 - What traps did you have to beware of?
- Think of the times you experienced emotions in a negative way.
 - What hindrances did you discover about yourself?
 - What might have been the initial good intention of your emotions?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We ask Mary and Jesus to share with us the experience and the invitation behind their emotions.

- “The angel Gabriel... went in and said to Mary, ‘Rejoice, so highly favored! The Lord is with you’. She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean...” (Lk 1:28-29). Mary transforms her inner “disturbance” into the wisdom-activity of “pondering”. The same can be said about her overwhelming “worry” when she and Joseph fail to find Jesus in Jerusalem. (cf. 2:48-52)

- “Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, ‘I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children’...” (Lk 10:21). The excitement of Jesus lies in the realization of the mysterious ways of God.
- “As he drew near and came in sight of the city of Jerusalem, Jesus shed tears over it...” (Lk 19:41). The distress of Jesus shows how deep is his concern for the peoples’ spiritual welfare.
- “When they reached Jerusalem, Jesus went into the Temple and began driving out those who were selling and buying there; he upset the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those who were selling pigeons...” (Mk 12:15). The anger of Jesus is purposed toward the pursuit of spiritual justice.
- On the way to Lazarus’ tomb “Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him!’...” (Jn 11:36). Jesus’ weeping expresses deep empathy and love.

Montfortian sharing

In his *Prayer for Missionaries* Montfort expresses a lot of emotions, and through them he is able to compose an “inflamed prayer.” Here are a couple of passages.

- “Would it not be better for me to be dead, Lord, than to see you offended daily so deliberately and with such impunity and, daily, to stand, myself, in ever-increasing danger of being swept away by the ever-swelling flood of iniquity? I would rather die a thousand deaths than endure such a fate. Send me your help from heaven or let me die.” (PM 14)
- “Let me then raise the cry of alarm: ‘The House of God is on fire! Souls are perishing in the flames! The sanctuary itself is ablaze! Help! Help! Good people! Help our brother and sister who are being murdered. Help our children who are being massacred. Help our kind father who is being done to death!’ If anyone has the Lord’s cause at heart, let him or her stand side by side with me.” (PM 28-29)



4. Awareness Exercises

After reflecting on the experience of my positive and negative emotions and after confronting myself with the experience of Jesus, Mary, and Montfort:

- What are my inner resources that are awakened through my emotions and that need to be strengthened?
- What are my distorted reactions that need attention and conversion?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge. Then:

- I praise God for the gift of my emotions and for what I am learning about myself.
- I choose one of Jesus and Mary's attitudes that came alive in them through the experience of their emotions, and I think of concrete ways to integrate it in my own life.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation...” (Heb 5:7-9)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and, in communion with Mary let us meditate on the emotions that Jesus experienced during his passion.

First decade: The treachery of Judas. “Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, ‘I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me’. The disciples looked at one another, wondering which he meant.” (Jn 13:21-22)

Second decade: The agony in the garden. “A sudden fear came over him, and great distress. And he said to them, ‘My soul is sorrowful to the point of death’...” (Mk 14:34)

Third decade: The mocking. “The men who guarded Jesus were mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and questioned him. ‘Play the prophet’ they said. ‘Who hit you then?’ And they continued heaping insults on him.” (Lk 22:63-65)

Fourth decade: The abandonment. “When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’...” (Mk 15:33-34)

Fifth decade: Mary's standing by the cross. "Even his Blessed Mother's presence added painfully to his sufferings for, as he was dying, he saw her standing at the foot of the cross engulfed in a sea of sorrow." (LEW 160)



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

Sixth Session

WHO AM I IN MY DEEP ASPIRATIONS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

Today, if you were to be free to undertake something attracting and fulfilling,

- What would you do?
- What aspects of yourself would be actualized?
- What is it that prevents you from turning your aspirations into reality?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *The deep aspirations of Mary*

“And Mary said to the angel Gabriel, ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me.’” (Lk 1:38)

At Cana “Mary said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’...” (Jn 2:5)

b) *The deep aspirations of Jesus*

“Father, glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; and... let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal

life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent..." (Jn 17:1-3)

"Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me..." (v.21)

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me..." (v.24)

c) *The deep aspiration of the apostle*

"Life to me, of course, is Christ, and so death would bring me something more... I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake... to help you to progress in the faith and even increase your joy in it." (Ph 1:21-26)

Montfortian sharing

While writing *True Devotion* Montfort expresses his deep aspirations in the following way:

- "It is to increase the number of Mary's servants that I have taken up my pen to write down what I have been teaching with success both publicly and in private in my missions for many years..." (TD 110)
- "My labor will be well rewarded if this little book falls into the hands of noble souls, children of God and of Mary, born not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of human beings. My time will be well spent if, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, after having read this book they are convinced of the supreme value of the solid devotion to Mary I am about to describe..." (TD 112)
- "If I thought that my guilty blood could help the readers to accept in their hearts the truths that I set down in honor of my dear Mother and Queen, I, her most unworthy child and slave, would use it instead of ink to write these words." (ibid.)



4. Awareness Exercises

After reflecting on my deep aspirations, I allow myself to be confronted by the experience of Jesus, Mary, Paul, and I ask:

- Which of my deep aspirations needs to be affirmed and strengthened?
- Which of my aspirations do I need to let go of?
- How is Montfort's aspiration resonating in me?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the wisdom of true self-knowledge. Then:

- I praise God for the gift of my spiritual aspirations.
- I choose one of Jesus and Mary's aspirations, and I think of concrete ways to integrate it in my own life.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name. Out of infinite love, may God give you the power through the Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.” (Ep 3:14-19)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and, let us contemplate the glorious mysteries, i.e., the fulfillment of all Christians’ aspirations.

First decade: The Resurrection. We aspire for God’s love.

Second decade: The Ascension. We aspire for heavenly gifts.

Third decade: The Pentecost. We aspire for the Holy Spirit.

Fourth decade: The Assumption. We aspire for true devotion to Mary.

Fifth decade: The Glorification. We aspire for perseverance in grace.



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

Seventh Session

WHO AM I IN MY IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit*

or “*Lord, let me know myself*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great desire.



2. Brainstorming

- What significant decisions have you made in your life? What aspects of yourself enabled you to implement those decisions?
- What was/is the aim of your important decisions?
- What inner difficulties do you normally encounter while discerning and carrying out your decisions?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *The decisions of Mary and her inner strength*

- “Mary said to the angel, ‘Let what you have said be done to me’...” (Lk 1:38)
- “Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah...” (Lk 1:39)
- At Cana, “when they ran out of wine... the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’... Then she said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’...” (Jn 2:4-5)
- “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother...” (Jn 19:25)

In all her important decisions Mary aims at being at the service of God (“I am the handmaid of the Lord”) as well as at the service of Christ’s reign on earth (“...and his disciples believed in him”).

The aspects that enabled her to stick to her decisions include: deep awareness of being loved (“highly favored”), humble openness to the wisdom of God’s project (“behold”), strong determination to pursue her goals (“let it be done”; “do”).

b) ***Paul’s inner conflict: our main difficulty***

“I cannot understand my own behavior. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate... In fact, this seems to be the rule, that every single time I want to do good it is something evil that comes to hand. In my inmost self I dearly love God’s Law, but I can see that my body follows a different law that battles against the law which my reason dictates. This is what makes me a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body.” (Rm 7:15,21-23)

Montfortian sharing

a) ***The decision of the true devotee***

“I renounce forever Satan... and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life, and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now...”

“I choose you, Mary, as my Mother and Queen. I surrender and consecrate myself to you... I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me... for the greater glory of God in time and throughout eternity.” (LEW 225)

b) ***A decision not understood by everyone***

“This devotion ... will not be understood in the same by everyone. Some – the great majority – will stop short at the threshold and go no further. Other – not many – will take but one step into its interior. Who will take a second step? Who will take a third? Finally, who will remain in it permanently? Only the one to whom the Spirit of Jesus reveals the secret.” (TD 119)



4. Awareness Exercises

After confronting myself with the experience of Mary, with the inner conflict of Paul, and with the teaching of Montfort:

- What might be today the decision of my life that lays the foundation for any other decision?
- What do I need to let go of in order to stand by my decision?



5. Decision for Life

I pray the *Litany of the Holy Spirit* that I may obtain the gift humility, openness and determination to pursue God's kingdom on my life. Then:

- I renew my baptismal promises.
- I choose to entrust my Christian life to Mary.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Yahweh, my heart has no lofty ambitions,
my eyes do not look to high.
I am not concerned with great affairs
or marvels beyond my scope.
Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet
like a child in its mother’s arms,
as content as a child that has been weaned.” (Ps 131:1-2)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us recite or sing “*Ave Maris Stella*” and, with Montfort, let us meditate on some motives which recommend the “excellence of the consecration of ourselves to Jesus through Mary”.

First decade: By consecrating ourselves to Jesus through Mary we give ourselves completely to God. (TD 135)

Second decade: This consecration helps us to imitate Christ, who “enclosed himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.” (TD 139).

Third decade: The consecration to Jesus through Mary is an excellent means of giving glory to God. (TD 151)

Fourth decade: This “devotion is a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of obtaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists.” (TD 152)

Fifth decade: This devotion gives great liberty of spirit – the freedom of the children of God – to those who faithfully practice it. (TD 169)



3. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of Our Lady.*

THIRD PERIOD

KNOWLEDGE OF MARY

“Each day of this week they should endeavor
in all their prayers and works
to acquire an understanding of the Blessed Virgin
and ask the Holy Spirit for this grace...
They should recite daily the *Litany of the Holy Spirit*
and the *Ave Maris Stella* as during the previous week.
They will also say at least five decades of the Rosary
for greater understanding of Mary.”
(TD 229)

First Session

MARY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is your knowledge of Mary in the Old Testament?
- Do you know of any text of the Old Testament which refers to Mary?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *In the Prophecies:*

- “I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; it will bruise your head and you will strike its heel.” (Gn 3:15)
- “The Lord will give you a sign in any case. It is this: the young woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel.” (Is 7:14)

b) *In the figures of Mary:*

- Eve, “mother of all those who live” (Gn 3:20): Mary, the New Eve, “mother of the living”.
- Hannah, mother of Samson: “My heart exults in Yahweh” (1 S 2:1) inspires the Magnificat of Mary.
- The Ideal Woman: “She is far beyond the price of pearls.” (Pr 31:10)
- The female figure of Wisdom: (cf. Book of Wisdom)
- The “Anawin”: the poor and humble of the Lord.

- The Daughter of Zion: “Shout for joy, Daughter of Zion.” (Zp 3:14)

c) ***In the symbols:***

- Noah’s ark: “Blesses are those who enter into her as into another Noah’s ark.” (TD 175)
- Temple of God: “The Holy Spirit calls her the City of God, the Altar of God, the Temple of God.” (TD 262)
- Paradise: “In this earthly paradise grows the real Tree of Life.” (TD 261)

Montfortian sharing

a) ***The Biblical Figure of this Perfect Devotion***

“The Holy Spirit gives us, in Sacred Scripture, a striking allegorical figure of all the truths I have been explaining concerning the Blessed Virgin and her children and servants. It is the story of Jacob who received the blessing of his father Isaac through the care and ingenuity of his mother Rebecca.” (TD 139)

b) ***The services of Mary to her servants***

“Here now are the services which the Virgin Mary, as the best of all mothers, lovingly renders to those loyal servants who have given themselves entirely to her in the manner I have described and following the figurative meaning of the story of Jacob and Rebecca.” (TD 201)

- “She loves them not only affectively but effectively, that is, her love is active and productive of good like Rebecca’s love for Jacob – and even more so.” (TD 202)
- She provides them with everything they need for body and soul.” (TD 208)
- “She leads and guides them according to the will of her Son.” (TD 209)
- “She defends and protect them against their enemies.” (TD 210)
- “The greatest service which this loving Mother renders her faithful followers is to intercede for them with her Son.” (TD 211)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience the love of Mary “not only affectively but also effectively”? (TD 202)
- How does Mary lead and guide me “by the hands along the path of holiness”? (TD 209)



5. Decision for Life

I entrust myself more and more to the maternal care of Mary.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“My heart exults in Yahweh,
my horn is exalted in my God,
my mouth derides my foes,
for I rejoice in your power of saving ...
The bow of the mighty is broken
but the feeble have girded themselves with strength.
The sated hire themselves out for bread
but the hungry cease from labor ...
God raises the poor from the dust,
lifts the needy from the dunghill
to give them a place with princes,
and to assign them a seat of honor ...” (1 S 2:1-8)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

The canticle of Mary, the Magnificat, bears many references to the Canticle of Hannah as quoted above.

Praying the Magnificat is proposed by Montfort in the particular practices of his devotion to Mary. And so, let us contemplate Mary in the mystery of her Magnificat.

First Decade: “To thank God for the graces given to our Lady, her consecrated ones will frequently say the Magnificat.” (TD 255)

Second decade: “The Magnificat is the only prayer we have which was composed by our Lady, or rather, composed by Jesus in her, for it was he who spoke through her lips.” (TD 255)

Third decade: “It is the greatest offering of praise that God ever received under the law of grace... Contained in it are mysteries so great and so hidden that even the angels do not understand them.” (TD 255)

Fourth decade: “Mary herself frequently recited it, especially as thanksgiving after Holy Communion.” (TD 255)

Fifth decade: “The devils take to flight when they hear these words:
‘The mighty arm of God scatters the proud in their conceit’.” (TD 255)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella.*”

Second Session

MARY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is your favorite image of Mary?
- What is the image of Mary according to the Marian dogmas?
- What is your gospel image of Mary ?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

The image of Mary is revealed to us in the Gospels in varying stages.

- a) Like a *silhouette*, in the Gospel of Mark: “Now his mother and his brothers arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him.” (Mk 3:31)
- b) Like a *sketch*, in the Infancy narratives of Matthew. Mary is the real physical mother of Jesus, and Joseph, the legal father: “Get up, take the child and his mother, and escape into Egypt and stay there until I tell you.” (Mt 2:13)
- c) Like a *real portrait*, in the Gospel of Luke. Mary is presented with her full personality:
 - as the first disciple “who hears the word of God and puts it into practice.” (Lk 8:21)
 - as the Virgin and Mother: “...‘But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its

shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God'..." (Lk 1:34-36)

- d) Like a *vision*, in the Gospel of John. Mary is the "Woman" associated with Christ, in faith and love: "Do whatever he tells you!" (Jn 2:5). She becomes the Mother of the Beloved disciple: "This is your mother." (Jn 19:27)

Montfortian sharing

Mary the *inseparable associate* of Christ:

- "What I say in an absolute sense of our Lord, I say it in a relative sense of our Blessed Lady. Jesus, in choosing her as his inseparable associate in his life, death, glory, and power in heaven and on earth, has given her by grace in his kingdom all the same rights and privileges that he possesses by nature. All that belongs to God by nature, say the saints, belongs to Mary by grace, and according to them, just as Jesus and Mary have the same will and the same power, they have also the same subjects, servants and slaves." (TD 74)
- "Even at his death she had to be present so that he might be united with her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father." (TD 18)
- "Lord, you are always with Mary, and Mary is always with you. She can never be without you because then she would cease to be what she is... So intimately is she united to you that it will be easier to separate light from the sun, and heat from the fire. I go further, it would even be easier to separate all the angels and the saints from you than Mary; for she loves you more ardently, and glorifies you more perfectly than all your other creatures put together." (TD 63)



4. Awareness Exercises

How does my “folklore” image of Mary change into the “gospel” image of Mary?

- How am I associated with Christ, like Mary, in the mystery of salvation?
- What attracts me more in contemplating the Gospel image of Mary?



5. Decision for Life

I must gradually acquire the habit of recollecting myself interiorly and so form within me an idea or a spiritual image of Mary. (cf. SM 47)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed in the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord’ ...” (Lk 1:40-42)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate the blessedness or holiness of Mary especially by following her example in divine worship.

First decade: Mary is *the attentive Virgin* who receives the word of God with faith.

“It was faith that was first her the cause of blessedness and certainty in the fulfillment of the promise: ‘Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled’(Lk 1:45).” (MC 17)

Second decade: *Mary is the Virgin in prayer.*

“At Cana, Mary appears as the Virgin in prayer: when she tactfully told her Son of a temporal need, she also obtained an effect of grace, namely that Jesus, in working the first of his “signs” confirmed his disciples’ faith in him.” (MC 18)

Third decade: *Mary, the Virgin-Mother.*

“She who believing and obeying... brought forth on earth the Father’s Son. This she did, not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit.” (MC 19)

Fourth decade: *Mary, the Virgin presenting offerings.*

“There (on Calvary) she united herself with a maternal heart to his sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth, and also was offering to the Eternal Father.” (MC 20)

Fifth decade: Mary, teacher of spiritual life.

“The faithful, at a very early date, began to look to Mary and to imitate her in making their lives an act of worship of God and their worship a commitment of their lives.” (MC 21)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella.*”

Third Session

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITARIAN LOVE

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is your experience of the Trinitarian love in your daily life?
- How will you share about this mystery with your friends?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“But when the appointed time came, God sent the Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subject of the Law, and to enable us to be adopted as sons and daughters. The proof that you are sons and daughters is that God has sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, ‘Abba, Father’ ...” (Ga 4:4-6)

Let us consider in the above text:

- 1) The Love of the Father
- 2) The Mission of the Son
- 3) The gift of the Holy Spirit
- 4) The role of the “woman”
- 5) The grace of our own divine “filiation”.

Montfortian sharing

TRINITARIAN LOVE

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

Before the time of the Incarnation

“Gave his only Son to the world through Mary.” (TD 16)

“Became man for our salvation only in Mary and through Mary.” (TD 16)

“Formed Jesus Christ in Mary.” (TD 16)

During the time of the Incarnation

“Imparted to Mary his fruitfulness.” (TD 17)

“Took his delight in Mary.” (TD 17)

“Became fruitful through Mary.” (TD 20)

After the time of the Incarnation

“Gathered all his graces together and called them Mary.” (TD 23)

“Imparted to her all that he has gained.” (TD 24)

“Entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary.” (TD 25)

“On earth”

“Dwell in Jacob!” (TD 30)

“Take Israel for inheritance!” (TD 31)

“Let all your virtues take root in my chosen ones!” (TD 34)

“In heaven”

“The saints call her the treasury of the Lord.” (TD 23)

“She is his mystic channel.” (TD 24)

“The dispenser of all he possesses.” (TD 25)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience the Trinitarian Love in communion with Mary?
- Am I aware that, through and in Mary, I am imitating the “compelling example of the three divine Persons?” (TD 140)



5. Decision for Life

I want to take the means to live, in communion with Mary, more and more in praise of the Trinitarian Love inhabiting within me.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name. Out of infinite love, may God give you the power through the Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.” (Ep 3:14-19)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate the Trinitarian Love with Mary. During the decade, repeat slowly and lovingly each invocation proposed and end the decade by singing one *Hail Mary* and the *Glory be to the Father*.

First Decade: “Hail Mary, well-beloved daughter of the eternal Father.”

Second decade: “Hail Mary, admirable mother of the Son.”

Third decade: “Hail Mary, most faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit.”

Fourth decade: “Hail Mary, glorious temple of the Blessed Trinity.”

Fifth decade: “Hail Mary, Sovereign Queen.” (MR 13)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella.*”

Fourth Session

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is Mary teaching you about Jesus?
- What is Jesus teaching you about Mary?



3. Reflection

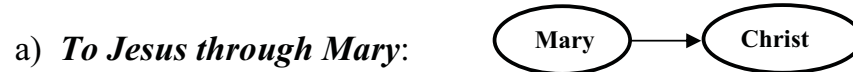
Scriptural sharing

“Go and find all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too go and do him homage. Having listen to what the king had to say, they set out... The sigh of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage.” (Mt 2:8-11)

- a) Matthew mentions five times in the Infancy narrative the expression, “the child with his mother.”
- b) This union of the mother with the Son starts from the virginal conception up to Jesus’ death.
- c) She is the Mother of the Redeemer, the generous Associate in the mysteries of Christ, and the humble handmaid of the Lord.

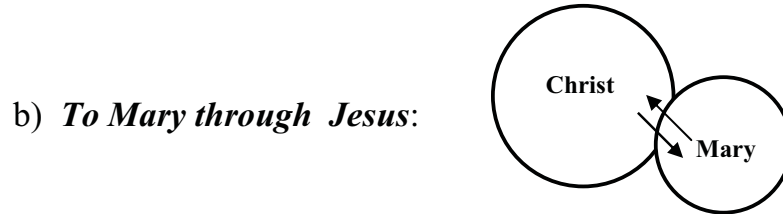
Montfortian sharing

Montfort indicates two complementary ways (both Marian) to deepen our encounter with Christ-Wisdom.



In this model our relationship with Mary leads us to the loving knowledge of Christ. “This devotion is a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of attaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists.” (TD 152)

“So united are they that our Lord may be called “Jesus of Mary” and his Mother, “Mary of Jesus.” (TD 247)



For Montfort, our devotion to Mary is an imitation of the example of the dependence of Christ as regard Mary. The more we imitate Christ, the more we will be devoted to Mary.

“He did this not just for the first eight, ten or fifteen years of his life like other children, but for thirty years. He gave more glory to God, his Father, during all those years of submission and dependence than he would have given by spending them working miracles, preaching far and wide, and converting all mankind. Otherwise, he would have done all these things.” (TD 139)



4. Awareness Exercises

- How do I experience in my spiritual journey the complementarity of the two ways?
- How does the “convincing and well know example” (TD 139) of Jesus depending on Mary change my attitude towards her?



5. Decision for Life

I want to love Christ with the Heart of Mary and to love Mary with the Heart of Christ.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman this is your son’. Then to the disciple he said, ‘This is your mother’. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” (Jn 19:26-27)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Montfort proposes a “beautiful prayer, recited by so many great souls, ‘O Jesus, living in Mary’...” (TD 246)

“O Jesus, living in Mary, come and dwell in your servants in the spirit of your holiness, in the fullness of your power, in the perfection of your ways, in the truth of your virtues, in the communion of your mysteries. Subdue our enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh, in the strength of your Spirit, for the glory of Your Father.” (*Morning and Night Prayers*, 20. In *God Alone*, p. 516)

Let us pray our Rosary meditating on the mystery of Jesus living in Mary. We repeat each invocation ten times, slowly, lovingly, taking a good pause each time.

First Decade: O Jesus living in Mary, come and dwell in me in the spirit of your holiness.

Second decade: O Jesus living in Mary, come and dwell in me in the fullness of your power.

Third decade: O Jesus living in Mary, come and dwell in me in the perfection of your ways.

Fourth decade: O Jesus living in Mary, come and dwell in me in the truth of your virtues.

Fifth decade: O Jesus living in Mary, come and dwell in me in the communion of your mysteries.



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella*” (*Hail, bright Star of ocean*).

Fifth Session

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is your favorite symbol of the Holy Spirit? Why?
- What has the sacrament of Confirmation changed in your life?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow” (Lk 1:35)

- This outpouring of the Holy Spirit is considered as the 1st Pentecost of Mary.
- The 2nd occurs when she is joined with the disciples in prayer: “...and there appeared to them tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Ac 2: 3-4)

In both narratives:

- a) There is a strong sense of mission.
- b) There is exultant praise.
- c) There is prayer and reflection.
- d) There is the presence of Mary.

Montfortian sharing

“God the Holy Spirit wishes to fashion God’s chosen ones in and through Mary. The Spirit tells her, ‘My well-beloved, my spouse, let all your virtues take root in my chosen ones that they may grow from strength to strength and from grace to grace. When you were living on earth, practicing the most sublime virtues, I was so pleased with you that I still desire to find you on earth without your ceasing to be in heaven. Reproduce yourself then in my chosen ones, so that I may have the joy of seeing in them the roots of your invincible faith, profound humility, total mortification, sublime prayer, ardent charity, your firm hope and all your virtues.’” (TD 34)

“When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he (*sic*) hastened there and enters there fully into it. He gives himself generously to that soul according to the place it has given to his spouse.” (TD 36)

“Happy, indeed sublimely happy, is the person to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the secret of Mary... Happy the persons to whom the Holy Spirit gives access to this sealed fountain where they can draw water and drink deep draughts of the living waters of grace.” (SM 20)



4. Awareness Exercises

- Do I experience to be “completely possessed and governed by the Spirit of Mary, a spirit which is gentle yet strong, zealous yet prudent, humble yet courageous, pure yet fruitful”? (TD 258)
- How does it translate in my day-to-day life?



5. Decision for Life

When will I breathe Mary as my body breathes air? (cf. TD 217)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self control. There can be no law against things like that, of course. You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires. Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit. We must stop being conceited, provocative and envious.” (Ga 5:22-26)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us offer the five decades in honor of the mystery of the Pentecost and let us ask, through this mystery and the intercession of Mary, the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit.

First Decade: “The Holy Spirit wishes to fashion God’s chosen ones in and through Mary.” (TD 34)

Second decade: “Together with the Holy Spirit Mary produced the greatest thing that ever was or ever will be: a God-man.” (TD 35)

Third decade: “The formation and the education of the great saints who will come at the end of the world are reserved to her, for only this singular and wondrous virgin can produce in union with the Holy Spirit singular and wondrous things.” (TD 35)

Fourth decade: “When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it.” (TD 36)

Fifth decade: “...from the moment the substantial love of the Father and the Son espoused Mary to form Jesus, the head of the elect, and Jesus in the elect, the Holy Spirit has never disowned her, for she has always been faithful and fruitful.” (TD 36)



3. Concluding Prayer: “Ave Maris Stella.”

Sixth Session

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What is the meaning of the Church for you?
- How do you participate in the activities of the Church?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

“So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” (Ac 1:12-14)

Montfortian sharing

“If Jesus Christ, the head of mankind, is born of her, the predestinate, who are members of his 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... If a member of the mystical body of Christ, that is, one of the predestinate, were born of a mother other than Mary who gave birth to the head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but a monster in the order of grace.” (TD 32)

The role of Mary in the Church is viewed by Montfort as follows:

- a) She intercedes with and for the Church.
- b) She is the Virgin Mother in the order of grace.
- c) She is the model of the Church.
- d) She is in mission: “Jesus is always and everywhere the fruit and Son of Mary.” (TD 44)



4. Awareness Exercises

How do I experience the spiritual motherhood of Mary?

- Am I a better member of the Church because of my relationship with Mary? How?
- In my apostolate, am I a continuation of the virginal motherhood of Mary?



5. Decision for Life

To commit myself to Christ is to commit myself to an apostolate in the Church.

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Three days later there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. When they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the wedding was all finished, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’. Jesus said, ‘Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet’. His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’...” (Jn 2:1-5)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate the unique presence of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church.

First Decade: The Incarnation. The mother of Jesus was there: “It was in this mystery that Jesus, in the womb of Mary and with her co-operation, chose all the elect.” (TD 248)

Second decade: The Visitation. The mother of Jesus was there: “It was by her word that he sanctified St. John the Baptist in the womb of his mother, St. Elizabeth; no sooner has Mary spoken than John was sanctified.” (TD 19)

Third decade: The Nativity. The mother of Jesus was there: “It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him and sacrificed him for us.” (TD 18)

Fourth decade: The Presentation. The mother of Jesus was there: “He glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this lovable virgin in his conception, his birth, his presentation in the temple, and in the thirty years of his hidden life.” (TD 18)

Fifth decade: The Finding in the Temple. The mother of Jesus was there: “Through this mystery and her intercession we ask for true wisdom.” (MR 8)



3. Concluding Prayer: “Ave Maris Stella.”

Seventh Session

MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF OUR HOLINESS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit*



2. Brainstorming

- What do you mean by holiness?
- How has your attitude changed towards Mary, the “All Holy”, since the beginning of this process of entrustment to her?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

The Blessed Virgin Mary’s exemplary holiness is based on solid evangelical virtues:

- Her *committed faith* in accepting the Word of God: “Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promises made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (Lk 1:45)
- Her *zealous charity* in reaching out to others: “Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah.” (Lk 1:39)
- Her *unwavering hope*: “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5)
- Her *deep humility*: “Because has looked upon God’s lowly servant.” (Lk 1:48)
- Her *profound wisdom*: “She treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Lk 2:19,33,51)

- Her *courageous fortitude*: “And a sword will pierce your own soul.” (Lk 2:34)
- Her *prompt obedience*: “You see before you the Lord’s servant, let it happen to me as you have said.” (Lk 1:38)
- Her *purity*: “Since I am a virgin.” (Lk 1:26)

Montfortian sharing

“Devotion to the Blessed Virgin ... is even more necessary for those who are called to a special perfection. I do not believe that anyone can acquire intimate union with our Lord and perfect fidelity to the Holy spirit without a very close union with the most Blessed Virgin and an absolute dependence on her support.” (TD 43)

“To Mary alone God gave the keys of the cellars of divine love and the ability to enter the most sublime and secret ways of perfection, and lead others along them.” (TD 45)

“...the greatest saints, those richest in grace and virtue, will be the most assiduous in praying to the most Blessed Virgin, looking up to her as the perfect model to imitate and as a powerful helper to assist them.” (TD 46)

“Here are some very sanctifying interior practices for those souls who feel called by the Holy Spirit to a high degree of perfection. They may be expressed in four words, doing every thing *through* Mary, *with* Mary, *in* Mary, *for* Mary, in order to do it more perfectly *through* Jesus, *with* Jesus, *in* Jesus, and *for* Jesus.” (TD 257)



4. Awareness Exercises

“Only experience can teach the wonders wrought by Mary.” (SM 57)

- What is my experience so far?
- What is most difficult for me in “becoming a living copy” (TD 217) of Mary?
- What is most wonderful for me in my relationship with Mary.



5. Decision for Life

I want to do “everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary, and for Mary, in order to do it more perfectly through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus.” (TD 257)

Part II



1. Proclamation of the Word

“Make no mistake about this: it is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given from above; it comes down from the Father of all light, with whom there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By the Father’s choice we were made God’s children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that God has created.” (Jm 1:16-18)



2. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us meditate on the mystery of the growth in holiness of Mary and our growth in holiness with her, in her, and through her.

First decade: “She was full of grace when she was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel and was filled with grace to overflowing when she was so mysteriously overshadowed by the Holy Spirit.” (TD 43)

Second decade: “From day to day, from moment to moment, she increased so much this tow-fold plenitude that she attained an immense and inconceivable degree of grace.” (TD 44)

Third decade: “As she is herself the earthly paradise, the virgin and blessed land, from which sinful Adam and Eve were expelled, she lets only those whom she chooses enter her domain in order to make them saints.” (TD 45)

Fourth decade: “She leads them by the hand along the path of holiness, steadies them when they are liable to stumble and helps them when they are fallen.” (TD 209)

Fifth decade: “...the greatest service which this loving Mother renders her faithful followers is to intercede for them with her Son ... She brings her servants into closest union with him and maintains that union.” (TD 211)



3. Concluding Prayer: “*Ave Maris Stella.*”

FOURTH PERIOD

KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

“During this week they should seek to understand Jesus Christ better.
They may say the prayer of St. Augustine (cf. TD 67).
They may pray repeatedly,
‘Lord, that I may know you’, or *‘Lord, that I may see’*.
As during the previous week,
they should recite the *Litany of the Holy Spirit*
and the *Ave Maris Stella*,
adding every day the *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*.”
(TD 230)

First Session

THE PERFECT CONSECRATION TO JESUS CHRIST

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

- What are your expectations from a person consecrated to God?
- How do you react to the following statement: “The vow we make at Baptism is the most important of all vows ... But is it not true that nearly all Christians prove unfaithful to the promises made to Jesus in Baptism?” (TD 127)



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *Jesus, model of consecration*

Jesus lived his Consecration to God fully. In fact in the NT we hear him saying:

- At the Incarnation: “You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, ‘God, here I am! I am coming do obey your will’...” (Heb 10:5-7)
- To his parents who found him in the Temple among the doctors of the Law: “Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?” (Lk 2:49)

- In the context of his priestly prayer: “For their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth ...” (Jn 17:19)
- To the disciples who urged him to eat: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete God’s work.” (Jn 4:34).
- Aware of having lived his consecration fully, he prays, “I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do” (Jn 17:4) and, before breathing his last, exclaims, “It is accomplished.” (Jn 19:30).

b) *Christians consecrate themselves to Christ*

Christians consecrate themselves to Christ through Baptism. The baptismal promises imply:

- *Renouncing* all that enslaves us or hinders our authenticity: “When we were baptized in Jesus Christ we were baptized in his death went ...” (Rm 6:3)
- *Sharing* in the Pascal mystery of Christ: “When we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, we too might live a new life.” (Rm 6:4)
- *Being united with* Christ in his threefold character as priest, prophet, and king: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into light.” (1 P 2:9)
- *Being united with one another* in the Church: “In the one Spirit we were all baptized, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.” (1 Co 12:13)

Montfortian sharing

a) *The consecration of Jesus to the Father is “Marian”*

At the Incarnation, “Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything ...” (TD 243)

“It was here that he perfectly restored the glory that sin had taken from his Father. It was here again that our Lord, by the sacrifice of himself and of his will, gave more glory to God than he would have given had he offered all the sacrifices of the Old Law. Finally, in Mary he gave his Father

infinite glory, such as his Father had never received from human beings.”
(TD 248)

b) *The Christian’s perfect consecration to Jesus is Marian too*

“As all perfection consists in our being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus, it naturally follows that the most perfect of all devotions is that which conforms, united, and consecrates us most completely to Jesus. Now of all God’s creatures Mary is the most conformed to Jesus. It therefore follows that, of all devotions, devotion to her makes for the most effective consecration and conformity to him. The more one is consecrated to Mary, the more is consecrated to Jesus.” (TD 120)

“This is why perfect consecration to Jesus is but a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach; or in other words, it is the perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism.” (TD 120)



4. Awareness Exercises

By the Montfortian consecration we give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary. (cf. TD 121)

- How intensely do I feel this call today?
- How do I intend to live it out?



5. Decision for Life

Today I renew my baptismal promises:

- being aware of my “promises and responsibilities...”
- and making “a personal ratification of the contract made with God.”
(cf. TD 127)

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

“I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ...” (Ph 3:8-9)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

With Mary and Montfort, we meditate on Jesus Christ as “the ultimate end of all devotions.” (cf. TD 61-67)

First Decade: “Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning the end of everything. ‘We labor’, says St. Paul, ‘only to make all people perfect in Jesus Christ.’” (TD 61)

Second decade: “In Jesus alone dwells the entire fullness of the divinity and the complete fullness of grace, virtue and perfection. In him alone we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing.” (TD 61)

Third decade: “Jesus is the only teacher from whom we must learn; the only Lord on whom we should depend; the only Head to whom we should be united and the only model that we should imitate.” (TD 61)

Fourth decade: “We are given no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. God has laid no other foundation for our salvation, perfection and glory than Jesus.” (TD 61)

Fifth decade: “If then we are establishing sound devotion to Our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to Our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ.” (TD 62)



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Second Session

THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE CONSECRATION TO CHRIST-WISDOM Act of Entrustment to Mary

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

- What is the difference between a consecration and an act of entrustment?
- Someone has written: “I entrust the two last hours of my life to Mary”. What is your reaction about the duration and the contents of such an act?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

Since this session is meant to introduce the specific Montfortian Consecration to Christ-Wisdom through the hands of Mary, we shall concentrate only on the Montfortian approach.

Montfortian sharing

- The Montfortian Spirituality is first of all, like many other spiritualities, a *Christian Spirituality*: “Indeed it could not be condemned without overthrowing the foundation of Christianity.” (TD 163)

- It is based on the full meaning of our commitment to Christ *through our baptism*: “It is nothing less than a perfect renewal of the promises and vows of baptism.” (TD 162)
- It is centered *on Christ*, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom and *on Trinitarian Love*, the Tenderness of the Father, the Gentleness of the Son and the inflaming Love of the Holy Spirit: “Through Christ, with him and in him, we can do all things and render all honor and glory to the Father in the unity of the Spirit, we can make ourselves perfect and be for our neighbor a fragrance of eternal life.” (TD 61)
- The *difference* with other spiritualities: “It is a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of attaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists” (TD 152). “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.” (ibid.)
- “There are indeed *several true devotions* to our Lady...” (SM 24):
 - a) “The first consists in fulfilling the duties of our Christian faith... like praying to our Lady occasionally...” (SM 25)
 - b) “The second consists in entertaining for our Lady deeper feelings of love, of confidence, of veneration...”
 - c) The third (the “perfect” practice of devotion to our Lady) “is one which is unknown to many and practiced by very few.” (SM 27)
- *Two essential elements*: “Chosen soul, this devotion consists ...
 - 1) ... in surrendering oneself in the manner of slave to Mary and to Jesus through her ... and then
 - 2) ... in performing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary.” (SM 28)
- It is *a growing process*: “As this devotion essentially consists in a state of soul, it will not be understood in the same way by everyone. Some – the great majority – will stop short at the threshold and go no further. Others – not many – will take but one step into its interior. Who will take a second step? Who will take a third? Finally who will remain in it permanently? Only the one to whom the Spirit of Jesus reveals the secret. The Holy Spirit will lead this faithful soul from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from light to light, until at length the person attains transformation

into Jesus in the fullness of his age on earth and of his glory in heaven.”
(TD 119)



4. Awareness Exercises

- What is the quality of my devotion to Mary now?
- Is it different from the time of my childhood and adolescence ?



5. Decision for Life

I will pray everyday the Holy Spirit for the gift of a perfect practice of devotion to our Lady.

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

“The mother of Jesus was there... This was the first of Jesus’ signs: it was in Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, but they stayed there only a few days.” (Jn 2: 11-12)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate during the five decades the mystery of the Pentecost, asking with Montfort, “Holy Spirit, give me a great love and a longing for Mary, your exalted spouse. Give me a great trust in her maternal heart, and a continuous access to her compassion, so that with her you may truly form Jesus, great and powerful, in me until I attain the fullness of his perfect age.” (SM 67)

First decade: For the grace of a share in the faith of Mary. “It is an active and probing faith which like some mysterious pass-key admits into the mysteries of Jesus Christ and our final destiny and into the very heart of God.” (TD 214)

Second decade: For the grace of pure love. “She will fill your heart with pure love of which she is the treasury.” (TD 215)

Third decade: For the grace of the communication of the spirit of Mary. “The soul of Mary will be communicated to you to glorify the Lord. Her spirit will take the place of yours to rejoice in God her Savior, but only if you are faithful to the practices of this devotion.” (TD 217)

Fourth decade: For the grace of transformation into the likeness of Jesus. “Mary is a mold capable of forming people into the image of the God-man. Any person who is cast into this divine mold is quickly shaped and molded into Jesus and Jesus into him or her.” (TD 219)

Fifth decade: For the grace of giving glory to Christ. “If you live this devotion sincerely, you will give more glory to Jesus in a month than in many years of a more demanding devotion.” (TD 222)



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Third Session

JESUS CHRIST THE INCARNATE WORD The Humanity of Jesus

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

As you reflect on the “humanity” of Jesus, what qualities of him have had an influence on you throughout your life?

- When you were a child ...?
- When you were an adolescent ...?
- When you were a young adult ...?
- When you were in midlife ...?
- Now ...?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *In the beginning*

“In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one things had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of people. a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.” (Jn 1:1-5)

b) *At the appointed time*

“When the appointed time came, God sent the Son, born of a woman...”
(Ga 4:4).

And so, “The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (Jn 1:14)

c) *Throughout time*

- He was taken care of in his humanity: “The time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to a son... She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger...” (Lk 2:6-7)
- He expressed love through his humanity: “At the sight of Mary’s tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, ‘Where have you put him (Lazarus)?’ They said, ‘Lord, come and see’. Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him?’...” (Jn 11:33-36)
- He let himself be loved in his humanity: “Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair.” (Jn 12:3)

Montfortian sharing

a) *The Word built a house worthy of God*

“At last, when the time appointed for the redemption of humankind had come, Eternal Wisdom built a house worthy of be God’s dwelling-place. Wisdom created the most holy Virgin, forming her ... with even greater delight than God had derived from creating the universe.” (LEW 105)

b) *The beauty of the Incarnate Word*

- His looks reveal “gentleness ... serenity ... charm ... majesty.” (LEW 121)
- He is gentle in his words: “Even those who hated him were so surprised at his eloquence and wisdom that they asked one another, ‘Where did he get such wisdom’?...” (LEW 122)
- He is gentle in his actions: “Poor people and little children flowed him everywhere seeing him as one of their own. The simplicity, the

kindliness, the humble courtesy and the charity they witnessed in our dear Savior made them press close about him.” (LEW 124)



4. Awareness Exercises

- Which traits of the humanity of Jesus do I strongly feel called to integrate in my own humanity today?
- How can Mary help me out in implementing my call?



5. Decision for Life

“With this knowledge of the Incarnate Word, shall we not love him who has loved us and still loves us more than his own life; and whose beauty and meekness surpass all that is loveliest and most attractive in heaven and on earth?” (LEW 131)

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

We proclaim the Beatitudes or the glorification of the humanity of Jesus, Mary, and the believers.

“How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.
Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:3-10)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

We meditate on Mary as the “milieu” of the humanity of the Incarnate Word.

First Decade: The Annunciation. Mary *conceives* the humanity of Jesus, whose “reign will have no end.” (cf. Lk 1:31,33)

Second decade: The Visitation. Mary *shares* with the believers the humanity of Jesus, and becomes the “cause of our joy”. (cf. Lk 1:41,44)

Third decade: The Birth of Jesus. Mary *gives birth* to the humanity of Jesus and provides the shepherds with the opportunity to “glorify and praise God.” (cf. Lk 2:7,20)

Fourth decade: The Presentation. Mary *offers* to God the humanity of Jesus, who becomes our “light.” (cf. Lk 2:22,32)

Fifth decade: The Death of Jesus. Mary *sacrifices* the humanity of Jesus and becomes the “mother of the beloved disciple.” (cf. Jn 19:25-27)



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Fourth Session

JESUS CHRIST AND THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

“The mystery of the Cross even today is an object of scandal and folly ... not only to the Jews and pagans ... but also to the so-called devout Catholics. Yes, the Cross remains an object of scandal and folly, of contempt and fear, although not in theory, for the Cross is spoken of more than ever, and much is written about its beauty and excellence ... but in practice ...” (LEW 174)

- What’s your instinctive reaction to this statement?
- In what ways is the cross an object of scandal and folly in your personal life?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

a) *The Cross of Christ*

- The Cross of Christ, like any cross, is *humiliation*: “For our sake God allowed the sinless one to be made into sin...” (2 Co 5:21). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake, since scripture says: ‘Cursed be everyone who is hanged on a tree’...” (Ga 3:13)

- The Cross of Christ is *power* and *wisdom*: “Here we are preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” (1 Co 1:23-25)
- The Cross of Christ is *glorification*: “... he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. For this reason God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names...” (Ph 2:8-9)

b) ***The true disciple shares in the Wisdom of Christ’s Cross***

- “The only *knowledge* I claim to have is about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ.” (1 Co 2:2)
- “I have been crucified with Christ, and *I live now* not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me.” (Ga 2:19-20)
- “If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also *imitate him* in his resurrection. We must realize that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin.” (Rm 6:5-7)

Montfortian sharing

a) ***The most convincing reason for loving Jesus***

“There is” – says St. Bernard – “one motive which excels all others which I feel most keenly and which urges me to love Jesus. It is, dear Jesus, the bitter chalice which you drank for our sakes, and the great work of our Redemption which makes you so lovable to us. Indeed the supreme blessing and incomparable proof of your love makes us want to return your love. This motive attracts us more agreeably and influences us more forcibly.” (LEW 154)

b) ***Wisdom and the Cross***

“The bond between them is indissoluble, their union is eternal. Never the Cross without Jesus, or Jesus without the Cross.” (LEW 172)

“He has so truly incorporated and united himself with the Cross that in all truth we can say: Wisdom is the Cross and the cross is Wisdom.” (LEW 180)

c) ***True disciples carry their cross “after Jesus”***

The formula of consecration to Jesus through Mary includes the following: “I... renew and ratify today through you (Mary) my baptismal promises. I renounce for ever Satan, his empty promises, and his evil designs, and I give my self completely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, *to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life*, and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now.” (LEW 225)



4. Awareness Exercises

“Wisdom is the Cross and the Cross is Wisdom.” (LEW 180)

- What name do I give to my “cross” today?
- In which way is this cross “wisdom” to me? In other words, how does it reveal to me the wisdom and the power of God?



5. Decision for Life

“Never the cross without Jesus, or Jesus without the Cross.” (LEW 172)

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

“His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as one of us as being as one of us, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Ph 2:6-11)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

With Mary and Montfort, we meditate on “the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ sufferings.

First Decade: He suffered in his possessions. “During his passion he was stripped of his garments by soldiers who shared them among themselves, and then fastened him naked to a cross...” (LEW 158)

Second decade: He suffered in his honour, reputation, wisdom and power. “He was overwhelmed with insults and called a blasphemer, a revolutionary, a drunkard, a glutton and a possessed person, ... an ignorant man and an impostor.” (LEW 159)

Third decade: He suffered in his disciples. “One of them bartered him for money and betrayed him; another, their leader, denied him; and the rest abandoned him.” (LEW 159)

Fourth decade: He suffered from all kinds of people, including his own Mother: “Even his Blessed Mother’s presence added painfully to his

sufferings for, as he was dying, he saw her standing at the foot of the cross engulfed in a sea of sorrow.” (LEW 160)

Fifth decade: He suffered from fear of God’s abandonment. “To all these torments we must add the most cruel and the most fearful one, namely his abandonment upon the cross which caused him to cry out, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’... ” (LEW 162)



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Fifth Session

JESUS AND HIS DEPENDENCE ON MARY

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

- How do you explain that love requires dependence?
- How do you experience freedom in depending on someone?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

The dependence of Jesus upon Mary in the Gospels is very striking:

- In his conception and gestation for nine months: “Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus.” (Lk 1:32)
- In his sanctification of John the Baptist: “Look! The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.” (Lk 1:43)
- In his birth: “... and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.” (Lk 2:7)
- In his presentation to the Temple: “They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.” (Lk 2:22)

- In his childhood: “He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority.” (Lk 2:51)
- In his public life: at Cana, “They have no wine” (Jn 2:4) and on Calvary, “Woman, this is your son.” (Jn 19: 27)

Montfortian sharing

“God-made-man found freedom in imprisoning himself in her womb. He displayed power in allowing himself to be borne by this young maiden. He found his glory and that of his Father in hiding his splendors from all creatures here below and revealing them only to Mary. He glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this lovable virgin in his conception, his birth, his presentation to the temple, and in the thirty years of his hidden life. Even at his death she has to be present so that he might be united with her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father, just as formerly Isaac was offer in sacrifice by Abraham when he accepted the will of God. It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him and sacrificed him for us. The Holy Spirit could not leave such wonderful and inconceivable dependence of God unmentioned in the Gospel...” (TD 18)

“He gave more glory to God, his Father, during all those years of submission and dependence than he would have given by spending them working miracles, preaching far and wide, and converting all mankind. Otherwise he would have done all these things. What immeasurable glory then do we give to God when, following the example of Jesus, we submit to Mary! With such a convincing and well-know example before us, can we be so foolish as to believe that there is a better and shorter way of giving God glory than by submitting ourselves to Mary as Jesus did?” (TD 139)



4. Awareness Exercises

- Am I aware that devotion to Mary is more an imitation of Christ than of Mary?
- How does this change my attitude of “gratitude, esteem, respect and love” (TD 65) towards her?



5. Decision for Life

From now on, my attitude will be to love Mary with the heart of Christ.

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

“As God’s dear children, then, take God as your pattern, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.” (Ep 5:1-2)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

Let us contemplate, with the Joyful mysteries, the dependence of Jesus upon Mary.

First Decade: The Incarnation. “The Most High God came down to us in a perfect way through the humble Virgin Mary, without losing anything of his divinity or holiness. It is likewise through Mary, that we poor creatures must ascend to almighty God in a perfect manner without having anything to fear.” (TD 157)

Second decade: The Visitation. “The Incomprehensible, was perfectly comprehended and contained by the humble Virgin Mary without losing anything of God’s immensity. So we must let ourselves be perfectly contained and led by the humble Virgin without any reserve on our part.” (TD 157)

Third decade: The Nativity. “The Inaccessible drew near to us and became closely, perfectly, and even personally one with our humanity through Mary, without losing anything of God’s Majesty. So it is also through Mary that we must draw near and unite ourselves to God perfectly, intimately, and without fear of being rejected.” (TD 157)

Fourth Decade: The Presentation: “... God, the ‘I Am Who I Am’, deigned to come down to us who are not and turned our nothingness into God, or I Am Who I Am. God did this perfectly by... submitting entirely to the young Virgin Mary without ceasing to be in time I Am Who I Am from all eternity. Likewise, it is through Mary that we, who are nothing may become like God by grace and glory. We accomplish this by giving

ourselves to her so perfectly and so completely as to remain nothing, as far as self is concerned, and to be everything in her, without any fear of illusion.” (TD 157)

Fifth Decade: The Finding in the Temple. “I boldly say – and I am telling the truth – that instead of this road, perfect though it be, I would still choose the Immaculate way of Mary.” (TD 158)



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Sixth Session

THE FREEDOM OF JESUS CHRIST

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

- What is your understanding of freedom?
- What are the main obstacles to freedom?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

Let us admire the freedom of Christ as it is shown in so many pages of the Gospels.

- He is *free towards his own family*: “Who are my mother and my brothers? ... Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mk 3:34-35)
- He is *free towards* the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and their *social rules*: “You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness.” (Lk 11: 39-40)
- He is *free with sinners*, tax collectors: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners.” (Mk 2:16)

- He is *free in the choice of his friends*: “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” (Jn 11:5)
- He is *free towards the political power*: “Leave this place, because Herod means to kill you. He replied: ‘You may go and give that fox this message’...” (Lk 13:31-32)
- He is *free in his surrender of love*: “The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down from my own free will...” (Jn 10:17-18)

Montfortian sharing

The measure of our freedom is in proportion to the measure of the capacity of our love.

“Now, there are three kinds of slavery: natural slavery, enforced slavery and voluntary slavery. All creatures are slaves of God in the first sense, for the “earth and its fullness belong to the Lord”. The devils and the damned are slaves in the second sense. The saints in heaven and the just on earth are slaves in the third sense. Voluntary slavery is the most perfect of all three states, for by it we give the greatest glory to the Father, who looks into the heart and wants it to be given to God. Isn’t God indeed called the God of the heart or of the loving will? For by this slavery we freely choose God and God’s service before all things, even if we were not by our very nature obliged to do so.” (TD 70)

“There is a world of difference between a servant and a slave.” (TD 71)

Servant		Dependence	Slave (of love)
<i>Just a part of what one is what one has what one will have</i>	→	The most complete	<i>All</i> (cf. TD 121) what one is what one has what one will have
<i>With wages</i> (cf. interested devotion TD 103)	→	The most unconditional	<i>No wages</i> (cf. disinterested devotion TD 110)
<i>For a time</i>	→	The most faithful (irrevocable)	<i>For ever</i>
<i>Relative rights</i>	→	The most radical	<i>Absolute right</i> (life and death)

“This devotion gives great liberty of spirit, the freedom of the children of God, to those who faithfully practice it... To reward us for this enslavement of love, our Lord frees us from every scruple and servile fear.” (TD 169)



4. Awareness Exercises

- What are my experiences of greatest freedom in my life?
- What different types of dependence am I experiencing in my life?



5. Decision for Life

I pray to be more and more drawn to live in a personal way, from within, and not by blind impulses or by mere external constraints.

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

Freedom is an exceptional sign of the image of God in man and woman.

“Now this Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the working of the Lord who is Spirit.” (2 Co 3:17-18)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

“Mary is totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards God, and, at the side of her Son, she is the most perfect image of freedom and of liberation of humanity and of the universe.” (RM 37)

First Decade: Let us contemplate Mary in her free and responsible “yes” at the Incarnation.

Second decade: Let us contemplate Mary in her free and courageous decision to accept her virginity for life.

Third decade: Let us contemplate Mary in her free obedience of faith during her pilgrimage of faith on earth.

Fourth decade: Let us contemplate Mary in her free and heroic offering of her Son at the foot of the Cross.

Fifth decade: Let us contemplate Mary in her glorious freedom in heaven.



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

Seventh Session

THE MARIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE CONSECRATION TO CHRIST

Part I



1. Introductory Prayer: *Prayer of St. Augustine*

or “*Lord, that I may know you*” or “*Lord, that I may see*”, repeated many times and with great loving desire.



2. Brainstorming

- What is the necessity of Mary in your relationships with Christ?
- What is special in a Marian experience of consecration to Christ?



3. Reflection

Scriptural sharing

We shall concentrate only on the Montfortian Marian experience of Consecration.

Montfortian sharing

a) *Experience of Dependence*

- It is a *secret of holiness*: “Here is a secret, chosen soul, which the most High God taught me and which I have not found in any book, ancient or modern. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, I am confiding it to you.” (SM 1)
- It is *to be cast into* the “living mold of God” (SM 16): “Dear friends, what a difference there is between a soul brought up in the ordinary

way to resemble Jesus Christ by people who, like sculptors, rely on their own skill and industry, and a soul thoroughly tractable, entirely detached, most ready to be molded in her by the working of the holy Spirit.” (SM 18)

- It is a *gift of the Holy Spirit*: “Happy, indeed sublimely happy, is the person to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the secret of Mary, thus imparting true knowledge of her.” (SM 20)
- It is *very demanding*: “The great difficulty is to enter into its spirit, which requires an interior dependence on Mary, and effectively becoming her slave and the slave of Jesus through her.” (SM 44)
- It is a *Marian presence*: “Should you not savor immediately the sweet presence of the Blessed Virgin within you, take great care not to torment yourself. For it is a grace not given to everyone, and even when God ... favors a soul with this grace, it remains nonetheless very easy to lose it, except when the soul has become permanently aware of it through the habit of recollection.” (SM 52)
- It is *an experience*: “Experience will teach you much more about this devotion than I can tell you, but if you remain faithful to the little I have taught you, you will acquire a great richness of grace that will surprise you and fill you with delight.” (SM 53)

b) *A mystical Marian experience*

- *Introduction*: “Here are some very sanctifying interior practices for those souls who feel called by the Holy Spirit to a high degree of perfection. They may be expressed in four words, doing everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary, and for Mary, in order to do it more perfectly through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus. (TD 257)
- *The purpose*: “Simply and solely because it is a way of reaching Jesus perfectly, loving him tenderly and serving him faithfully.” (TD 62)
- *Some of the reasons*:
 - * The way of God is a Marian way: “It is the path which Jesus Christ opened up in coming to us.” (TD 152)
 - * Mary is the mold of God: “Mary is a mold capable of forming people into the image of God-man.” (TD 219)

- * Mary is entirely relative to God...she exists uniquely in reference to him. (TD 221)
- * Mary is the most conformed and united and consecrated to Jesus; so our devotion to her “will conform, unite and consecrate us most completely to Jesus.” (TD 120)
- *Through* Mary: “We must do everything through Mary, that is we must obey her always and be led in all things by her spirit which is the Holy Spirit of God.” (TD 258)
- *With* Mary: “In all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows.” (TD 220)
- *In* Mary: “When we have obtained this remarkable grace by our fidelity, we should be delighted to remain in Mary. We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her ...” (TD 264)
- *For* Mary: “It is only right that we should do everything for her as if we were her personal servant and slave.” (TD 265)



4. Awareness Exercises

“It is in the bosom of Mary that people who are young grow mature in enlightenment, in holiness, in experience and in wisdom and in a short time reach the fullness of the age of Christ.” (TD 156)

How does my relationship of dependence upon Mary make me grow in my daily living:

- in enlightenment?
- in holiness?
- in experience?
- in wisdom?



5. Decision for Life

I must gradually acquire the habit of recollecting myself interiorly and so form within me an idea or a spiritual image of Mary. (cf. SM 47)

Part II



1. Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

2. Proclamation of the Word

“As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2:19). “His mother stored up all these things in her heart.” (Lk 2:42)



3. Contemplation through the Rosary

“God the Holy Spirit wishes to fashion God’s chosen ones in and through Mary. The Spirit tells her, ‘My well-beloved, my spouse, let all your virtues take root in my chosen ones that they may grow from strength to strength and from grace to grace.’” (TD 34)

For each decade we repeat 10 times slowly, meditatively, the invocations taken from the “Prayer to Mary” (SM 68), and we conclude with the singing of *Glory be to the Father*.

First Decade: Rejoice, highly favored! “May the light of your faith dispel the darkness of my mind.”

Second decade: Rejoice highly favored! “May your deep humility take the place of my pride.”

Third decade: Rejoice highly favored! “May your heavenly contemplation put an end to the distractions of my wandering imagination.”

Fourth decade: Rejoice highly favored! “May your continuous vision of God fill my memory with divine presence.”

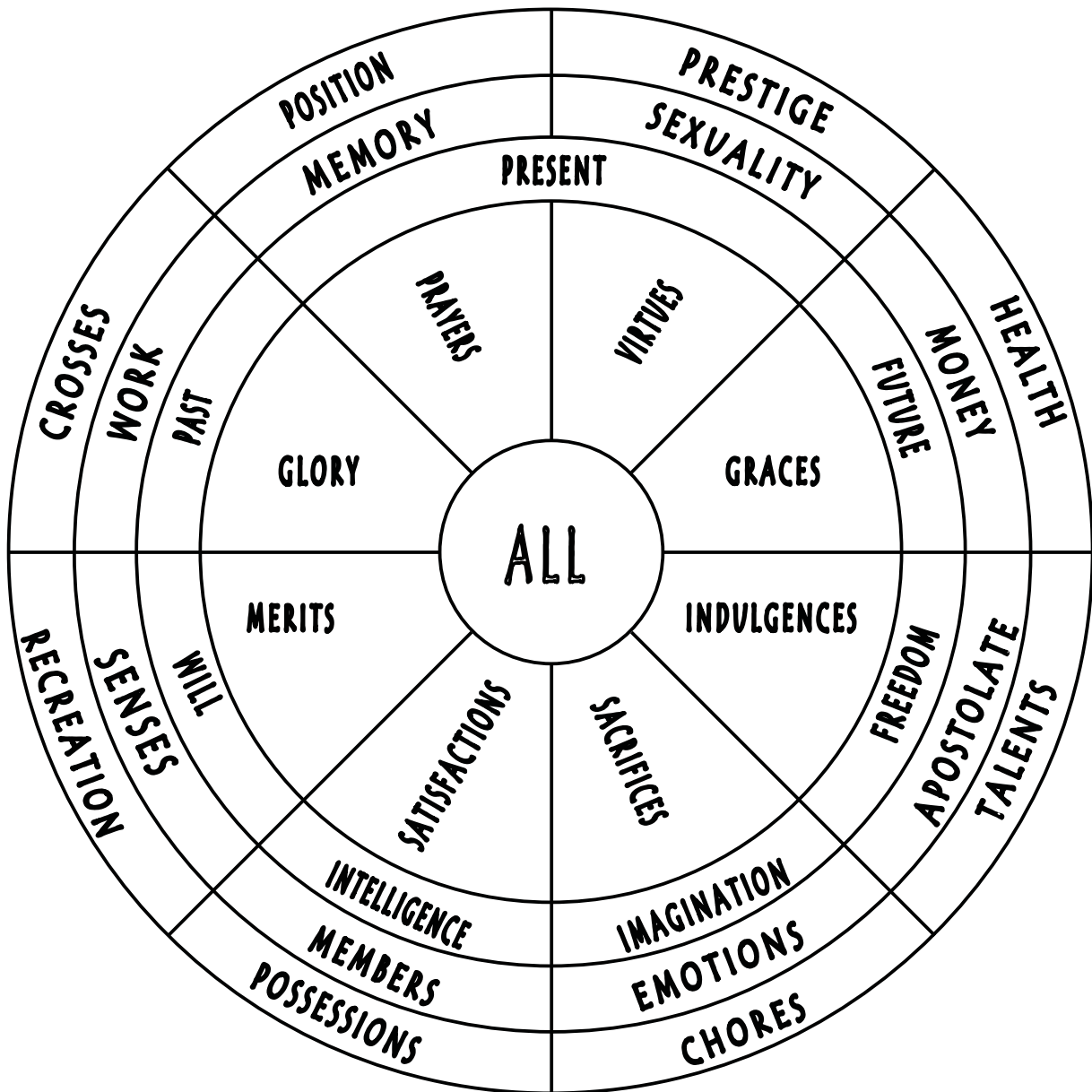
Fifth decade: Rejoice highly favored! “May the burning love of your heart inflame the coldness of mine.”



4. Concluding Prayer: *Litany of the Holy Spirit* and “*Ave Maris Stella*”

CONTENT OF CONSECRRATION

(TD 121)



“Always in accordance with the order established by God, and in keeping with the duties of one’s state of life.” (TD 124)

What is that “order”? Certainly the loving plan of God, realized from our side in each and every free and responsible decision, in the order of love.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO JESUS THE INCARNATE WISDOM THROUGH THE HANDS OF MARY

Original Text of Montfort

Commentary

THE WAY OF WISDOM

Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom,

A contemplative prayer of admiration.

most lovable and adorable Jesus,
true God and true man, only Son of
the eternal Father and of Mary
always virgin,

Attractiveness of Jesus: most lovable
and adorable,
only Son of the Father
only son of Mary.

I adore you profoundly, dwelling in
the splendour of your Father from all
eternity and in the virginal womb of
Mary, your most worthy Mother, at
the time of your Incarnation.

Adoration: Wonderment ! Awe!
In the Womb of the Father.
In the Womb of Mary.
To honor the Mystery of the
Incarnation.

I thank you for having emptied
yourself in assuming the condition of
a slave to set me free from the cruel
slavery of the evil one.

Thanksgiving.
The manner of God: slave of love.
“He emptied himself, taking the
form of a slave ... he was humbler
yet, even to accepting death, death
on a cross.” (Ph 2: 6-8)

I praise and glorify you for having
willingly chosen to obey Mary, your
holy Mother, in all things, so that
through her I may be your faithful
slave of love.

Praises.
Purpose of my entrustment to Mary:
to imitate the dependence of Christ-
Wisdom.

THE WAY OF THE POOR

But I must confess that, I have not kept the vows and promises which I made to you so solemnly at my baptism. I have not fulfilled my obligations,

and I do not deserve to be called your child or even your loving slave.

Since I cannot lay claim to anything except what merits your rejection and displeasure, I dare no longer approach the holiness of your majesty on my own.

That is why I turn to the intercession

and the mercy of your

holy Mother,

whom you yourself have given me to mediate with you.

Through her I hope to obtain from you contrition and pardon for my sins,

and that Wisdom whom I desire to dwell in me always.

Alas! Act of contrition.
Awareness of my sinfulness,
of my unfaithfulness,
of my unworthiness.

“Leave me Lord, I am a sinner.”
(Lk 5:8)

Act of humility.
I cannot of my own, I need someone to accompany me, “aware, by the light of the Holy Spirit, of my tainted nature.” (TD 79)

Mary, Mediatrix of intercession.

Mother of mercy.

The Mother of God is also my Mother.

A gift from Jesus: “Behold your mother.” (Jn 19:27)

Act of hope: contrition and pardon of my sins.

A great gift: wisdom “to strengthen our weakness, to enlighten our minds, to inflame our hearts.”
(MR 11)

THE WAY OF MARY

<p>I turn to you, then, Mary immaculate,</p>	<p>“Little Crown” of excellence.</p>
<p>living tabernacle of God. The eternal Wisdom, hidden in you, willed</p>	<p>Mary: All Holy! Dwelling of God!</p>
<p>to receive the adoration of both human beings and angels.</p>	<p>I unite myself also to her adoration.</p>
<p>I greet you as Queen of heaven and earth.</p>	<p>“Little Crown” of power of love. Universal Queenship of Mary.</p>
<p>All that is under God has been made subject to your sovereignty.</p>	<p>“Queen of all Hearts.” (TD 38)</p>
<p>I call upon you</p>	<p>“Little Crown” of goodness.</p>
<p>as the unfailing refuge of sinners.</p>	<p>Maternal refuge of sinners.</p>
<p>In your mercy you have never forsaken anyone.</p>	<p>Mother of mercy.</p>
<p>Grant my desire for divine Wisdom and, in support of my petition,</p>	<p>Ardent desire, holy and sincere: “a great grace.” (LEW 182)</p>
<p>accept the promises and the offering of myself which I now make, conscious of my unworthiness.</p>	<p>Accept the humble surrendering on myself.</p>

THE WAY OF THE BAPTIZED

<p><i>I,.....</i></p>	<p>“I, personally, freely, and fully aware of my doing.” (TD 126)</p>
<p><i>an unfaithful sinner renew and ratify today</i></p>	<p>Awareness of my sinfulness</p>
<p><i>through you</i></p>	<p>Through the hands of Mary: guided by her hands, held in her hands and molded with her hands.</p>

<i>my baptismal promises,</i>	Covenant of mutual love and promises.
<i>I renounce forever Satan,</i>	Mystical death.
<i>his empty promises and his evil designs,</i>	False wisdoms: riches, flesh and pride.
<i>and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ,</i>	Commitment to Christ.
<i>the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life,</i>	“Wisdom is the cross and the cross is Wisdom.” (LEW 180)
<i>and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now.</i>	Faithfulness through Mary, “the Virgin most faithful.” (TD 175)
<i>This day, with the whole court of heaven as witness,</i>	God, the angels and saints are witnesses.
<i>I choose you, Mary, as my Mother and Queen.</i>	Love is a decision.
<i>I surrender and consecrate myself to you,</i>	Absolute surrender in love. “God looks into the heart and wants it to be given to him.” (TD 69)
<i>Body</i>	All the parts and all the senses, in health and sickness.
<i>And soul,</i>	Intelligence, will, imagination, memory, passions, etc.
<i>With all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the spiritual value of all my actions, past, present, and to come.</i>	<i>Meritory:</i> strictly personal; for Mary to keep in safety. <i>Impetratory:</i> value of prayers; at her disposal. <i>Satisfactory:</i> remission of pains due to sins; at her disposal.
<i>I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without any reservations, in</i>	Here on earth and in heaven. Right of life and death (martyrdom).

whatever way you please,

Absolutely nothing reserved:
otherwise “please, pluck it out and
cast it far from me.” (SM 66)

*For the greater glory of God in time
and throughout eternity.*

“To the praise of the glory of God’s
grace.” (Ep 1:5)

THE WAY OF ENTRUSTMENT

Accept, gracious Virgin, this little
offering of my slavery,

A symbolic tribute” if only a pin as a
token.” (TD 232)

to honor

In adoration, communion and
mission

and imitate that obedience which the
eternal Wisdom willingly chose to
have towards you, his Mother. I wish
to acknowledge the authority which,
both of you have over this

Imitation of the dependence of
Christ: “such a convincing and well
known example...” (TD 139).
Imitation of the Trinity: “such a
compelling example.” (TD 140)

little worm and pitiful sinner.

The ugly silkworm becomes a
wonderful butterfly.

But I wish also to thank God, for the
privileges bestowed on you by the
Blessed Trinity.

In thanksgivings for your privileges.

I solemnly declare that for the future
I will try to honor and obey you in
all things as your true slave of love.

I resolve firmly and solemnly .
“There is a world of difference
between a servant and a slave.”
(TD 71)

O admirable Mother,

Mother admirable !

present me to your dear Son, as his
slave now and for always, so that he
who redeemed me through you, will
now receive me through you.

“She prepares them to God’s taste
and to God’s greater glory.”
(TD 205)

Mother of mercy,

Mother of Mercy!

grant me the favor of obtaining the true Wisdom of God,	Obtain for me true wisdom, “the greatest of all God’s gifts.” (LEW 184)
and so make me one of those whom you love,	“Not only affectively but also effectively.” (TD 202)
teach and guide,	“She leads them by the hand.” (TD 209)
whom you nourish	“She provides them with everything.” (TD 208)
and protect as your children and slaves.	“She shelters them.” (TD 210)
Virgin most faithful,	Virgin most faithful!
make me in everything so committed a disciple, imitator, and slave of Jesus, your Son, the Incarnate Wisdom, that I may become, through your intercession and example,	A true disciple! A true imitator! A “slave of love.” Permanently, “in a state of soul.” (TD 118)
fully mature with the fullness which Jesus possessed on earth, and with the fullness of his glory in heaven. Amen.	“From strength to strength, from grace to grace, from light to light until at length I attain transformation into Jesus in the fullness of his age.” (TD 118)

APPENDIX

PRAYERS

COME, HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise, and ever rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord. Amen!

LITANY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Father all powerful, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, eternal Son of the Father,
redeemer of the world, *save us.*

Spirit of the Father and the Son,
boundless life of both, *sanctify us.*

Holy Trinity, *hear us.*

Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the
Father and the Son, *enter our hearts.*

Holy Spirit, equal to the Father and the
Son, *enter our hearts.*

Promise of God the Father, *have mercy on*

on us.
Ray of heavenly light, “
Author of all good,
Source of heavenly water,

Consuming fire,
Ardent charity,
Spiritual unction,
Spirit of love and truth,
Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
Spirit of counsel and fortitude,
Spirit of knowledge and piety,
Spirit of the fear of the Lord,
Spirit of grace and prayer,
Spirit of peace and meekness,
Spirit of modesty and innocence,
Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier,
Holy Spirit, who governs the Church,
Gift of God, the Most High,
Spirit who fills the universe,
Spirit of adoption of God’s children,

Holy Spirit, *inspire us with horror of sin.*
Holy Spirit, *come and renew the face of
the earth.*

Holy Spirit, *shed your light in our souls.*
Holy Spirit, *engrave your law in our
hearts.*

Holy Spirit, *in flame us with the flame of
your love.*

Holy Spirit, *open to us the treasures of
your graces.*

Holy Spirit, *teach us to pray well.*

Holy Spirit, *enlighten us with your
Heavenly inspirations.*

Holy Spirit, *lead us in the way of
Salvation.*

Holy Spirit, *grant us the only necessary
Knowledge.*

Holy Spirit, *inspire in us the practice of
good.*

Holy Spirit, *grant us the merits of all
virtues.*

Holy Spirit, *make us persevere in justice.*
Holy Spirit, *be you our everlasting*
reward.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *send us your Holy Spirit.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *pour down into our souls*
the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *grant us the Spirit of*
Wisdom and Piety.

Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your
faithful.

And enkindle in them the fire of your love.

Let us pray:

Grant, O merciful Father, that your divine
Spirit enlighten, inflame and purify us,
that he may penetrate us with heavenly
dew and make us fruitful works. Through
our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who
with you, in the unity of the same Spirit,
lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen!

PRAYER OF ST. AUGUSTINE

(TD 67)

O Jesus Christ, you are my Father, my
merciful God, my great King, my good
Shepherd, my only Master, my best
helper, my beloved friend of
overwhelming beauty, my living Bread,
my eternal Priest. You are my guide to
my heavenly home, my one true light, my
holy joy, my true way, my shining
wisdom, my unfeigned simplicity, the
peace and harmony of my soul, my
perfect safeguard, my bounteous

inheritance. My everlasting salvation.

My loving Lord, Jesus Christ, why have I ever loved or desired anything else in my life but you, my God? Where was I when I was not in communion with you? From now on, I direct all my desires to be inspired by you and centered on you. I direct them to press forward, for they have tarried long enough, to hasten towards their goal, to seek the one they yearn for.

O gentle Jesus, let every worthy feeling of mine show you love, take delight in you and admire you. O God of my heart and my inheritance, Christ Jesus, may my heart mellow before the influence of your spirit and may you live in me. May the flame of your love burn in my soul. May it burn incessantly on the altar of my heart. May it glow in my innermost being. May it spread its heat into the hidden recesses of my soul and, on the day of my consummation, may I appear before you consumed in your love. Amen!

LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Jesus, hear us.
Jesus, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, redeemer of the world, “
God the Holy Spirit,
Holy Trinity,

Jesus, Son of the living God,

Jesus, splendor of the Father,
Jesus, brightness of eternal light,
Jesus, king of glory,
Jesus, son of justice,
Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary,
Jesus, most amiable,
Jesus, most admirable,
Jesus, mighty God,
Jesus, father of the world to come,
Jesus, angel of the great council,
Jesus, most powerful,
Jesus, most patient,
Jesus, most obedient,
Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
Jesus, lover of chastity,
Jesus, lover of us,
Jesus, God of peace,
Jesus, author of life,
Jesus, model of virtues,
Jesus, lover of souls,
Jesus, our God,
Jesus, our refuge,
Jesus, father of the poor,
Jesus, treasure of the faithful,
Jesus, good shepherd,
Jesus, true light,
Jesus, eternal Wisdom,
Jesus, infinite goodness,
Jesus, our way and life,
Jesus, joy of angels,
Jesus, king of patriarchs,
Jesus, master apostles,
Jesus, teacher of evangelists,
Jesus, strength of martyrs,
Jesus, light of confessors,
Jesus, purity of virgins,
Jesus, crown of saints,

Be merciful, *spare us, O Jesus.*

Be merciful, *graciously hear, O Jesus*

From all evil, *Jesus deliver us.*
From all sin, “
From the snares of the devil,
From the spirit of fornication,
From everlasting death,
From the neglect of your inspirations,
Through the mystery of your Incarnation,
Through your nativity,
Through your infancy,
Through your most divine life,
Through your labors,
Through your agony and passion,
Through your cross and dereliction,
Through your sufferings,
Through your death and burial,
Through your resurrection,
Through your ascension,
Through your institution of the Eucharist.
Through your joys,
Through your glory,

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *spare us, O Jesus.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *graciously hear, O Jesus.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *have mercy on us, O Jesus.*

Jesus, hear us.

Jesus, graciously hear.

Let us pray:

O Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, “Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you”. Grant, we beseech you, to us who ask the gift of your divine love, that we may ever love you with all our hearts, and in all our words and actions, and never cease praising you. Give us, O Lord, a perpetual love of your Holy Name; for you never fail to govern those whom you solidly establish in your love. You live and reign forever and ever. Amen!

AVE MARIS STELLA

Hail, bright star of ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
Even sinless Virgin,
Gate of heavenly rest.

Taking that sweet Ave,
Which from Gabriel came,
Peace confirm within us,
Changing Eva's name.

Break the captives' fetters,
Light on blindness pour,
All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore.

Show thyself a Mother,
May the Word Divine,
Born for us thy infant,
Hear our prayers through thine.

Virgin all excelling,
Mildest of the mild,
Freed from guilt, preserve us,
Pure and undefiled.

Keep our life all spotless,
Make our way secure,
Till we find in Jesus
Joy for evermore. Amen!

LITANY OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on
Us.*
God the Son, redeemer of the world, *have
mercy on us.*
God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*
Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *pray for us.*
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother inviolate,
Mother undefiled,
Mother most amiable,
Mother most admirable,
Mother of good counsel,
Mother of the Creator,
Mother of the Savior,
Virgin most prudent,
Virgin most venerable,
Virgin most renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,

Spiritual vessel,
Vessel of honor,
Singular vessel of devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of Heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comfort of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Queen conceived without original sin,
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of assumed into Heaven,
Queen of peace,

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *graciously hear, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, *have mercy on us, O Lord.*

Christ hear us.

Christ graciously hear.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

*That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Grant us, your servants, we beseech you,
O Lord God, at all times to enjoy health
of soul and body; and by the glorious
intercession of Blessed Mary, ever virgin,
when freed from the sorrows of this
present life, to enter into that joy which
has no end. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen!