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PREFACE

LOUIS Mary Grignon de Montfort was born to a poor family on January 21, 1673, at Montfort, France. He was educated at the Jesuit College in Rennes and was ordained there in 1700.

The young priest was assigned to a hospital at Poitiers and his much needed organization of the hospital staff caused great resentment, leading to his resignation. However, during his stay there he organized a group of women into the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Wisdom.

For most of his life, Father Louis was a poor, wandering preacher with his few possessions (Bible, Breviary, and Notebooks) carried in a knapsack on his shoulder. Some considered that this was undignified, and he was forbidden to preach from time to time.

Eventually Father Louis went to Rome where Pope Clement XI appointed him a “missionary apostolic,” and he spent the rest of his life preaching popular missions in Poitiers and Brittany.

The Saint had an emotional style that reaped permanent results in the restoration of churches, almsgiving, and spiritual revival. He composed verses and hymns, some still in use today, and promoted the practice of the Rosary. His greatest success is regarded as the reconciliation of many Calvinists at La Rochelle.

In 1715, Louis organized several priests and formed the Missionaries of the Company of

Jesus. The Saint also laid the foundation for a teaching order that came to be called Brothers of St. Gabriel. All three of his Congregations have spread his ideas and ideals to people today.

This holy man gave one the impression of having benefited from a baptismal rebirth in the Pauline manner. He had the Apostle's visceral repugnance to evil and charismatic openness to life in the Spirit. Those who knew him as a child and growing boy say that he was "seized" by the Virgin right from his Baptism, like Saint Paul by Christ. Mystic union with Mary was the "Divine milieu" of his spiritual life and his missionary apostolate.

This voyager, who traveled 16,000 miles on foot, seemed made for action, yet left a considerable body of writing, all of it penned with an eye to pastoral ministry. Among his 164 handwritten Canticles, totaling more than 20,000 lines, only 24 actually sing the praise of Mary. But her name appears in nearly all, invoked to promote conversion of life, spiritual practice, union with Christ, and perseverance.

His principal work is *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, which has become a classic and been translated into fifty languages. Indeed, one can say that the principal Marian movements of the last century have arisen through meditation on this impassioned work.

His second classic work is the present *Secret of the Rosary*, which has guided thousands of

Catholics in the best way to recite this great prayer to Jesus and Mary. The Saint cites writers before him and also brings his own insights to bear on the richness of the prayers recited and the benefits from meditating on the Mysteries. He assures us that those who faithfully pray the Rosary advance rapidly in the faith, live perfectly, die peacefully, and rise surely to eternal life.

Worn out by his indefatigable labor and preaching for Christ, Father Louis died in 1716 at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre, France, and was canonized in 1947 by Pope Pius XII.

Pope John Paul II has held St. Louis up as a witness and teacher of a true Marian spirituality, which finds its whole basis in Christ: "I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of St. Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments" (*Mother of the Redeemer*, no. 48).

The Pope also cited St. Louis first in a list "of all the many Saints who discovered in the Rosary a genuine path to growth in holiness" and he called him "the author of an excellent work on the Rosary [*The Secret of the Rosary*]" (*The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*, no. 8).



FIRST DECADE

Excellence of the Holy Rosary in Its Origin and Name

FIRST ROSE

The Prayers of the Rosary

[9] **T**HE Rosary is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer. The mental prayer of the Holy Rosary is the meditation on the principal Mysteries of the Life, Death, and Glory of Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother.

The vocal prayer of the Rosary consists in saying fifteen decades of the Hail Mary, each decade being headed by an Our Father, while at the same time we meditate on and contemplate the fifteen principal virtues that Jesus and Mary practiced in the fifteen Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

In the first five decades we honor and meditate on the Joyful Mysteries; in the second five decades, the Sorrowful Mysteries; in the third five decades, the Glorious Mysteries.*

So the Rosary is a holy composite of mental and vocal prayer. By it we honor and learn to imitate the Mysteries and virtues of the Life, Passion and Death, and Glory of Jesus and Mary.

* See Appendix II, p. 229, for the new Luminous Mysteries.