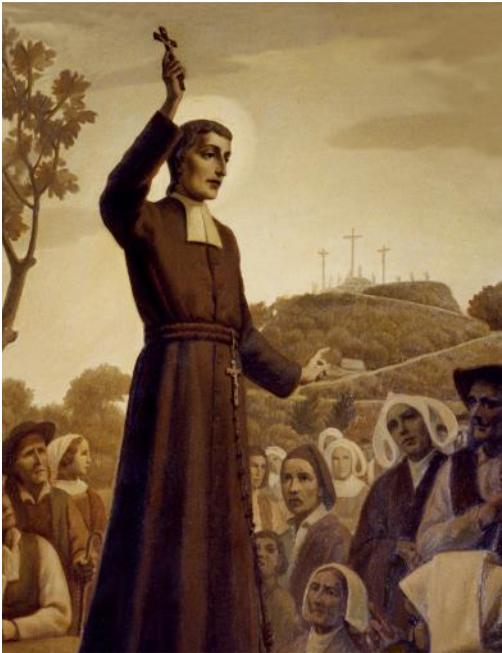




Indefatigable, he rested in the tomb



Pasquale Arzuffi,
Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto

TO KNOW HIM

«Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort was the subject of around twenty biographies in French. Can anything more be added? In truth, few of these publications have attempted to go beyond his pastoral activity and his spiritual doctrine to open up to his personal evolution. It is especially in his last five years of life that we can approach this evolution both through a greater knowledge of the

events and through reading between the lines. For a person from Nantes, the culmination of Louis Marie's missionary apostolate was the mobilization of an entire region for a whole year (1709-1710) for the construction of the Calvary of Pontchâteau, which corresponds to his exceptional ability to activate the crowds.

At the beginning of 1711, he headed south, essentially towards the diocese of La Rochelle, where he worked for five consecutive years until his death, in April 1716. This relative stability above all revealed a maturation in this man who until then had been a bit of a wanderer, but we must also place him in the context of the religious geography of this diocese. It was roughly divided into two profoundly different territories: the north, wooded, which extended the Armorican Massif. Open field in the south, to which the region of La Rochelle belonged. Today we know that the fervor of the former contrasted with the tepidity of Aunis and its border with the Poitiers region. Since Louis Grignion died in Saint Laurent, in the heart of the “bocage” (terrain of mixed woodland and pasture), in the north, a tradition was born that considers him as the Apostle, even the very father of this region. But Louis preached 17 missions in the southern parishes compared to only 4 in the northern parishes of the same region. This deserves to be looked at more closely.

Beyond a possible mandate by the bishop, this contrast must be seen as a decisive choice on his part. We know that in one or another parish of Aunis he obtains mediocre results, especially not lasting ones. In his Last Will drawn up in Saint Laurent on the eve of his death, he decides to give his 15 banners with the mysteries of the Rosary “to every parish of Aunis where the recitation of the Rosary will persevere”. One gets the impression that this small region is his favorite. This corresponds to the directives he leaves to his missionary followers to prefer “the countryside to the city and the poor to the rich”. In these first decades of the 18th century in which the missionary breath of the Catholic reform was exhausted, Montfort completed his

evolution by demonstrating his predilection for the peasants of Aunis, certainly “practicing” but less evangelized than those of the Saint Laurent region. We can say that his last five years were the most missionary.

It is certainly also during these last years of his life that Montfort wrote almost all his main writings... Among the internal dating criteria of the same, we consider important the part dedicated to the practical directives of moderation regarding “penances and mortifications”... The *Letter to the Friends of the Cross* contains a series of fourteen rules, often of great moderation. The evolution is even clearer in the *Rule of the missionary priests of the Company of Mary*, written in 1715 or shortly before, as the following passage testifies: “They do not display any singularity in their behavior... They dress like the majority of good ecclesiastics...”.

How can we not see in this prescription a reflection of the personal behavior of the founder, who in his youth was noted for his eccentricity to the point of exchanging his clothes for the rags of a poor man! We add that, starting from 1711-1712, in La Rochelle, he lived in a low house similar to those in the neighborhood, while in 1705, in Paris, he was huddled under the stairs. In recent years he became, with a few fleeting exceptions, a priest almost like the others».

(Louis PEROUAS, *Grignion de Montfort à l'âge de la maturité*. Undated)



THE GUIDING WORD

Let us listen to the Word of God
from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to
Timothy (4:1-8)

«In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. **For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.** Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. **But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist,** discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing».

LET US MEDITATE FROM PSALM 4

Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God!
Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

How long will you people
turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?
Know that the Lord
has set apart his faithful servant for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.
Offer the sacrifices of the righteous
and trust in the Lord.

Many, Lord, are asking,
“Who will bring us prosperity?”
Let the light of your face shine on us.
Fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.

TODAY FOR ME

The temptation to take stock of a person's life from “numbers” is always strong and latent. How many times do we “count”: he wrote so many books, he preached so many missions, he accomplished this and that, he founded these congregations, etc. We could make a very long and certainly incomplete list about Saint Louis Marie... But I think it is more important to find out what guided him in his “work”.

In a letter written only eight days before his death, when he had no suspicions about the end (he plans a time of rest after the 5th of May, while he will die on the 28th of April) he writes: “I count on the inexhaustible wealth of the motherly divine Providence which has never failed us in all we have undertaken for the glory of God” (L 33).

It is the experience of the motherly divine Providence that guides him, reassures him, pushes him to move forward. A comparison with ourselves arises spontaneously, with the life of our parishes, associations and groups. How much protagonism in us, how much careerism, how much “what will they say” ..., “but I” ..., “it's always been done this way”! It is not yet time for us to “rest in the grave” like Saint Louis.

Perhaps, looking at him and his work, the words that are dear to us in the Act of Consecration acquire a different and incisive meaning: “I renounce forever Satan, his empty promises and his evil designs, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life”.

FOR PERSONAL AWARENESS

- What guides me in my personal actions, in my group, in my parish community?
- I remember the presence of significant people in my personal experience...
- I write my “litany” of saints...



Praises of God for his blessings

1. Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.
Bless him, holy Angels,
Praise his majesty;
To his kindness render
Unending, lasting praise.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

2. Oh! How good a Father!
He takes great care of us!
He supports us one and all
Even in our misery.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

3. Like a faithful Shepherd
He has, with greatest toil,
Led back into the sheepfold
The most rebellious sheep.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

4. He has broken all my chains,
Like a mighty conqueror,
And as a kindly Savior
Has saved me from distress.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

5. My poor soul He has healed
Like a kind physician.
Like a benign master,
My calm He has restored.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

6. He has taken for his temple
Both my body and my heart,
It is there that his great splendor
Shines brightly night and day.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

7. May all things praise in my stead
A God so filled with love;
He grants me every day I live,
New graces for my soul!
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

8. He is my dearest Father,
He takes good care of me,
He holds me close to Himself,
Helping me in my distress.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

9. His kindness upholds me,
His light instructs me,
His beauty ravishes me,
His love enraptures me.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

10. His gentleness caresses me,
His grace heals me,
His power strengthens me,

His charity urges me.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

11. God alone is my tenderness,
God alone my support,
God alone is all I have,
My life and my wealth.
Let us forever bless
The Lord for his great gifts.

