



## Father of the poor, protector of orphans, reconciler of sinners



*Montfort welcomes a poor man.  
Statue at the residence of the  
Brothers of Saint Gabriel in  
Nantes.*

### TO KNOW HIM

«Grignion de Montfort, this enthusiast of the poor, gave ample space to his favorites throughout his life. He dedicated himself to them especially in the first years of his priesthood; he continued to serve them afterwards and above all he appealed to all Christians to help those who lived in misery. He had the habit, during his missions, of feeding every day the poor of the parish and the vagabonds who happened to be passing through. Father de Bastières, often in charge of this service, counted up to 200 per day in certain parishes. But this “popular soup” was the business of all the parishioners whose generosity was solicited: in Fontenay le Comte, in August 1715, Miss Mulot delivered 153 pounds from anonymous donors to the missionary. Like Vincent de Paul, Montfort had grasped **the link**

between mission and charity. In Sallertaine he committed each family to feeding a poor person in their home during the entire time of the mission. "Each one considered it a pleasure and a duty to contribute to his works of mercy", assures Father Préfontaine. These acts of charity risked not continuing long after the mission. Montfort was committed to ensuring that in one form or another, this commitment would become permanent.

He had the possibility of appealing to more generous and available people, who were also more open to new initiatives in favor of the relief of the poor. In Nantes for example, the Misses Dauvaise organized a shelter for the incurable founded at his suggestion; while, on his advice, Mrs Chapelain organized an asylum for convalescents leaving the hospital. In other places, in Dinan for example, he encouraged initiatives of this kind. We must also add, towards the end of his life, the opening of charity schools for children whose parents could not pay the small usual fee: in La Rochelle, in Saint Pompain, in Vouvant. All these foundations, such as those of the Daughters of Wisdom for the care of the poor and small schools, were at the level of institutions but the missionary wanted to involve every Christian in a habitual commitment towards the poor.

Almsgiving, discreet and joyful, is among the convert's duties during the mission. In Montfort, whose personal experience was rich in gestures of generosity, there is at the same time a mystique and a morality of almsgiving. Like Father Leuduger and more than him, he underlines the obligation that every Christian has to give to the poor: "The poor have the right to claim / anything you do not need, / a rich person cannot keep it, / although he believes otherwise. / He is only the steward" (C 17, 19).

If the verses are not much, the commitments are precise and based on the Bible and the declarations of the Fathers.

At the same time, the missionary makes us understand that giving to the poor is giving to Jesus Christ himself of whom these poor are the members. Thus, these charitable services are integrated into the movement itself which he wanted to impress upon the whole of Christian life, that of self-denial for **total service of the Lord**».

(Louis PÉROUAS, *Grignion de Montfort. Les pauvres et les missions*, 140-142)

«... Several decades after Montfort's passing, local traditions, perhaps somewhat embellished by time, remembered the astonishing way in which he had managed to reconcile deeply divided people. Reconciliations and restitutions were the objectives of all or almost all missionaries.

If we believe the Capuchins, these reconciliations made during the missions often did not have a charitable motive but rather the desire to more easily arrive at an advantageous solution, intimidating the devout adversaries.

Montfort also had to encounter similar cases, but he was not satisfied with the solutions taken during the mission. He knew that in the parishes charity was corroded by trials that always aimed at self-interest. Then, he advised avoiding any type of trial, even the right ones, even for the Church; he forced the most committed Christians to reject it.

For this commitment to have any chance of being respected, he insisted on detachment from money, on paying debts, on being satisfied with one's income. These directives, perhaps, reflect a contempt for money, certainly a rigidity, but express the desire to act effectively to spread more charity among Christians».

(Louis PÉROUAS, *Grignion de Montfort. Les pauvres et les missions*, 138)

## THE GUIDING WORD



### Let us listen to the Word of God from the Book of Sirach (4:1-10)

«My child, don't prevent the poor from making a living, or keep them waiting in their need. Never give a hungry person any cause for resentment or anger. Don't add to the troubles of someone who is already desperate. If he is in need, don't put off giving to him. Don't refuse to help a beggar who is in distress. Don't turn your back on a poor person or give him any reason to curse you. If he becomes so bitter that he does curse you, his Creator will hear his prayer. Make yourself popular in the synagogue. Bow your head to men of authority. Listen to what the poor have to say, and answer them politely. Protect people from those who want to wrong them, and be firm in your judgments. Be like a father to orphans, and provide widows with the help their husbands can no longer give them. Then you will be like a child of the Most-High, and he will love you more than your own mother does».

## LET US MEDITATE

From PSALM 112

**Blessed are those who fear the Lord.**

Blessed are those who fear the Lord,  
who find great delight in his commands.  
Their children will be mighty in the land,  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in their houses,  
and their righteousness endures forever.  
Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for those who are gracious, compassionate and righteous.

Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely  
who conduct their affairs with justice.  
Surely the righteous will never be shaken:  
they will be remembered forever.

They will have no fear of bad news,  
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.  
Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear,  
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,  
their righteousness endures forever,  
their horn will be lifted high in honor.

The wicked will see and be vexed,  
they will gnash their teeth and waste away;  
the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

## TODAY FOR ME

«... Brothers and sisters, on this World Day of the Poor, the parable of the talents is a summons to examine the spirit with which we confront the journey of our lives. **We have received from the Lord**

the gift of his love and we are called to become a gift for others.

The love with which Jesus cared for us, the balm of his mercy, the compassion with which he tended our wounds, the flame of the Spirit by which he filled our hearts with joy and hope – all these are treasures that we cannot simply keep to ourselves, use for our own purposes or bury beneath the soil. Showered with gifts, we are called in turn to make ourselves a gift. Those of us who have received many gifts must make ourselves a gift for others. The images used by the parable are very eloquent: if we do not spread love all around us, our lives recede into the darkness; if we do not make good use of the talents we have received, our lives end up buried in the ground, as if we were already dead (cf. vv. 25.30). Brothers and sisters, so many Christians are “buried underground”! Many Christians live their faith as if they lived underground!

Let us think, then, of all those **material, cultural and spiritual forms of poverty that exist in our world**, of the great suffering present in our cities, of the forgotten poor whose cry of pain goes unheard in the generalized indifference of a bustling and distracted society. When we think of poverty, we must not forget about its discretion: poverty is discrete; it hides itself. We must courageously go and look for it. Let us think of all those who are oppressed, weary or marginalized, the victims of war and those forced to leave their homelands at the risk of their lives, those who go hungry and those without work and without hope. So much poverty on a daily basis: not one, two or three but a multitude. The poor are a multitude. When we think of the immense numbers of the poor in our midst, the message of today’s Gospel is clear: let us not bury the wealth of the Lord! Let us spread the wealth of charity, share our bread and multiply love! Poverty is a scandal. When the Lord returns, he will settle accounts with us and – in the words of Saint Ambrose –

he will say to us: “Why did you allow so many of the poor to die of hunger when you possessed gold to buy food for them? Why were so many slaves sold and mistreated by the enemy, without anyone making an effort to ransom them?” ».

*(POPE FRANCIS, Homily of 19 November 2023 for the World Day of the Poor)*

## FOR PERSONAL AWARENESS

- What do I do with a gift as great as my life?
- As a Christian, am I able to take risks or do I close in on myself out of fear or cowardice?
- What in particular can I share?



## LET US PRAY WITH SAINT LOUIS

(Canticle 18)

### *The cry of the poor*

1. You rich, wake up and hear  
Our most pitiful sobs,  
Alas! come to our aid,  
For we are desolate.  
All of us are Christians,  
We are all your brothers,  
Help us with your riches,  
Answer then our prayers.

2. God made you important  
But to be our fathers,  
God made you powerful  
To alleviate our woes.  
Yet you enjoy yourselves,  
Always midst abundance  
While leaving us aside,  
Always in dire need.

4. Nobody offers alms,  
Rather, they rebuke us.  
They think they're doing good  
When they all bully us,  
Chase us and arrest us,  
Chaining us in prison.  
We are even forbidden  
To call attention to our woes.

5. The rich so often tell us:  
I have no silver, no coins.  
High class people curse us,  
Treating us as riff-raff.  
Get out of here, bold idlers!  
Oh! You brazen, evil race!  
That's the language many use,  
And even the common folk.

6. Great God, please do help us  
In this situation,  
What! Will you forget us  
As does all your creation?  
Gaze on us from heaven,  
For you are our Father,  
Deign to cast your eyes  
Even on our dust.

7. **GOD:** O dear poor of heart,  
I hear your just complaints  
And deeply feel your sorrow,  
I suffer the same blows;  
Have patience for a while,  
Then you will see my anger,  
Though I am almighty God  
I also am your Father.

8. You are my elder sons,  
My true and chosen friends,  
My dear predestined souls,  
My dwelling-places fair.  
All the evil done to you  
Is done also to me.  
Anyone who helps you out  
Is proof that person loves me.

9. **POOR:** O you rich, how good for you  
When you give us alms;  
For a corner in your house  
You'll get a stunning throne.  
For some of your old clothes,  
A rich crown is your prize,  
And all of Paradise  
For a cup of water.

10. Now, do give us something,  
Do not be niggardly,  
This will be the sure way  
Of becoming very rich.  
The Lord Himself has promised  
To grant the hundredfold  
To all those who befriend  
The miserable poor.

11. Almsgiving wins God over  
And makes Him favorable;  
Almsgiving also quenches  
The fire of His justice;  
It gives to all the sinners  
A sincere anticipation  
Of receiving from his Savior  
The weight of heavenly glory.

GOD ALONE

